Good Practices in GENDER MAINSTREAMING

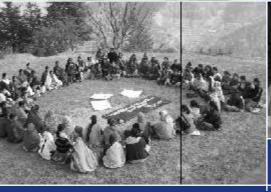














Case Studies from India







Good Practices in Gender Mainstreaming

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2008







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FOREWORD

Friends,

It gives me great pleasure to share with you the Resource Book on 'Good Practices in Gender Mainstreaming'. It was a very prestigious and ambitious project for WomenPowerConnect (WPC) as this is a first of its kind document in this area. The underlying theme of this joint project of Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and WPC, was to promote gender equality and demonstrate that gender mainstreaming can be effectively undertaken.

As you are all aware, WPC is a national level network organization with more than 700 women's groups and individuals as its members. With the active support of all the members, experts and friends in the government and outside, WPC is trying to formalize the process of legislative coordination and influence legislators and policy-makers to create and implement gender-friendly policies.

One of the important concerns that has always emerged from the consultations and interactions was the lack of information on various innovative initiatives that have been undertaken by States/civil society/women groups to address discrimination and gender inequalities. Taking a cue from this, it was decided to collate a series of good practices to facilitate experience sharing and mutual learning between different development practitioners and act as a catalyst for replicating and encouraging innovative and effective schemes in other parts of the country.

I am glad that the collection of Case Studies featured in the resource book not only highlight the replicable aspects of practical interventions but have also been able to capture the processes so that it becomes a tool for field actors who want to mainstream gender concerns in their programmes and policies. WPC has tried to focus mainly on those good practices that have emerged from a participatory process, involving a range of actors (civil society, private sector, Government, etc.); have significant scale and address discrimination and inequalities from the life cycle perspective.

Most certainly, this is not an exhaustive list of good work being done in the country and I am sure there are thousands of other examples; if the nominations we received are any indication. I would personally like to thank all the organizations that opened not only their doors but also their hearts to help our team get the essence of their work.

Lastly, I call upon all of you to use the resource book and replicate the good practices to create a gender-just society. I believe that your action will lead to an actual change that contributes to breaking new ground in non-traditional areas for women. That will also create a link between the `good practice' and some visible or measurable change in gender relations, gender balance, or women's options and opportunities.

WPC on its part will try to take the recommendations to concerned authorities for larger impact on the policy, legislation, the regulatory environment and resource allocation. This dissemination workshop is being organised to create an interface between different stakeholders to enable partnerships for faster action.

I would also take this opportunity to thank all my colleagues at WPC especially Dr N Hamsa, Executive Director, Ms Rashmi Verma, IAS, and Ms Kanta Singh for their commitment to complete this project.

Ranjana Kumari President, WPC

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WPC Governing Body members deserve many thanks for their guidance and support during the project. They not only gave their time, but also gave valuable inputs from time to time.

WPC wants to place on record the contribution of the Advisory Committee members, namely: Dr. Seeta Prabhu, Ms. Meenakshi Kathel, Dr. Suraj Kumar, and Ms. Ritu Mathur (UNDP); Dr. Ranjana Kumari (President, WPC); Dr. Mridul Eapen (Kerala Development Board); Prof. Malashri Lal (Joint Director, Delhi University); Prof. Vibhuti Patel (Vice-President, WPC); Mr. Subodh Wagle (Director, Prayas); Ms. Manjula Krishnan (Economic Advisor, Ministry of Women and Child Development) and Ms. Hasina Kharbih (Director, Impulse NGO Network).

We would also like to thank Ms. Gouri Chowdhary, Ms. Soma K. Parthasarthy, Ms. Asha Ramesh, Ms. Poonam Kathuria and Ms. Shilpa Vasavada for visiting the organizations selected, collecting the information and writing the case studies. But for their contribution, we would not have been able to put this document together. The organizations whose projects/schemes have been selected for inclusion in this report need to be thanked for extending their complete support to the case study writers' during their field visits. Ms. Amrita Patel is to be thanked for her participation and constructive suggestions during the case study writers' workshop held in August 2007. Ms. Archana Dwivedi provided valuable inputs in terms of fine-tuning the first draft.

We are particularly grateful to Ms. Nandini Oberoi for editing and giving the document a final shape within a short period.

Though the entire staff of WPC worked on this project, the study team consisted of Ms. Rashmi Verma, IAS (former Hon. Executive Director, WPC), Ms. Kanta Singh, Senior Programme Officer, Ms. Benu Verma and Ms Parikrama Gupta (Researchers).

WPC takes the responsibility for any shortcomings and limitations in the document.

N Hamsa

Executive Director, WPC

GLOSSARY

Apni Adalat – Our court or peoples' court

Adivasi – Refers to the indigenous people of India, especially in central India, many of

whom are now classified as Scheduled Tribes

Adivasi Kalakar Tukdi – Tribal Artists Group

Anganwadi – An anganwadi is part of the Government of India's Integrated Child

Development Scheme (ICDS), wherein facilities (including nutrition) for

women (in the 15-44 year age group) and children are provided

Agewans – Initiative-takers, a term used to denote responsibility rather than power, as

a leadership trait.

Anudeshika – Instructor

Be tem na rotla – Two square meals a day

Crore – 10 million/ 100 lakhs/ 10,000,000

Dai – Mid-wife

Dalit – Dalit means oppressed or broken. The word was used in the 1930s as a Hindi

and Marathi translation of 'depressed classes', a term the British used for what are now called the Scheduled Castes, because they are listed in the

Fifth Schedule of the Constitution of India.

Devadasi – A tradition common in parts of South India whereby parents 'marry' or

dedicate their daughters to a deity or a temple

Dhani – Cluster of villages

Dharna – A sit-down strike; a means of non-violent protest

Faliya – Hamlet

Gram Sabha – Smallest unit of the decentralized, democratic governance mechanism of

the Panchayati Raj system

- One of the Scheduled Tribes of southern India, the Irulas live by catching

rats and fish

Jaati Panchayats – Informal social forums that deal with cases of conflict between people or

 $families\,residing\,within\,the\,juris diction\,of\,the\,designated\,Jaati\,Panchayat.$

Jhanpa khuli gayaa – the flood gates have opened

Karyakartas – Field workers, functionaries

Kishori sangha – Youth group **Lakh** – 100,000

Lok Adhikar Kendra – Centre for People's Rights

Mahila Mandal – Women's coalition at the village level

Mahasangha – Women's representative forum

Mehndi – Colour produced by crushed Henna leaves, which is often applied on the

palms of married women in India, on festivals and weddings

Mahiti Kendras – Community resource centre for gender justice

Nyaya Samiti – Justice committee
Padyatra – Journey by foot

Panchayati Raj – System of local governance with district, block and village as its three tiers

Penkal veettin kankal – Women are the eyes of the home

Roji Roti Lokjumbesh People's Campaign for Right to Food and Work

Sabha – Assembly

Sabla sangh – Grassroot forum

Sahyogini – Some one who helps/assists

Sangathan – Collective/association

Sangha – Women's solidarity group

Sansthan – Organization

Sarpanch – Village Council head

Sati – Refers to the practice of the burning of wives on the funeral pyres of their

husbands, banned in India, in 1829

Satta – The practice of girls of one family becoming the daughter in law of the

other and vice versa (for example the bride's brother has to marry the groom's sister or vice versa), a custom followed in some parts of India

