

Destitute Women

Chapter 8: Destitute Women

Introduction

Recognizing the needs to prevent women from exploitation and to support their survival and rehabilitation, a central sector scheme named *Swadhar Greh* was launched (2011) by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, GoI by merger of two schemes, *Swadhar* (2001-02) and Short Stay Home (1969). The scheme was launched for providing holistic and integrated services to women in difficult circumstances such as destitute widows, women prisoners released from jail and without family support, women survivors of natural disasters; trafficked women/girls rescued from brothels or other places or victims of sexual crime, mentally challenged women who are without any support etc. The package of services made available include provision for food, clothing, shelter, health care, counseling and legal support, social and economic rehabilitation through education, awareness generation, skill upgradation to enable them to start their life afresh with dignity and conviction.

This scheme is being implemented in the State by the Department of Women Welfare through NGOs and Women Welfare Corporation.

Swadhar Greh scheme was provisioned to be financed jointly by Central and State. Component-wise financial assistance for construction of *Swadhar Greh*, rent, food, clothing, medicines and other recurring expenditure is provided by the Centre and State governments in the ratios given in **Appendix 8.1**. The financial assistance in respect of sanctioned projects is released directly to implementing agencies by GoI and the State Government. The grants are released to the implementing agencies in two installments by GoI, first installment at the time of the sanction of the Project and second installment is released on the request of the implementing agency on furnishing of utilisation certificates and inspection report of the District Administration.

8.1 Allocation and expenditure

As per information provided by the Directorate, Women Welfare, 64 *Swadhar Greh* projects were sanctioned, out of which the Directorate could provide details of release and utilisation of funds in respect of 56 projects only (**Appendix 8.2**).

The information provided revealed that a total ₹ 8.07 crore grant was released to NGOs during 2010-15 against which an expenditure of ₹ 7.19 crore was incurred as per UCs provided by NGOs. No funds were released to any *Swadhar Greh* project in 2014-15. Further, utilisation certificates of ₹ 30.33 lakh and ₹ 58.45 lakh were not submitted by NGOs during the year 2012-13 and 2013-14 respectively.

8.1.1 Irregular sanction of grant

Scrutiny of records of test-checked districts revealed that a *Swadhar Greh* established by an NGO (*Navyug Gramodyog Samiti*, Naini, Allahabad) in 2009-10 had informed the State Government about the closure of *Swadhar Greh* project in September 2013 due to financial constraint.

The Department of Women Welfare, GoUP, however, failed to inform the GoI about the closure of *Swadhar Greh* project by the NGO. Consequently, grant¹ of ₹ 7.61 lakh was released (September 2014) by GoI to the NGO for running the *Swadhar Greh* in the financial year 2013-14 also.

On this being pointed out by the Audit, Directorate, Women Welfare informed that a departmental enquiry was being conducted for irregular release of grant to NGO.

8.2 Implementation

The *Swadhar Greh* scheme envisions a supportive institutional framework for woman victim of difficult circumstances so that she could lead her life with dignity and conviction. It envisages that shelter, food, clothing and health as well as economic and social security are assured for such women. The benefit of the scheme was to be provided to women beneficiaries above the age of 18 years. Under the scheme new *Swadhar Greh* was to be setup in every district with capacity of 30 women. We observed in Audit that:

8.2.1 Non-establishment of District Women's Welfare Committee

District Women's Welfare Committee (DWWC) headed by District Magistrate including at least two women members was to be constituted in every district to look after the affairs of every *Swadhar Greh* in the district. DWWCs were to conduct need assessment in their respective districts and inform the State Government about the estimated number of destitute women so that the proposed *Swadhar Greh* could accommodate these destitute women. Further, DWWC was responsible for providing accreditation, forwarding and recommending proposals, sending recommendations for release of installments of the grant, undertaking periodic monitoring of the functioning of *Swadhar Grehs* in their districts.

Scrutiny of records of the Directorate and test-checked districts revealed that DWWCs were not formed in any of the districts. Hence, important functions of the Committee including need assessment and recommending proposals in the districts could not be performed. Therefore, the magnitude of prevalence of destitution in women in the districts remained un-assessed.

On being pointed out Directorate, Women Welfare confirmed the facts. Further, during discussion in exit conference, Government stated to take required action against reported facts and audit comments.

