

## **Title of Practice**

Empowering Women with Self-Reliance in terms of Mobility

## **Objectives of Practice:**

- **To make women, particularly from rural areas, independent in commuting.**
- **To instill self-confidence in women by through skill enhancement.**
- **To open new avenues for women and enhance their employability.**
- **To change women's image from "a liability" to "an asset".**
- **To bring gender parity in the driving and transport sector**
- To help them overcome social and gender taboos, stereotypes, glass ceiling
- **To help women realize their inner potential.**

## **The Context:**

It has been observed that women, particularly those from the rural heartland, are not independent when it comes to mobility. They invariably depend upon the male members of their family to commute to and from a place. Not only rural women, even the majority of rural girls studying in various Higher Education Institutions do not know how to drive. In the absence of proper public or private transport, travelling to and from the institution is a great challenge. Given the fact that in a rural set-up, they have to carry the additional burden of the rhetoric of propriety while commuting to the institutions as the society would not approve of any 'laxity' of behaviour, the challenge at times, becomes insurmountable, forcing some of them to opt out of higher studies, thereby adversely affecting the Gross Enrolment Ratio. Furthermore, lack of this skill limits their prospects of employment. A decade ago, many of our students who participated in the campus placement drive in our own institution, could not be considered for placement in cities like Delhi and Gurugram due to this handicap. Realizing the need, the University entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with United Nations Development Programme in 2015 and through it, signed a Letter of Understanding (LoU) with Hero MotoCorp. in 2017.

## **The Practice:**

Working with the zeal of the missionaries towards women empowerment, Bhagat Phool Singh Mahila Vishwavidyalaya embarked upon a new journey in 2017 with the setting up of the **Saarthi: A two-wheeler riding training centre** by Hero

MotoCorp Limited (HMCL) at the BPSMV campus to train girls residing on the campus and nearby areas to increase their mobility and confidence.

In tune with the conditions of the LoU, BPSMV provides logistics and infrastructure support for activities and facilitates mobilization of suitable candidates for the training program. The necessary gear and equipment i.e. 10 scooters, one simulator and other safety training equipment along with professional trainers have been provided by Hero MotoCorp as a part of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Two lady trainers, appointed for imparting training to the shortlisted candidates, ensure that the trainees learn all the nitty-gritty of driving in a learner-friendly atmosphere with awareness and adherence to the traffic rules. The University also organizes sensitization workshops in and around the University through its various outreach programmes.

The trainees have to register themselves with the centre. **There are no registration charges. In fact, the entire training process involves no fee.** The timings have been kept flexible and trainee-friendly. The trainees can opt for training sessions not only during but beyond office hours as well. The trainers are so committed that they offer training even on Sundays/Holidays in case some of the trainees find it difficult to attend the training sessions on working days. As such, girls could be seen undertaking practice sessions at the earmarked place in early morning or late evening also. The number of trainees has also been kept to 10 in a batch so as to enable the trainers to pay proper attention to every trainee.

Another salient feature of the flagship training programme has been the procurement of Learner's License for the trainees on the campus itself. All women trainees registered with the driving centre are facilitated to get Learner's License free of cost.

### **Evidence of success:**

This initiative has brought about a revolution of sorts not only on the campus of the University but in its vicinity as well. The newly acquired confidence clearly exuberates in the faces of the girl students and women from the nearby areas. In the year 2017-18, 260 women, primarily from rural areas were trained, while in 2018-19, this number increased to 291. In the year 2019-20, the total number was 209 before the sudden outbreak of COVID-19. Thus, **during the Assessment period, a total number 760 women learnt to ride two-wheelers under the supervision of trained professionals** and became self-dependent not only for their own work but became an asset for the family as well as society. This shift in the approach of the family and society towards women i.e. from a liability to an asset has, in itself, been the hallmark of the success of the best practice which has given

these rural women new 'wings' to soar high in the sky of opportunities to attain self-respect and self-actualization.

**Problems encountered and resources required:**

Any new initiative is bound to meet challenges. For students on campus, no major challenge was encountered; however, in case of women from the nearby villages, the first challenge was to convince them and pull them out of their 'veil' of traditional mindset where the family would not support any such move for women as the field of driving and transport is not considered appropriate for women. Then, the outbreak of COVID-19 in March 2020 put everything to halt. Now things will take time to get back in place.