Taluka/tehsil – Administrative and geographical block comprising several villages or

village clusters, headed by a Talukdar or Tehsildar

Tola – Old Indian unit of weight (1 tola is equal to approximately 11.66 grams)

Ujjas Patrika – Newspaper that brings light

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ANANDI – Area Networking and Development Initiatives (NGO)

ASAA – Anna Suraksha Adhikaar Abhiyaan

ANM – Auxiliary Nurse and Midwife

ATSEC – Action Against Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Children

AWSA – Association of Strong Women Alone

BGVS – Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti

BIRDS – Belgaum Integrated Rural Development Society

BMC – Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation

BPL – Below Poverty Line

BSF – Border Security Force

BSY – Balika Samridhi Yojana

CACT – Campaign Against Child Trafficking

CAP – Common Action Plan

CAPART – Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology

CAW – Crimes Against Women

CBO – Community-Based Organization
CDS – Church Development Services

CENCORED - Centre for Communication Resources Development

CEDAW – Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women

CEHAT – Centre for Enquiry into Health and Allied Themes

CLP – Computer Literacy Programme

CIDA – Canadian International Development Agency

CLP – Computer Literacy Programme

CPC – Criminal Penal Code

CRC – Convention on the Rights of the Child

CSO – Civil Society Organization
CWC – Child Welfare Committee

DCA – Diploma in Computer Applications

DMS – Devgadh Mahila Sangathan

DPEP – District Primary Education ProgrammeDSP – Decentralizing Support Programmes

DV – Domestic Violence

DWC – Delhi Women's Commission

ECCE – Early Childhood Care and Education

EDP – Economic Development Programme

ENSS – Ekal Naari Shakti Sangathan

EWR – Elected Woman Representative

FGD – Focus Group Discussion
FIR – First Information Report

FSW – Female Sex Worker

FWPR – Female Work Participation Rate

GBV – Gender Based Violence

GDI – Gender related Development Index

GM – Gender Mainstreaming
GOI – Government of India

GP – Good Practice

GR – Government Resolution

HARC – Himalayan Action Research Centre

HDI – Human Development Index

HSS – Hadoti Shilp Sansthan

HIVOS - Humanistisch Instituut Voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking (Humanist Institute for

Cooperation with Developing Countries)

ICDS – Integrated Child Development Services

ICHAP – India-Canada Collaborative HIV/AIDS Project

 ${\sf ICTC} \qquad - \qquad {\sf Integrated Counselling and Testing Centre}$

IEC – Information, Education and Communication

IMR – Infant Mortality Rate
 INGON – Impulse NGO Network
 IPC – Indian Penal Code

IPS – Indian Penai Code

IPS – Indian Police Service

KGSV – Kasturba Gandhi Swatantrata Vidyalaya

KHPT – Karnataka Health Promotion Trust

KILA – Kerala Institute of Local Administration

KMVS – Kutch Mahila Vikas Sangathan

KSY – Kishori Shakti Yojana LAK – Lok Adhikar Kendra LSG – Local Self Government

LSGI – Local Self-Government Institution

LSVS – Lok Shakti Vikas Sansthan

MALAR – Mahalir Association for Literacy Awareness and Rights

MCRIL – Micro Credit Ratings International Limited

MDG – Millennium Development Goal

MHA – Ministry of Home Affairs

MIS – Management Information System

MLA – Member of Legislative Assembly

Wernber of Legislative Assembly

MMR – Maternal Mortality Ratio

MOU – Memorandum of Understanding

MS – Mahila Samakhya

MSK – Mahila Shiksha Kendras

MTP – Medical Termination of Pregnancy
 NACO – National AIDS Control Organization
 NACP – National AIDS Control Programme

NAWO – National Alliance of Women's Organizations

NCW – National Commission for Women
 NFHS – National Family Health Survey
 NGO – Non-Governmental Organization
 NHRC – National Human Rights Commission

NREGA – National Rural Employment Guarantee Act

NRHM – National Rural Health Mission

NMDFC – National Minorities Development and Finance Corporation
 NPEGEL – National Programme for Education of Girls to Elementary Level

NREGS – National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme

OPD – Out-Patient Department
OBC – Other Backward Castes

OVC – Orphans and Vulnerable Children

PCPNDT – Pre-conception and Pre-natal Diagnostic Techniques

PDS – Public Distribution System

PFA – Proposals for Action
PHC – Primary Health Centre

PLWHA – Person/People Living With HIV/AIDS

PPTCT – Prevention of Parent-to-Child Transmission

PRA – Participatory Rural Appraisal
PRI – Panchayati Raj Institutions

PRIA – Society for Participatory Research in Asia
PWDS – Palmyrel Workers Development Society

PWDVA – Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act

RCIC – Rape Crisis Intervention Centre

RBC – Residential Bridge Course

RTI – ReproductiveTractInfection

RMK – Rashtriya Mahila Kosh

RWA – Residents' Welfare Association

SACS – State AIDS Control Society

SC/ST – Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes

SDC – Swiss Development Corporation

SEWA – Self-Employed Women's Association

SIDBI – Small Industries Development Bank of India

SHG – Self-Help Group

SIDA – Swedish International Development Agency

SGSY – Swaranjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana

SK-VAW – Saurashtra Kachchh group on Violence against Women

SSA – Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan

STI – Sexually Transmitted Infection

STQC – Standarization Testing and Quality Certification Directorate

SWATI – Society for Women's Action and Training Institute

TNSF – Tamil Nadu Science Forum

TNTRC – Tamil Nadu Tsunami Resource Centre

UEE – Universalization of Elementary Education

UNDP – United Nations Development Programme

UNFPA – United Nations Population Fund

UNICEF – United Nations Children's Fund

UNIFEM – United Nations Development Fund for Women

UNODC – United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

URDSS – Ujwala Rural Development Service Society

 ${\sf USAID} \qquad - \qquad {\sf United\,States\,Agency\,for\,International\,Development}$

VAW – Violence Against Women

VCTC – Voluntary Counselling and Testing Centre

VHC – Village Health Committee

AN INTRODUCTION TO GENDER MAINSTREAMING

"If decision making processes in political organizations are likened to weaving a braid, then historically, the braid has been woven with the strands of rationality, feasibility and cost. If the potential effects on women are considered at all, it is only at the end of the process. In other words, a little bow is tied to the end of the braid when it is completed. In gender mainstreaming, on the other hand, gender relations is one of the strands in the braid, intertwined with the others and influencing decisions right from the beginning."

Barbara Steigler

Gender powers policy: ten questions and answers on the concept of gender mainstreaming¹

Gender mainstreaming entails an examination of actions taken and effected at the policy level and an assessment of how they impact on the lives of both men and women. It rejects the idea that women's concerns belong to one department of the government, as the rest of the policy environment then continues to remain uninformed about the needs and issues affecting women. Gender mainstreaming requires policymakers and enforcers to confront the effects of every decision they take at the macro level and take stock of whether it has positive, negative or negligible consequences for women. The policy environment is made more aware of the gender dimension and allows policies to effect changes at the grassroots level and eliminate policy decisions or forms that ignore the gender component. In addition, steps are taken to ensure coordination between the different areas of policy formulation. This entails informing all sectors about a uniform gender perspective, which results in a more coherent outcome, making both comprehension and application easier.

