

SOCIAL INITIATIVE

From shadows
to light:
How PCVC Transforms Lives



In the bustling, vibrant city of Chennai, amidst the humdrum of daily life and the rush of urban progress, lies a sanctuary of hope and transformation - the International Foundation for Crime Prevention and Victim Care (PCVC). This organisation, nestled quietly yet powerfully within the fabric of the city, offers a lifeline to women who have faced the darkest of times, guiding them toward a future filled with dignity, strength, and newfound joy.

PCVC was born from a place of deep empathy and urgent need. In 2001, Dr. Prasanna Gettu and her colleagues saw a glaring gap in the support system for victims of domestic violence in India. They witnessed women suffering in silence, trapped in cycles of abuse with nowhere to turn. Determined to change this heart-wrenching reality, they founded PCVC.

“PCVC started with the simple yet powerful mission of providing comprehensive support to victims of domestic violence,” recalls Dr. Gettu. “We wanted to create a sanctuary where women could find not just shelter, but also the emotional and legal support needed to rebuild their lives.”

PCVC operates several shelters across Chennai, offering safe havens for women and their children. These shelters are more than just physical structures; they are environments where healing begins. Upon entering a PCVC shelter, women are greeted by a team of empathetic staff and volunteers who provide immediate medical attention, counselling, and legal aid.

PCVC’s approach is holistic, offering a range of services to address the multifaceted needs of domestic violence survivors. PCVC operates a round-the-clock crisis helpline (1800 102 7282)/(044-43111143) and chat support at 9840888882, providing immediate support and intervention for women in distress. Temporary shelters are available for women and children

needing immediate safety. Assistance with medical check-ups, treatments, and referrals to hospitals for women who have suffered physical abuse, support in the form of filing police reports, obtaining restraining orders, and navigating the judicial system are rendered. Both individual and group counselling sessions are provided to help women and children process their trauma and rebuild their self-esteem.

Dr. Gettu explains, “We provide vocational training and job placement assistance to help women achieve financial independence. Skills such as tailoring, computer literacy, and small-scale entrepreneurship are taught to equip them with the tools they need to support themselves.”

PCVC has developed several specialised programs to address specific needs and challenges faced by domestic violence survivors.

Vidiyal: This program focuses on the rehabilitation of burn survivors. It provides medical support, psychological counselling, and vocational training to help women rebuild their lives after suffering severe burn injuries.

Smiles: Smiles offers psycho-social support and counselling services for survivors of domestic violence, helping them to overcome trauma and regain their emotional well-being.

Sharp: The Sexual Harassment Awareness Response Program (SHARP) is designed to educate and support individuals who have faced sexual harassment. It includes awareness campaigns, legal support, and counselling.

CLAPP: The Child Learning and Protection Program (CLAPP) aims to provide a safe and nurturing environment for children of women affected by domestic violence. It offers educational support, counselling,



and recreational activities to help children heal and thrive.

Youth Unite: This initiative engages young people in the fight against domestic violence and gender-based violence. It focuses on raising awareness, promoting gender equality, and empowering youth to become advocates for change in their communities.

Understanding the complexities of legal battles faced by many survivors, PCVC offers robust legal support. Their legal team assists women in filing police reports, obtaining restraining orders, and navigating the often-intimidating judicial system.

Additionally, PCVC conducts awareness campaigns and workshops to educate women about their rights and the legal recourse available to them.

“Legal support is crucial for these women,” emphasizes Dr. Gettu. “Many are unaware of their rights or are too scared

to seek help. Our team guides them through the process, providing not just legal assistance but also moral support, standing by them every step of the way.”

The psychological scars of domestic violence can be as debilitating as the physical ones. PCVC places a strong emphasis on mental health support, offering counselling services that help women and their children process their trauma and rebuild their self-esteem.

PCVC’s impact extends beyond the confines of its shelters. The organisation actively engages with the community through educational programs aimed at preventing domestic violence. They work with schools, colleges, and local communities to raise awareness about gender-based violence and promote gender equality.

“Changing societal attitudes is a long-term process,” says Dr. Gettu. “By educating the younger generation and the community at large, we hope to create a culture where



domestic violence is not tolerated, and everyone understands the importance of respect and equality.”

Dr. Gettu believes that addressing the root causes of domestic violence requires

a broader societal shift, particularly in how boys and men are raised. “We need to bring up our sons to respect women, to understand that violence and abuse are never acceptable,” she asserts. “Patriarchal conditioning must be challenged at every

level. Men must learn to break away from the traditional norms that perpetuate dominance and control. This change begins at home, with parents teaching their children about equality and respect. Schools and communities also play a crucial role in reinforcing these values.”

Dr. Gettu continues, “It’s not just about empowering women; it’s about transforming society. Men need to be allies in this fight against domestic violence. They need to stand up against abuse, support survivors, and contribute to creating a culture where everyone can live with dignity and without fear.”

Despite the noble work she and her team do, Dr. Gettu faces threats and intimidation from those who oppose their mission. Yet, she remains undeterred. “Threats and opposition are part of the journey,” she admits. “But the larger picture keeps us going. We see the positive impact on the lives of women and children, and that makes it all worthwhile. The safety and empowerment of these women are our ultimate goals, and no threat can overshadow that mission.”

The true measure of PCVC’s impact lies in the stories of the women they have helped. Each story is a testament to resilience and transformation, illustrating the profound change that is possible with the right support. “Our work is validated by the transformations we witness,” Dr. Gettu states. “Women who come to us broken and scared leave with a renewed sense of self and hope for the future. They become advocates for change in their communities, spreading the message that help is available and that it is possible to break free from the cycle of violence.”

The heart of PCVC beats through its dedicated staff, each individual committed to the cause of empowering survivors of domestic violence. Among them is Sajitha, who has dedicated the past decade of her

career to PCVC’s mission. Armed with a Master’s in Social Work, Sajitha plays a pivotal role within the client services team, overseeing various operational aspects of projects aimed at supporting women and children in need.

“Being part of PCVC has been not just a job but a calling,” Sajitha reflects with heartfelt sincerity. “Every day, I witness first-hand the impact of our work - the transformation in the lives of women and children who come to us seeking refuge and support. It’s incredibly fulfilling to contribute to their journey towards empowerment, to see them regain their confidence and take steps towards a brighter future.”

PCVC runs on regular donations from large-hearted individuals and organisations committed to bringing change. As PCVC continues to expand its reach and impact, the organisation has collaborated and partnered with various organisations/NGOs/law-enforcement authorities while remaining committed to its mission of supporting and empowering survivors of domestic violence. Their vision for the future includes establishing more shelters, expanding their economic empowerment programs, and strengthening community outreach initiatives.

The work of PCVC is a powerful reminder of the impact that dedicated individuals and organisations can have on the lives of those in need. By providing comprehensive support and fostering an environment of empowerment, PCVC is not just helping women escape the cycle of violence but is also enabling them to thrive and inspire others. In the heart of Chennai, PCVC stands as a symbol of hope, resilience, and the unwavering human spirit and it is for this that they are the shining Champions of Chennai.

By Meera Shivashankar