

## Higher Education is still a **DISTANT DREAM** for some girls in BPL families in Himachal *Action research by students of Social Work*

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Dept of Social Work, Central University of Jammu (CUJ) in collaboration with Dept. of Social Work Central University of Himachal Pradesh (CUHP) organised Rural Winter Camp from 13.02.18 to 16.02.2018, focussing on social stratification, power, gender, mobility and autonomy within the community.

The second semester students from both the universities along with their faculty members visited five different villages (i.e. Rait, 39mile, Manjgran, Shahpur and Chatri) in Shahpur Tehsil of Kangra District. The sharing of the findings took place on last Friday at CUHP, Dharamshala campus. The respective groups made presentation regarding their rural winter camp. The presentation was attended by students, faculty members and representatives from Educare (a civil society organization) and their interns from United States, England, Germany, Canada and Russia.

This Rural Winter Camp was concluded with the following findings:

- Society is stratified on the basis of caste and resource distribution.
- In some BPL households, certain essential entities like schools are accessible but 'higher education' is a distant dream for girls.
- Public Distribution System, Panchayats, Integrated Child Development Scheme and Health services are functioning well in the villages.
- 108 Ambulance service is very efficient and contributing significantly towards institutional delivery.
- Education and economic freedom enhances women's mobility and decision making capacity.
- Panchayats are playing significant role in women empowerment.
- Livelihood opportunities have enhanced women's autonomy and mobility to a significant level.
- There is stigma attached to menstruation which leads to various exclusionary practices.
- There is a wide gap between the roles of boys and girls based on gender which clearly portrays disparity among them.
- Society needs to be more accommodative and sensitive towards women, disabled and marginalized population groups.
- Groups came up with the finding that social stratification in terms of caste is still prevalent and strong in all the villages.



Camp Manager Dr. Ranvir Singh organized this camp under the able guidance of Head of the Department, Prof. Lokesh Verma and his colleagues Bhat Iqbal and Yangchan Dolma from Department of Social Work, Central University of Jammu. Ambreen Jamali and Shabab Ahmad faculty members at Department of Social Work, Central University of Himachal Pradesh coordinated the camp from their end.

The participants felt that such rural winter camps need to be organised very often through inter university collaboration.