¹ Building rent: ₹ 1.125 lakh; administrative expenditure: ₹ 3.00 lakh; office contingencies: ₹ 0.03 lakh; medical expenses: ₹ 0.15 lakh; food of residents: ₹ 3.00 lakh; and pocket money: ₹ 0.30 lakh.

8.2.2 Non-establishment of *Swadhar Greh* in each district

As per guideline, *Swadhar Greh* was to be established in each district with intake capacity of 30 women.

Scrutiny revealed that *Swadhar Greh* were established in only 42 out of 75 districts in the State as of March 2015 in which five districts² reported closure of scheme (*Appendix 8.3*).

Recommendation: The Government should undertake need based assessment to establish *Swadhar Greh* of required capacity in every district for destitute women.

8.2.3 Non-convergence with other programmes

The scheme guideline envisaged to establish necessary linkages with other programmes such as Non Formal Education, Skill Development and other programmes being implemented by GoUP and GoI.

Scrutiny of records of the Directorate, Women Welfare revealed that the State Department as well as implementing agencies had not established necessary linkages with other programme such as non-formal education, skill development, etc. Thus, the objective of upliftment and economic rehabilitation of inmates of *Swadhar Greh* through linkage with other programmes could not be ensured.

On being pointed out in Audit, Directorate Women Welfare did not provide any specific reply, however, during discussion in exit conference, Government stated to take required action against the fact.

Recommendation: The Government should ensure convergence with other departments for effective implementation of the Scheme.

8.3 Improper functioning of *Swadhar Greh*

As per information provided by the Directorate, 56 *Swadhar Greh* were running in the State. Only eight *Swadhar Greh*³ were running in seven⁴ districts out of 20 test-checked districts. Scrutiny of records and joint physical inspection (JPI) of these eight *Swadhar Greh* conducted by Audit along with the representative of Department of Women Welfare revealed grossly inadequate infrastructure, excess reporting of beneficiaries, lack of support services, non-rehabilitation of inmates and improper maintenance of records. Various shortcomings noticed in running of *Swadhar Greh* are detailed in *Appendix 8.4*.

² Allahabad, Azamgarh, Deoria, Jhansi and Varanasi

³ Chitrakoot Jan Kalyan Samiti, Banda, Jagriti, Ashtabhujia Nagar, Pratapgarh, Maxon Gromodyog Samiti, Charbag, Lucknow at Pratapgarh, Panchsheel *Swadhar Greh*, Agra, Pragati Pathgamini, Sitapur Road, Lucknow at Ambedkar Nagar, *Swadhar*, Titowa, Sant Kabir Nagar, Lohia Public School Samiti, Lucknow at Sitapur, Avadh Grameen Vikas Sansthan, Sultanpur.

⁴ Agra, Ambedkar Nagar, Banda, Pratapgarh, Sant Kabir Nagar, Sitapur and Sultanpur.



Swadhar Greh : Avadh Grameen Vikas Sansthan, Sultanpur

Recommendation: Government should ensure functioning of *Swadhar Grehs* as per provisions of Scheme Guidelines in regards to infrastructure, support services and rehabilitation of inmates.

8.4 Monitoring

A State Level Monitoring Committee was to be formed under the chairpersonship of Principal Secretary, Women Welfare Department, which was to meet at least twice a year to monitor the projects. At district level DWWC was responsible for periodic monitoring of the functioning of *Swadhar Greh* scheme. *Swadhar Greh* were to be monitored continuously by the District Administration in order to ensure their smooth functioning, identifying groups and suggesting steps that would lead to their better functioning.

Scrutiny of records of the directorate and test-checked districts revealed that the monitoring committees were not formed at State and districts level.

On being pointed out Directorate, Women Welfare replied that no such committees were constituted at district and State level.

Recommendation: The Government should constitute state and district level monitoring committees and ensure their regular meetings for effective implementation of the Scheme.

8.5 Conclusions

- District Women Welfare Committees for planning and implementation of the *Swadhar Greh* scheme in the districts were not constituted; as a result, the magnitude of prevalence of destitution in women in the districts remained un-assessed.

(Paragraph 8.2.1)

- *Swadhar Grehs* were not established in about half of the districts in the State depriving the destitute women of these districts of much needed help and support in the form of food, clothing, shelter, health care, counselling and social and economic rehabilitation.

(Paragraph 8.2.2)

- Inadequate infrastructure, excess reporting of beneficiaries, lack of support services, non-rehabilitation of inmates and improper maintenance of records were found in *Swadhar Grehs*, functioning in test checked districts.

(Paragraph 8.3)