The United Nations lays down certain important prerequisites or facilitating conditions that are necessary for gender mainstreaming in a country. These are: sound political will, specific gender equality policy, statistics (gender-disaggregated data), comprehensive knowledge of gender relations, knowledge of the administration, necessary funds and human resources, female participation in political and public life and in decision-making processes.

It also follows some core principles for mainstreaming a gender perspective within its systems².

- 1. 'Issues across all areas of activity should be defined in such a manner that gender differences can be diagnosed; i.e. an assumption of gender neutrality should not be made.
- 2. The responsibility for translating gender mainstreaming into practice is system-wide and lies at the highest levels. Accountability for outcomes needs to be monitored constantly.
- 3. Gender mainstreaming requires that every effort be made to broaden women's participation at all levels of decision-making.
- 4. Gender mainstreaming must be institutionalized through concrete steps, mechanisms and processes in all parts of the UN system.
- 5. Gender mainstreaming does not replace the need for targeted, women-specific policies and programmes or positive legislation, nor does it substitute for gender units or focal points.
- 6. Clear political will and the allocation of adequate and, if need be, additional human and financial resources for gender mainstreaming from all available funding sources are important for the successful translation of the concept into practice'.

^{&#}x27;Steigler, B., Steigler, B., Gender powers policy: ten questions and answers on the concept of gender mainstreaming, Bonn: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2004.

²See http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/followup/main.html

Gender mainstreaming is, therefore, much more than the promotion of equal opportunities at individual levels. Instead, it is an instrument for the creation of general conditions and structures that are conducive to achieving the objectives of gender equality.

OBJECTIVE OF THIS DOCUMENTATION

This exercise was jointly conceived by the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) of the Government of India and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The basic objective of this documentation was to demonstrate that several commendable initiatives towards gender equity and mainstreaming have been effectively undertaken in India. The document seeks to share information on an ongoing basis, both within government mechanisms and with external audiences. It aims to create an online database of good practices on gender equity, participation and mainstreaming initiatives.

GOOD PRACTICES IN GENDER EQUITY AND MAINSTREAMING

At an operational level, gender mainstreaming essentially involves the 'assessment of any planned policy, action or practice for its implications for men and women separately and making the concerns and experiences of men and women (separately) an integral dimension of the design, implementation and evaluation of policies and programmes' (adapted from ECOSOC Agreed Conclusions, 1997/2).

A successful project often has one specific feature that is not only innovative but also has a considerable impact on the scheme's outcome. This feature, henceforth called as a 'good practice' (GP) is simply a process or a methodology that represents the most effective way of achieving a specific objective. For the purposes of this study, good practices can fall into the 12 critical areas of concern as outlined in the Beijing Platform for Action. The critical areas of concern as adopted at Beijing are; women and poverty, education and training of women, women and health, violence against women, women in disaster management, women and the economy, women in power and decision making, institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women, human rights of women, women and the media, women and the environment and the girl child.

The good practices could also be in gender mainstreaming, including training and capacity building, institutional and policy commitments and resource allocation. These good practices should emerge from a participatory process, have significant scale or reach, address discrimination and inequalities and demonstrate government commitment to further action and resources.

This report seeks to analyse and document these good practices, along with the core principles upon which they are based. The lessons learnt are presented as guidelines for practitioners.

THE PROCESS

The project began with an in-depth subject study and intensive literature survey, from which the conceptual framework for selecting good practices for the project evolved.

The criteria used in selecting good practices were:

- Ability to bring about some visible or measurable change in gender relations, gender balance or in women's options and opportunities;
- Impact on policy environment by creating a more conducive or enabling environment for gender equality. This could include impact on legislation, institutions, the regulatory environment, resource allocation, gender balance or the choices and paths open to women;
- Capacity to demonstrate an innovative and replicable approach. The selected good practice should indicate what is new or unique about the initiative, either its product or process and demonstrate that the initiative can be replicated in other countries and contexts;

- The degree of sustainability of the good practice is important. The commitment of mainstream and
 institutional sponsors/participants in the initiative (whether government, academic, UN, NGO, etc.) is
 integral to the existence of a good practice; and
- Innovation in approach, through which the performance and outcomes stand out when compared to other similar projects.

Based on the above conceptual framework, some primary research questions were formulated which were to be posed for each study:

- 1. What is the 'good practice'?
- 2. Why does it qualify to be accepted as a good practice (i.e. information regarding its innovative features and contribution to the outcome)?
- 3. What are the basic principles underlying the good practice at the sectoral, thematic and generic levels for development initiatives?
- 4. What is the conventional method for managing such a project? Why does it make more sense to mainstream gender in the project/scheme?
- 5. How does the project or scheme work to ensure gender equity/gender mainstreaming?
- 6. How is this project/scheme different from other developmental programmes?
- 7. How does it contribute to better performance?
- 8. What are the factors that enabled/inhibited the design and practice of the good practice (such as design, staff, laws, policy, socio-cultural factors, etc.)?
- 9. In terms of reducing gender inequality in the region/sector, how has the good practice contributed in making the project/scheme a success?
- 10. What are the lessons learnt for potential efforts to replicate the good practice or the underlying principle?

COLLECTION OF CASE STUDIES

The collection of the case studies from various parts of the country was an elaborate and long process. The team began by contacting NGOs, government officials, academics and other resource persons. An exhaustive list of institutions working on gender issues in all states of the country was compiled and approximately 3,000 letters were sent out by e-mail and post. Often, a lead from one resource person/organization about a commendable practice being carried out by another organization or under another project was received; which was then followed up. There was an encouraging response from all quarters and respondents were then sent the prepared format to ascertain more details.

Due to the wide variety of responses received from different groups and organizations in the country, the project team was exposed to different interpretations of the concept of 'gender mainstreaming'. While some were research initiatives on the subject itself with a particular organization in mind, many of the responses consisted of women's empowerment programmes that understood gender mainstreaming as attempts towards greater participation and gender equity. The role of men in women's development initiatives was largely underplayed (i.e. talking gender meant talking about women only). The conceptual framework that was sent out gave a detailed explanation as to what is meant by gender mainstreaming; however, the responses seemed to be largely in line with the 12 specified critical areas of concern mentioned earlier.

Based on the conceptual framework, case studies with the following indicators were short-listed:

- Quantifiable increase in female participation in decision-making processes;
- · Enhancement in the number of women beneficiaries;
- Any new pro-women legislation passed;

- New institutions set up for the benefit of women;
- Increase in budgetary allocation for women-specific/pro-women schemes;
- New schemes introduced for women;
- Uniqueness of the initiative;
- Continued support of resources for sustaining the initiative; and
- Institutionalization of the initiative in terms of methods and processes that make it potentially replicable.

Once the studies were short-listed, the team contacted the concerned organizations for a validation visit. When these visits were made, team members spoke with the chief functionaries, project staff and the beneficiaries to seek answers to the different questionnaires prepared for these three categories. The information collected was then forwarded to the respective case study writers, who then took the process further by fleshing out the most important aspects of the projects.

DEFINING GENDER MAINSTREAMING, SUSTAINABILITY AND ASSESSING IMPACT

Individuals with gender expertise and a strong research background were selected to write the case studies. A workshop was organized for the case study writers to discuss the methodology for the collection of relevant information and the presentation of the case study reports.

