

## **Community Counseling Process**

Community Counselors address the issues of women and children in really positive ways. They had been providing services to the community whenever in need. The District Mission of Thrissur had been providing various services to the women through Snehitha Gender Help Desks. Through Community Counselors they had been trying to identify the issues in the grass root level itself and if needed the issues are taken to the next level by assuring the help of professional counselors and ensuring necessary actions regarding the issue. Let's see how Kudumbashree Thrissur District Mission had been providing adequate support to address the vulnerabilities of the women and children in the state. Let's see how Community Counselors work in a society!

### **What is Community Counseling?**

Community counseling can be defined as a generic term for any kind of professional counseling that occurs outside a hospital set up. This term may also be used to describe a form of counseling that is focused on helping communities who may be struggling with an increased amount of shared psychological problems, which might even be the result of some traumatic events that have taken place recently within the community or so.

### **The process of community counseling**

Community counselors work with wide variety of groups in the society and help the common people to solve their issues and thereby they address their problems. The Community Counselors provide their services directly to the

community. Women and children are the most socially and economically marginalized people in our society and hence they are more vulnerable to abuse and harassment. The community counselors of Kudumbashree Mission thus give more focus to provide welfare to women and children thereby to gift them better lives.

### **Gender Self Learning Programme (GSLP)**

Gender self-learning programme (GSLP), initiated 2007, is a participatory education programme through which women in Neighbourhood Groups (NHGs) address gender and its manifestations in their own lived experiences. The emphasis is on the process, which helps the women develop a collective consciousness on gender and a deep understanding of its pervasive expressions.

Community counseling and support services primarily aim to give premarital counseling, counseling services to the parents of BUDS/BRC children, old age people and adolescent students. Other than these focused areas, community counselors target group includes young couples, children, women who are victims of violence in family and workplace, people with psychiatric problems etc.

### **Services Provided by Community Counselors**

The Community counselors are involved with gender self learning activities by providing psycho social support, case study and analysis, legal support, crisis management, home visit, family risk assessment and risk management, gender based violence, domestic violence, sexual abuse, harassment, human trafficking, educational issues of children, referral services, awareness classes, counseling support to women in need, counseling support to the cases

registered in block level community counseling centre, Gender Resource Centre and Snehitha Gender help desk.

Apart from taking group counseling sessions, community counselors deal with a number of individual cases too. Over these years, community counselors in the state dealt with a wide variety of cases and given them adequate support needed. The cases can family issues, adolescent issues, mental health problems and other problems.

The Community counselors use various techniques such as case study, mental status examination, behavior therapy, positive reinforcement etc.

### **Process of analyzing a case**

The community counselors are given the training for case study analysis. It includes

- Collecting the personal details of the client, their family background and current status, which would include their age, sex, marital status, family tree, and socio economic status of the client as well as the family.
- Collecting the history of the family: it includes taking the family history, health status of family members (if needed) and details of the illness.
- Problem statement: the counselor states the problem as mentioned by the client.
- Identifying the underlying key issues and the persons involved in it: The counsellor analyse the problem and identify the key issues and persons involved in the particular issue.

- Contact with key persons (client and other people involved, professional support if needed): counsellor contacts all the key persons and government authorities (if needed) and dates for sessions will be fixed.
- Session wise details : number of sessions varies with each case
- Possible solutions: counsellor helps the clients to reach possible solutions for their problems.
- Outcome : the outcome of the counselling
- Referral (if needed)
- Follow up
- Case summary

### **Implementation Phase**

As a part of Kudumbashree Gender self learning programme, 320 community counselors were selected from 14 districts across the state. Community counselors were selected women from Kudumbashree network as well as professional counselors from the community. All of them are trained persons in counseling techniques, types and process. They received a three day training based on the module developed by counseling experts. These counselors work in collaboration with gender resource centres of Kudumbashree and Snehitha Gender Help Desks set up all over the state.

### **Vulnerability Mapping**

Vulnerability mapping is a tool identified by Kudumbashree Mission to address the issues/demands through the collective action of the community. Through the process, the situations are identified and possibilities are found out to prevent them. The vulnerability may depend upon the geographical, social,

economical and physical situation and capacity of an individual or the group. There lies the relevance of employing community counselors that the community resource Persons can be support them to realize or understand the vulnerability through different methodologies. It also aims at the participatory preparation of social protection plan at the NHG area. It may be Focus Group Discussions, Individual Interviews, Home visits, Case Studies, experience sharing.

### **Formation of Vigilant Groups**

It was in the wake of the rising cases of atrocities against women, Kudumbashree Mission decided to constitute women vigilante groups at the ward level across the state. The main aim of forming such groups was to create a safe neighbourhood, ensure freedom of movement and protect the rights of women.

The vigilant groups are led by Kudumbashree members and resource persons. The role of the vigilant group would be to identify victims of atrocities or vulnerable women from their own community and provide them with legal and other assistance through Gender Corner and Jagratha Samithi. . Involving local women in the vigilant group will ensure their involvement and increase the efficacy of the group.

Kudumbashree Mission ensures the involvement of local bodies in the activities of the vigilant groups formed. Counseling and awareness programmes are conducted by community councilors. The vigilante group will include CDS and ADS workers, committee of Anganwadi mothers, Balasabha workers, elected representatives, NGOs and representatives of other voluntary organisations.

## **Scope of the programme**

The programme is very much relevant in today's scenario that women are getting an opportunity to find solutions for their problems through the service of these community counselors. Vigilant Groups formed address the issues of the women and children in more positive ways.

In Thrissur, the community counselors are actively working among the communities to rectify their problems by addressing them with utmost care and seriousness. If needed the community counselors refer the case to the Snehitha Gender Help Desk and facilitate them the services of professional counselors. There are 33 community counselors working in the district and each are given charges of 3 panchayaths each.

The Gender Resource Persons are also working in every ward that in each ward 4 Gender Resource persons are working to identify the real issues. In Thrissur, the issues addressed are domestic violence and the issues of the elderly persons. The community counselors are also conducting education programmes on the adverse effects of alcohol and drug addiction and are addressing the issues with utmost care and interest. Through the regular review of the Community Councilors, the quality of the service provided by them is ensured by Kudumbashree District Mission of Thrissur.

Therefore it could undoubtedly stated that the community counseling programme implemented in Thrissur District have been identifying the issues of the women and children in a realistic, systematic and fruitful way.