

2-day workshop on Women Empowerment begins at KU

Experts call for grassroots engagement to address challenges, problems

Srinagar, Dec 1: A two-day workshop on empowerment of women through community participation began at the University of Kashmir on Tuesday.

Registrar Dr Nisar A Mir inaugurated the workshop, organised jointly by the State Resource Centre for Women (SRCW) and KU's Department of Social Works to impart counseling skills to the staff of Mahila Shakti Kendras (MSKs), a centrally-sponsored scheme for empowerment of rural women through community participation.

Asserting that women counselors could be enablers of great social transformation, Dr Mir said it was important to continuously evaluate whether the benefits envisaged in various women empowerment schemes reach the intended beneficiaries at grassroots.

"Women counselors can play a lead role in this regard and work in a mission-mode to let benefits of various schemes percolate amongst the real beneficiaries," he said, asserting that women counselors can also help remove misconceptions, if any, surrounding various schemes to enable people to avail them in a hassle-free manner.

"Unless people are not made aware of the benefits of various schemes, it would become difficult to achieve the desired results," Dr Mir said, assuring the university's all-out support to endeavours concerning women's empowerment and capacity-building.

Keynote speaker Prof Fozia S Qazi from Islamic University of Science and Technology said there was a pressing need to facilitate restoration of societal spaces that once existed for women to engage with each other and discuss their problems freely.

"Women counselors could be a means of enabling that engagement," she said.

Ms Shabnam Kamili, Mission Director SRCW, highlighted capacity-building programmes undertaken by the SRCW at community level. She also highlighted the objectives of MSKs.

"The MSK counselors/volunteers intend to create a secure environment for women to ensure their active participation in developmental processes," Kamili said.

Prof Mohammad Ayoub, Dean and Head, Faculty of Law at KU, said: "The community-level engagement with women should eventually empower them and lead to amicable settlement of their problems in times of disputes. Such engagement could be a viable alternate dispute redressal mechanism."

Dr Adil Bashir, Coordinator, Department of Social Works, KU, underlined objectives of the workshop, which shall broadly cover issues including stressors among women, psychological issues among women, legal frameworks and remedies, and sociological dimensions associated with women issues.

Dr Sarfaraz Ahmad delivered a vote of thanks, while Dr Javaid Bashir conducted proceedings of the inaugural session.

A study conducted by Dr Hina Basharat from Department of Law KU and sponsored by SRCW was also released on the occasion.