At this workshop, an attempt was also made to define the concept of gender mainstreaming. Gender mainstreaming was defined as:

'Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres, so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The aim is to facilitate processes that challenge existing gender power relations. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality¹³.

In addition, the sustainability aspect and the quantifiable increase criteria, which were both part of the selection procedure, were emphasized.

It was also felt that sustainability should be looked at in terms other than that of financial sustainability, alone. The project should be sustainable in terms of being able to create a space for negotiations, enable women to ask questions and bring about change, thus facilitating a continuity of the effort. Hence, sustainability shall not only mean a financial back up or support for the project but also a paradigm shift, which promises to enable continuity of the effort itself and more efforts in similar directions. The issue of the initiative's sustainability at present was also proposed as a parameter in documenting the 'good practice'.

The quantifiable impact of the initiative was another aspect that was probed. It was decided that the case studies should also be considered in their independent contexts and thus the impact would be measured with reference to factors particular to that region. While a quantifiable increase in the number of women beneficiaries remained an important indicator, the regional context and environmental factors (which could affect implementation directly or indirectly) would also be taken into account. It was imperative to note the factors that acted as catalysts or obstacles. Thus, it was decided that case study writers could suggest good practices, after discussions with the people who work with gender issues at the regional level, so as to do justice to the cases selected.

-

³ Ibid

Given the current crisis in the country with regard to the girl child, manifested in the adverse sex ratio (933 women for every 1,000 men) and the child sex ratio (927 girls for every 1,000 boys), it was felt that a special section should be devoted to attempts that try to restore the fundamental balance between the sexes. The projects that form part of this initiative are HAQ and MV Foundation. A discussion of the changing face of women in Indian film, as depicted in the film, Chak De! India, is also part of this collage. While these initiatives do not conform strictly with the criteria laid down for consideration as per the project guidelines, it was agreed that these efforts towards affirmative action for the girl child should be recorded, thus affording this document a wider range and scope.

The thematic parameters considered for the collage documentation were:

- The theme is cutting across sectors;
- The initiatives are short-term;
- The initiatives are situational; and
- The initiatives cut across class and caste divides.

GOOD PRACTICES - A BRIEF LOOK

As indicated above, this report documents some of the good practices adopted by different organizations in their attempts towards gender equity and mainstreaming in India. The organizations chosen here belong to different parts of the country. They share certain common objectives – of empowering women, helping them demand their rights, making them agents of change and sensitizing communities to the importance of gender in all social, political or economic initiatives.

Each case study first details the background and explains the need for the establishment of such a project or organization. Some information is provided about the evolution of the organization or programme, the specific 'good practice' is highlighted and the innovative methods or strategies are then explained. The replicability of the schemes is examined, following which, challenges and limitations are discussed and the lessons learnt from the exercise are detailed.

The case studies are broadly classified under some general gender themes, which are critical for interventions that help to promote gender equality and the restructuring of gender power relations. The themes sometimes overlap and most initiatives have a multi-dimensional impact on changing the gender balance, which is to be expected.

BREAKING PATRIARCHY AND FIGHTING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Dilaasa, a crisis centre in Mumbai, is a joint venture between an NGO and the public healthcare system that addresses the issue of domestic violence from the secure space of a public hospital. Dilaasa's main aim is to sensitize the public health system to the domestic violence that occurs behind closed doors and to demonstrate how this violence is linked to women's general health. Through trainings and capacity-building exercises, the centre attempts to bring about attitudinal changes among those in the healthcare system, so that they can provide those affected by domestic violence with the medical, psychological and legal assistance that they need. Since the healthcare system is the first point of access for many of those affected by violence, Dilaasa offers counselling services to women who have experienced abuse. It serves as an alternative safe space, where abused women can come to recover and discuss the future course of action. The centre also links up with other rehabilitation and support services to raise awareness about their services and the need for women to come forward to access assistance.

The Saurashtra Kachchh group on Violence against Women (SK-VAW) in Gujarat challenges the deep-rooted patriarchal and traditional society that accepts violence against women (VAW) in the home and relegates women to being secondary members of the community. Initiated by SWATI, an NGO that works on issues of women's rights and empowerment, the SK-VAW aims at building leadership skills and capacities among women enabling and empowering them to combat VAW in their own lives. SK-VAW's activities include advocacy and raising awareness about the Protection of Women against Domestic Violence Act. Today SK-VAW has a membership of over 25,000 women, spread over five districts. These women are based in large-scale collectives. There is a commonly constituted agenda for all, with partnership formations at four distinct levels (grassroots-level governance bodies; other networks, research and capacity-building institutes; the 'Men-Engage' coalition; and policy makers and implementing agencies). The women's collectives (federations) are the foundation of the mahila nyaya samitis (women's justice committees), which have gained credibility by involving men in their efforts to stop VAW and in their functions as alternative justice forums. The activities of the mahila nyaya samiti demonstrate how the women's collective has broken through institutionalized power structures and created alternative forums to bring justice to its members.

The social and economic isolation faced by widows in India led to the formation of the **Ekal Nari Shakti Sangathan (ENSS)**. The collective holds out hope for widows and other single women in the conventional and highly patriarchal state of Rajasthan. The ENSS initiative has challenged traditional patriarchal mores and rituals and helped organize women, who have been abandoned or rejected by their families and by society, enabling them to improve their quality of life. It has been only eight years since it was set up but the organization has more than 26,000 single women (including widows) members, from both rural and urban areas, in 26 districts of Rajasthan. ENSS aims at reaching as many single women as possible, dealing with social issues at the community level (family, panchayats, etc.) and taking up issues of entitlement directly with the administration. The organization believes in 'collective power' and believes that if people get together and organize themselves they can bring change and influence policies and even social customs. ENSS is thus focused on helping single women (mainly widows) to reclaim their rights as individuals and as members of the community they belong to.

A Delhi Police initiative, **Parivartan** came into being in 2005 and its mandate was to check the rising incidence of rape and sexual assault against women in the city. It was launched in northwest Delhi and essentially operates at two levels: first changing the mind-set of the community towards VAW and second changing the attitude of the police force itself. The programme interacted closely with social scientists, gender specialists from UN agencies, lawyers, psychologists and police officers in the field. At the organizational level, Delhi Police took the innovative step of introducing women police constables (WPCs) in the areas covered. The WPCs were empowered to monitor large populations, a job previously assigned only to their male counterparts. Police personnel were given gender sensitivity training to improve their understanding about VAW and women's safety. At the community level, Parivartan has attempted to change the mindsets of people, which are rooted in the patriarchal ideology. This is done through awareness-raising activities and street plays dealing with gender issues. All this has meant that the police system in these areas has become much more sensitive and responsive to the grievances brought to them by women. The behaviour of the community towards women has also shown some improvement

LITERACY AND EMPOWERMENT

The **Mahalir Association for Literacy Awareness and Rights (MALAR)** is based in the Kanniyakumari district of Tamil Nadu and demonstrates the transformation of an organization, from one that deals solely with literacy delivery to one that encourages economic self-reliance and autonomy for women. The MALAR federation works on the principles of democracy, transparency and accountability and believes in

equipping women with the financial and social tools they need to take care of themselves, independent of their families. Using a system of collective savings (based on a small membership fee), MALAR gives loans to group members in times of need, thus preventing the members from being exploited by local money lenders or being forced to approach the men in their households. It also links with financial institutions to help Self-Help Groups (SHGs) access loan facilities for their economic ventures. At the same time, the initiative has not abandoned its literacy activities, which continue to grow. MALAR addresses other social issues that affect women as well, such as domestic violence, dowry and alcoholism.

