

### **3.5.3. Special Cells for Women and Children and Resource Centre for interventions on Violence against Women**

About

Two Field Action Projects led by Dr. Trupti Panchal are working at different levels of intervention to respond to the issue of Violence against women (VAW). **The Special Cells for Women and Children** works on ground with police systems, to facilitate multi-agency coordinated response to VAW and children, by placing professional social workers within Police offices in particular. **Resource Centre for Interventions on Violence Against Women** works with the state systems to develop mechanisms to respond to VAW in 15 States & U.T. of Delhi. Today there are 320 plus Police-based units providing psycho-social-legal services on regular basis through direct case intervention, available telephonic-cum-outreach helplines, providing training on VAW response for Governmental & non-Governmental interventionists, and carrying out interventions researches. Following are the updates with respect to both the projects.

Current Covid-19 Initiatives

#### **Covid Helpline: Malaa Bolaaycha Aahe (I Want to Speak)**

There is increased domestic violence due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the lock-down. Social workers and Coordinators of the Special Cells for Women are making efforts to reach as many survivors of violence as possible, and for this, our team at the VAW Cell working with and in the Commissionerate of WCD (Govt. of Maharashtra) Pune has created a helpline named **Malaa Bolaaycha Aahe**, through which district-level Protection officers, Police, and other crisis-interventionists and any women survivors in Maharashtra are connected by the TISS team (Coordinators & VAW Cell Programme Officers) to the relevant district/taluka-level Special Cells social workers.

In Maharashtra, the social workers of Special Cells for Women have also been involved in work with migrant relief camps, as per Govt. order dated 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 by Commissioner WCD, GoM.

We are also in communication with the office of the Chief Minister of Maharashtra, to address issue of VAW through directives to all State helplines to (a) continue to provide legally mandated response to all distress calls from women survivors of violence, while also connecting said callers to Special Cells social workers & coordinators, (b) for Police & District administrations to provide vehicular support to all crisis-interventionists, to assess, identify and provide information of/linkage with all VAW response services in particular to all women, as required. (c) to provide for basic protection equipment such as masks, sanitisers, gloves, soap & handwash facilities to all crisis-intervention units/personnel, and (d) to direct all community workers (SHG facilitators/animators, ANM, ASHA & Anganwadi workers, Relief Camp workers & distributors etc.) to assess, identify and provide information of/linkage with all VAW response services in particular to all women, as required.