Mahila Samakhya (MS) is the largest state-sponsored women's education programme in the country. In Uttarakhand, it has impacted upon women's lives and taught them how important it is for them to define the change and work for it, both in their own lives and in their communities. The educational strategy is aimed at challenging gendered power relations and seeking institutional responses to the issues of gender inequality and the secondary status of women. Through its emphasis on education and empowerment, the MS programme has assisted the establishment of alternative legal forums (Apni Adalats) that provide gender-sensitive justice. Women are given intensive training and regularly receive inputs on legal provisions and frameworks required to try cases related to crimes against women. They also explore leadership roles within the panchayat structure. The MS programme has a health component as well, which aims at educating women and eliminating local superstitions about female health, urging local communities to recognize how integral women's health is to social development.

ANANDI seeks to bring about a change in the status of women and thus enhance justice and people's entitlements. Their strategy relies on education and awareness as significant factors in the process of capacity development. Over the past few years, ANANDI has enabled the emergence of tribal women's federations that have played an increasingly important role in the struggle to claim rights for poor and marginalized populations. ANANDI encourages alliance-building and grassroots mobilization for women and enhances their ability to intervene in complex political processes. The process adopted by ANANDI facilitated the formation of an autonomous women's organization, Devgadh Mahila Sangathan (DMS) in the Panchmahaals area of Gujarat. DMS works with tribal women, helping to empower them and assists them in developing livelihoods opportunities for themselves and for their communities. Apart from strategies that provide information and encourage collective strength in demanding basic entitlements, ANANDI has sought to initiate alternative action in the form of ensuring entitlements from the public distribution system, forming Seed and Grain Banks, releasing mortgaged lands, providing training in agriculture and horticulture and engaged in campaigns such as the Right to Food and the Right to the Forests, etc.

PROTECTION FROM TRAFFICKING

The **Impulse NGO Network (INGON)** in Shillong, Meghalaya, has been working to rescue and protect young girls, who are trafficked from the North-East, lured away from their homes by false promises of well-paying jobs or fame, since 2000. The girls end up in sex trafficking rings in large cities such as Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and Bangalore and usually have no hope of escaping from such captive situations. INGON uses a unique strategy now known as the 'Meghalaya Model', in its rescue, rehabilitation and repatriation operations. Rescue operations include networking with other organizations and the media to spread the word; rehabilitation efforts incorporate counselling and providing skills-training to rescued girls and repatriation is aimed at reuniting the trafficked girls with their families, if possible. While the police usually concentrates its efforts on rescue activities and often arrests the very women and children who are 'traffiked', INGON's 'Meghalaya Model' urges the government and legal systems to bring the traffickers to justice.

USING THE RADIO TO REACH OUT AND EMPOWER

The **Kutch Mahila Vikas Sangathan (KMVS)** is a rural women's organization located in the Kutch region of Gujarat that works for the political and economic development of women. Their work is especially important in the light of the rigid patriarchal mindset of the people in this drought-stricken region. The organization started its work on the premise that the empowerment of women was possible through the successful interplay of four components: collective awareness building; capacity-building and skills development; participation and decision-making power and actions to bring about gender equality. As a response to the concern often raised by women regarding the lack of information and limited communication, KMVS began to use the radio to broaden its outreach. Currently, KMVS has more than 12,000 rural women members, spread across 165 villages. Today, the radio serves as a distance learning tool and helps to raise awareness on issues of gender and good governance. The network uses local symbols, examples rooted in the cultural context of the region and the local language (Kutchi) so that the villagers can identify with it. This makes the KSN radio programmes extremely popular and an excellent vehicle to reach the target audience.

ENSURING RELIEF AND REHABILITATION

In the post tsunami period, **Ekta**, an NGO based in Madhurai (Tamil Nadu) began to work in the Cuddalore district of Tamil Nadu, an area which was one of those worst hit by the tsunami but one where very few other NGO's were working. Ekta focused on the special needs of women, advocating gender-sensitive disaster relief policies It continued its activities even when other organizations moved out, providing comprehensive packages to orphaned girls or to girls with single parents, encouraging them to pursue their education and assisting them in accessing adequate healthcare and life-skills training. The components identified for the Ekta intervention were educational assistance for girls affected by the tsunami, shelters/homes, legal aid and medical camps. Ekta took up the challenge of making the community realize the importance of providing these facilities to girl-children, ensuring at the same time that that they can live in a safe environment. The organization also enabled 'single' women (women whose husbands/brothers/sons had died in the tsunami) to become more aware of their own rights and equipped them to demand these rights and establish their place within the community.

HIV AND AIDS

The **Karnataka Health Promotion Trust (KHPT)** identified Bagalkote district in the northern part of the state as a prime candidate for the Samastha project – an integrated HIV and AIDS prevention and care programme – operating in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. The incidence of HIV/AIDS in this area is high because of the Devadasi tradition that makes both young girls and women very vulnerable to the disease. Through a dedicated group of supervisors and link workers, KHPT followed an integrated approach that included all programme elements (information, education and communication [IEC], the management of sexually transmitted infections [STI] and condom promotion, preventive measures, voluntary counselling and testing) and has covered approximately 600,000 people. Sex workers were involved in raising awareness about HIV/AIDS, thus empowering these women to be part of the greater change. In addition, special attention was paid to orphans and other children vulnerable to the disease.

CAPACITY BUILDING FOR LOCAL GOVERNANCE

Created in 1996, **Sakhi** works to enable women in Kerala claim their rights in the state's development scenario. The objective of the organization was to create a training framework for the Women's Component Plan (WCP); build up a pool of state-level trainers well-versed in gender and development issues; prepare a comprehensive manual on WCP, gender planning, budgeting and auditing; and identify

project ideas that could be adapted, at a later date, into the plan formulations of local self governments and the WCP. Sakhi works with local panchayats to help elected women representatives and the community become aware of the importance of the decentralized governance system. The organization's interventions with the panchayats and its capacity-building programmes with over 60 Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) has encouraged local samitis to address issues related to VAW and developed a grassroots-level movement of gender trainers, who impart their learning to other women in the villages.

GENDER IN THE WORKPLACE

The **Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA)** works to mainstream gender concerns within the work place, in order to create and promote a gender-friendly environment in the organization. This role is played by the Committee for Gender Awareness and Mainstreaming in PRIA (CGAMP), which was established in 1998. CGAMP builds staff capacities on gender issues, advocates for relevant policies to be adopted within the organization and deals with sexual harassment issues. Besides sexual harassment concerns, CGAMP also makes provisions for employees who have become just parents (options to work part-time, rest for pregnant women, paternity leave, child support, etc.). CGAMP's success is largely due to an appreciation of women's dual roles (at home and at the workplace) at the higher levels of the organization and the commitment of the organization's leadership, the strong gender-related capacity-building efforts that have been undertaken for all the staff. PRIA has also conducted workshops and interactions for a number of other organizations to sensitize them to this issue and to help them create more engendered workplaces.

THE GIRL CHILD

The low sex ratio in India (933 females per 1,000 males as per the Census of India, 2001) is a serious cause for concern. The child sex ratio (0-6 years) is even more distressing, it has fallen from 945 girls per 1,000 boys (1991) to 927 girls per 1,000 boys (2001). In the light of this fact and the current crisis – like situation with regard to gender demography, a separate section details some successful initiatives with regard to the girl child. Organizations that provide critical support to the girl child have been selected for inclusion in this collage of initiatives. These are:

- **HAQ** a Delhi based NGO that works for the rights of children, particularly girl children, who come in contact with the law or are engaged in legal cases.
- The **MV Foundation** in Andhra Pradesh, has done exemplary work in combating the malaise of child labour and bringing children to the schoolroom. In this context, it has revitalised the existing school system, created residential schools and rescued a number of working-children (including girls), from highly exploitative and inhuman working conditions.
- The film **Chak De! India** also finds mention in this section, because in this film, the issue of inequity between the sexes has been squarely addressed. The girls that make up India's hockey team in the film, represent modern India, where girls can stand up for themselves and be in control. The film breaks the stereo-typed images that Bollywood films have promoted so far. The personalities of the girls in the team display traits such as strength of character and purpose, focus and ambition, jealousy and individualism, team spirit and commitment; making them real people that the audience can identify with. Their personal lives and rivalries, their motives and fears are etched out and the film brings to life new heroes, who live their lives on their own terms and do their country proud, nonetheless.

CONCLUSION

As described, the primary task of this study was to document good practices employed in bringing about gender equity and mainstreaming in India. The study team selected these practices from a broad spectrum of over a 100 commendable case studies. The list spanned an array of issues, ranging from education to livelihoods, violence to health and civil society to government-run programmes. The common thread that binds these diverse initiatives together is that each sample practice has attained a high level of achievement and excellence in more than one area of its functioning.

The efforts in each case study demonstrate that even though, in aggregate terms, the gender mainstreaming concept is in a nascent stage, there are organizations in India that have a strong interest in gender equity and mainstreaming and are keen to incorporate such learning into their own operations as well as in other organizations. The good practices illustrated in different sectors in this study can provide other organizations with the motivation to improve existing practices and appropriately adapt them to suit both the local conditions and the organization's own capabilities. Critical areas where improvement is needed and the tools/guidelines necessary to assess and improve performance in each area, have been documented in this study.

The study team hopes that this document will enable civil society organizations and government bodies in India, to graduate from traditional and patriarchal forms of management to becoming more gender-aware and gender-sensitive institutions. While the study shows that it is possible to adopt good practices and achieve excellence in project management, it is also apparent that documentation alone is not enough. A larger effort consisting of capacity-building, formal training, on-site technical assistance and investor and donor support is necessary in order to disseminate and inculcate a good practice culture amongst all stakeholders. Dissemination of 'good practices' to a wider audience is critical, given that the case studies presented here have the potential to stimulate learning and enhance the abilities of smaller groups not just in India, but throughout the South Asia region (with suitable adaptations). While much needs to be done in gender mainstreaming in the Indian context, these initiatives will act as a positive reinforcement to other ongoing efforts and it is hoped that they will help to bring favourable policy changes and constructive engagement with the government.

Recognizing Domestic Violence as a Public Health Concern

Dilaasa, Mumbai

Recognizing Domestic Violence as a Public Health Concern

Dilaasa, Mumbai

BACKGROUND

Dilaasa, which means 'reassurance' in Hindi, is a joint initiative between the Public Health Department of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC)¹ and the Centre for Enquiry into Health and Allied Themes (CEHAT)². Established as a research centre of the Anusandhan Trust in Mumbai, CEHAT undertakes socially-relevant health research and spreads awareness on the right to healthcare³. It also addresses issues related to violence against women (VAW) such as domestic violence (DV), sex determination tests, female foeticide and sexual assault. There is a reciprocal relationship between gender based violence (GBV) and health: violence (both physical and mental) has adverse health consequences,⁴ while certain health conditions can increase a woman's risk of being attacked⁵ or targeted⁶.

The extent of DV in Indian society remains largely invisible from the public domain and is likely to be far greater than what is generally admitted.⁷ For the Dilaasa project, CEHAT has focused on the most common and pervasive form of VAW: domestic violence. This is the first time that a crisis centre to assist victims of DV has been set up in a public hospital in the country, and this is an attempt to sensitize the public health system to domestic violence-related issues.

Studies conducted in healthcare institutions in India, indicate that while many female victims of DV approach public hospitals for the treatment of injuries inflicted on them, healthcare providers give them

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) provides healthcare facilities in the city of Mumbai, which has a population of 11.9 million people.

²Initiated in 2001, CEHAT has been advocating the role of health professionals in responding to and preventing domestic violence, as well as in caring for victims of such violence. It is in this light that the first hospital-based crisis centre, Dilaasa, was conceptualized.

³The organization's work has focused on four integrated themes related to health service and financing, which are (i) health legislation, (ii) ethics and patient rights, (iii) women and health, and (iv) investigation and treatment of psychological trauma.

⁴Apart from causing grievous mental injuries, such acts of violence result in chronic pain, disfigurement and miscarriage, as well as stress, anxiety, hypertension and insomnia. Research on the association of depression and DV consistently demonstrates a greater depressive symptomology among battered women, when compared to other women. See Gleason, W.J., 1993. 'Mental disorders in battered women: an empirical study' Violence and Victims, 8:53-68

⁵For instance it has been established that women with mental health conditions face greater chances of being abused. Similarly, 18 to 28 percent of Indian women experience violence during the period of their pregnancy. See Ramiro, S. L., F. Hassan and A. Peedicayil, 'Risk markers of severe psychological violence against women: a WorldSAFE multi-country study', International Journal of Injury Control and Safety Promotion, London: Taylor and Francis, 2004.

⁶It is important to note that almost 20 percent of women seeking services at Dilaasa are admitted to the hospital after a suicide attempt. See P. Deosthali, P. Maghnani and S. Malik, 'Establishing Dilaasa – documenting the challenges', Mumbai: Dilaasa, 2005.

⁷It is estimated that in India 37.2 percent of women face spousal violence at some point of their lives. See Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, National Family Health Survey-3, Mumbai: International Institute for Population Sciences, 2007. Available online at http://www.nfhsindia.org/volume_1.html



only symptomatic treatment and believe they have no further role to play. Thus, while the physical injuries of a DV victim are addressed, the underlying cause of injury and attendant emotional trauma is not. It is therefore apparent that while the medical community particularly the public health system is in a unique position to assist women facing DV, in effect, this rarely happens. In fact, the attitude of neglect and apathy that DV victims encounter leaves them feeling extremely vulnerable and often exacerbates the vicious cycle of violence that they face.

GOOD PRACTICE

- I. **Description:** The objective of the Dilaasa project is to establish a hospital-based crisis intervention and management centre for women facing DV. Services provided at the centre include counselling, legal aid (such as access to lawyers) and social support (such as shelter homes). Healthcare providers are trained to screen abused women, provide them with emotional support and refer them to Dilaasa.
- II. **Evolution:** The idea of Dilaasa developed during a Ford Foundation workshop on reproductive health and rights, where the-then CEHAT coordinator learnt of similar efforts being made in Malaysia to set up One Stop Crisis Centres (OSCCs) for DV victims in public hospitals. The Malaysian model convinced CEHAT of the potential for successful partnerships between the public sector and NGOs in India.

III. Howitworks/methodologyfollowed:

- Operational since 2001, the Dilaasa centre occupies a highly visible location opposite the hospital's Casualty Ward.
- The project structure was formulated keeping in mind the needs of the women being targeted, the constraints of the hospital system and the objective of raising awareness on DV issues and incorporating this into the public health system's larger goals.
- Hospital staff (at all levels) is subjected to continuous training and sensitization on DV, its health
 consequences and the need for interdepartmental coordination. Such training allows the staff to
 be proactive in identifying female victims of DV, based on clinical symptomology.

There are many reasons for this attitude. Firstly, healthcare officials usually view DV as a personal issue between the victim and the perpetrator and therefore none of their business; secondly, they may also come from a social milieu where violence is accepted as a norm; and finally, they consider DV a law and order problem that should be the concern of the police. See Daga, A.S., S. J. Jejeebhoy, et al, 'Preventing violence, caring for survivors: role of health professionals and services in violence', in Domestic violence against women: An investigation of hospital casualty records. Mumbai: Research Centre of Ausandhan Trust, 1998.

⁹Reproductive health research indicates that some common experiences for women include coercion against contraception, sex selective abortion, physical/mental abuse while in labour, etc.

¹⁰The Malaysian experience underscored the critical role healthcare professionals can play in the treatment of a victim's injuries, rehabilitation and in preventing further trauma. The One Stop Crisis Centres (OSCCs) in Malaysia were jointly staffed by both NGO and hospital representatives and provided a range of psychological, medical, legal and social services for the care of those who had experienced DV.

• The process of mainstreaming awareness about DV in other BMC hospitals has been achieved by establishing a training cell at the K. B. Bhabha Hospital. This is a significant and constructive step and such a mechanism (within the healthcare system) does not exist elsewhere in the country.¹¹

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

The strength of the Dilaasa project is its conceptualisation and implementation as a collaborative project, in terms of human resources, leadership and management. The project team is made up of professionals from both CEHAT and the public hospital system. The medical superintendent of K. B. Bhabha Hospital is the Director of Dilaasa and the Coordinator of the Centre is from CEHAT. All project-related decisions, such as policy, programme activities and future initiatives, are taken jointly by representatives of both CEHAT and K. B. Bhabha Hospital.

The roles and responsibilities of both the partner organizations have been clearly spelt out in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between CEHAT and the BMC. Initially, the department was staffed by counsellors from both the BMC as well as CEHAT. However, since 2006, service provisioning has been handed over entirely to the BMC. Currently, CEHAT is responsible for providing technical assistance, monitoring service provision, co-ordinating training of healthcare providers and capacity-building of Dilaasa staff. On its part, BMC has provided three large rooms (free of cost) for Dilaasa to operate from, a temporary shelter for DV victims who also have medical problems, and four staff members (one full-time

social worker, one part-time social worker, nurse and physiotherapist). In addition, the project receives direction and advisory support from a committee comprising of senior officials of BMC and K.B. Bhabha Hospital, representatives from CEHAT and State agencies, lawyers and activists from women's groups and educational institutions.



Participants at a training workshop

REPLICABILITY

The general acceptance of the Dilaasa project is an important element in determining its success and chances of replicability. The successful mainstreaming of Dilaasa within the public health system (beyond K. B. Bhabha Hospital) is

evident from the fact that another hospital under BMC (the Bhabha Hospital at Kurla) has now set up a Dilaasa department on its premises. ¹² Also, Dilaasa is not looked upon as a project but a department within the hospital.

Since 2005, the Dilaasa crisis prevention centre is being gradually handed over to the hospital, so that it can be run by BMC, as had been envisioned in the original project. With requests coming in to establish similar centres elsewhere, Dilaasa is now planning to scale up the programme to reach out to hospitals and healthcare systems in BMC; and in other states, through NGOs and state public health systems.

¹¹The vision of this training cell goes beyond DV awareness. It aims at improving the quality of services provided by the BMC hospitals; it has thus moved into the realm of patients' rights and clinical ethics.

¹²These units have been set up on the initiative of the hospital management and senior staff and are wholly managed by them. The role of CEHAT is limited to capacity building and monitoring for support and guidance.

¹³Initially made up mainly of professionals from CEHAT, the current team now comprises four hospital staff on deputation to the project and one professional from CEHAT.



Requests have also been made to mainstream the delivery of services so as to address DV within the framework of the public health system, and to make the institutional system more gender responsive. The attempt is to make the public health system responsible for providing crisis prevention support to the victims of DV.

In 2006, a training cell was set up (with teams from five BMC hospitals) to further the capacity-building process for Dilaasa. Thus, even in these five hospitals where Dilaasa centres have not yet been set up, hospital staff are trained on DV issues and the role health providers can play in this context. There has been extensive

documentation of the processes involved in gender mainstreaming within the healthcare system, manuals and training modules are also available which can be used for replication.

CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

One of the biggest challenges faced by Dilaasa is that of inadequate resources, which makes it difficult to recruit regular staff. Currently, specific resources and full-time staff for the crisis prevention centre are from BMC. Staff on deputation are drawn from the existing pool. This means that they are liable to be shifted out or transferred, thus affecting the development of experienced and trained quality teams for Dilaasa. At present, the co-ordination of activities of the 'Training Cell' is managed entirely by CEHAT. There is hence a need to allocate funds from the BMC towards the cell in order to sustain its training activities on a long term basis.

While DV is the most rampant form of abuse that women face, irrespective of caste, class or vocation, there is a need to sensitize the public health system and make it responsive to all forms of VAW, not just DV. At present, the public health system is not adequately sensitized to the issue and therefore does not play a pro-active role to counter VAW.

LESSONS LEARNT

The steady increase in the number of women coming to Dilaasa is an indicator of the success of the concept and highlights the potential strength of this innovative approach. The increase in referrals of women to Dilaasa from other hospital departments also indicates the public health system's acknowledgement of the need for such a facility, within the healthcare system.

Though this is an extremely successful pilot project, the mainstreaming of DV into the agenda and mandate of the public health system continues to be a fragile concept. Much remains to be done to integrate and consolidate the gains of this initiative and to ensure its growth, while adhering to the standards that have emerged from it. This represents both a challenge and a lesson that has been learnt for the future.

Overall, Dilaasa is indeed a strong and innovative example of government-NGO collaboration and represents a revolutionary effort in the mainstreaming of gender concerns into the public health system.

Mobilizing Communities on Rights Awareness

■ The Saurashtra Kachchh group on Violence against Women (SK-VAW), Gujarat

Mobilizing Communities on Rights Awareness

The Saurashtra Kachchh group on Violence against Women (SK-VAW), Gujarat

BACKGROUND

As a result of India's traditionally patriarchal¹ culture, women have long been relegated to a secondary position, one that forces them to submit to men and continue to stay in exploitative/destructive relationships. It discourages attempts at seeking justice (relying instead on systems such as the jaati² and gram panchayats³), and obstructs gaining knowledge and information about the law. As a consequence, many women (particularly in rural areas) do not approach the police or seek justice from the courts.

In 2000, a group of NGOs in the Kutch-Saurashtra region of Gujarat came together to launch a coordinated and concerted campaign to address the issue of Violence against Women (VAW). Initiated by SWATI,⁴ this campaign is called the Saurashtra Kachchh group on violence against women (SK-VAW) and focuses on placing VAW concerns on the agenda of organizations working for women's development.

GOOD PRACTICE

- I. **Description:** The SK-VAW aims at building leadership skills and capacities among women, thus enabling and empowering them to combat VAW in their own lives. SK-VAW's activities include advocacy, raising awareness about the Protection of Women against Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA) and engaging the government in efforts to provide justice.
- II. **Evolution:** SK-VAW believes that the incidence of VAW will decrease only if men are part of the movement to eradicate such violence. Another tenet of this belief is that it is important to ensure that such participation occurs at all levels of society. Consequently the network has established partnerships at four different levels:
 - Governance bodies at the grassroots level⁵
 - Other networks and research and capacity-building institutes⁶

¹For the purposes of this report, the term 'patriarchal culture' means a culture where men occupy most of the decision-making roles and follow traditional male-thought patterns that relegate women to a secondary status and give them little say in decision-making processes.

²A jaati panchayat is an informal social forum enjoying full social validity in dealing with cases of conflict between people or families residing within its jurisdiction. Traditionally, it has regulated social relations and the conduct of its members. Observations suggest that the jaati panchayat is a major institutional culprit in the sanction and promotion of VAW, as its members uphold caste identities, rigid ideas of 'honour' and guard customary practices that discriminate against women and lower castes such as Dalits.

 $^{{}^3\!}T\!he\,smallest\,unit\,o\!f\,the\,decentralized, democratic\,governance\,mechanism\,o\!f\,the\,Panchayati\,Raj\,system.$

⁴The Society for Women's Action and Training Initiatives (SWATI) is an NGO that is active in the area and is also the secretariat for the SK-VAW.

⁵These bodies include village panchayats, local youth groups and community leaders, all of whom are considered opinion leaders.

⁶Research on VAW was conducted by the Gujarat Institute for Development Research, the Indian Institute for Para-Legal Studies (IIPLS), Ekal Nari Shakti Sangathan (ENSS) and the Women and Land Rights Network. The long-term donors that supported this programme were HIVOS, OXFAM and Community Aid Abroad.

- A 'Men Engage' coalition⁷
- Policy-makers and implementing agencies⁸
- III. **How it works/methodology followed:** The Constitutional right to equality is borne out by the establishment of an alternative forum to combat the patriarchal and rigid attitudes of the jaati panchayats. Called mahila nyaya samitis (women's justice collectives), these platforms work for the redressal of disputes through a democratic and participatory process of mediation. Women's collectives (federations) are the foundation of the mahila nyaya samitis. These have gained credibility by involving men in their efforts to stop VAW and in their functions as a justice forum. This federation of women's collectives provides a foundation and moral support for the quasi-legal arbitration forums and lends weight to the latter's judgments at the village level.

In the first phase of the project, training in capacity-building¹⁰ was given to staff and women leaders¹¹ at the village level so that they could, in turn, train other women about anti-VAW initiatives in the Saurashtra - Kutch region. Cultural interventions were carried out through partner NGOs, who collated the experiences of those affected by VAW and put together a play based on the experiences of VAW survivors. The plays were followed by open discussions on the causes and consequences of VAW, which engaged men and women of all ages. SK-VAW developed, prepared and brought out a report on the PWDVA and distributed it amongst (i) MLAs and government officials, to convince them to push the state government for allocation of resources for the act and (ii) lawyers, NGOs and the general public, to create awareness and acceptance of the law.

In the second phase, the SK-VAW decided that a common minimum programme¹² that could be implemented by all partner agencies should be introduced. This included a Common Action Plan (a campaign-based programme) that was carried out intensively in over 140 villages in four districts (Surendranagar, Bhavnagar, Amreli and Kutch). Each NGO focused on 20 villages to spread awareness about VAW issues; more villages were reached by extensive campaigning and sammelans (public gatherings/meeting).

VOICES

"Over the past three years, I have learnt a great deal about how women face different forms of violence, and seen the reality of their lives, thrown as they are in the face of death. But women do not go to the law courts because they fear society."

– Hanuder Walia, Team Member – Savaraj – a partner NGO

⁷This is a SK-VAW-initiated programme with an outreach in five districts of Gujarat and a membership base of 25,000 people. From micro to macro linkages, the coalition has a broad and impressive roster of participation, including UNFPA, UNIFEM and Oxfam's 'We Can' campaign (South Asian initiative aimed at encouraging couples to settle differences without resorting to violence), the White Ribbon Campaign (an organization begun by men working to end VAW through campaigns, policy changes and education) and the National Alliance of Women's Organizations.

⁸It is important to influence the media, law enforcement agencies and policy makers on implementing legislation against VAW. Such agencies include the Delhi Women's Commission (DWC), the judiciary, the National Commission for Women (NCW) and the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC).

⁹ In the district of Surendernagar alone, over 6,000 women are members of the mahila vikas sangh.

¹⁰The trainings cover subjects such as the various forms of VAW and the legal/extra-legal mechanisms available for providing justice to victims.

¹¹Trained staff members then became part of a resource team that extends similar training to about 35 women leaders, from different districts.

¹²The common minimum programme covered 50 percent of the total programme. The remaining 50 percent involved working on certain objectives that differed in form and content (in keeping with the issues specific to the region and the capacity of the group).



BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

In addition to the six¹³ integral partners that carry out the network's activities, SK-VAW's continuous activities with men and youth have assisted it in building male partnerships and changing community opinions about VAW. The momentum generated by the campaign was followed by intensive orientation trainings for young men in the villages. Youth associations were formed to sensitize rural men and encourage them to be active in the mission to combat VAW.

SK-VAW has also raised awareness across districts, by engaging in programme initiatives with NGOs. Training leaders and groups at the

village level¹⁴ has led to a wider outreach at the grassroots level. The campaign has educated activists about other laws and issues of concern, such as the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PC PNDT) (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act (1994) and the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act (1971).¹⁵ Finally, strong support from the regional media has assisted the campaign in gaining a broader outreach.

REPLICABILITY

The campaign's approach and strategies offer immense potential for working together with men, to bring about effective implementation of the PWDVA and other laws aimed at the prevention of VAW.

To achieve this, implementation strategies need to be worked out, so as to be integrated at the grassroots level, with the help of village and urban paralegal workers, women's organizations/nyaya panchayats and networks of volunteers committed to the cause.

CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

The sustainability of the alternative justice forums depends upon people's participation. The forums therefore need to be scaled-up and institutionalized. Greater gender equality can only be achieved through reconstruction of the country's archaic and patriarchal legal system and by altering the opinions and influence of the upper-caste elite, which continue to be a big challenge.

¹³SWATI, Utthan-Development Action Planning Team, Shikshan Ane Samaj Kalyan Kendra, Kutch Mahila Vikas Sangathan, Savaraj and Navjot Mahila Vikas Sangathan.

¹⁴Training on VAW issues was provided to two leaders from each village. Over 300 women were oriented on these issues and they then went on to play a leadership role in extending counselling and helping women seek support at the village level.

¹⁵Many people (both men and women) in the villages voiced their concern with regard to the declining child sex ratio in the state, the result of widespread 'son preference', among families. While Gujarat's overall sex ratio has dropped from 934 per 1,000 males to 920 as per the Census of India (2001), the state's child sex ratio fell much more dramatically from 928 girls per 1,000 boys to 883 girls per 1,000 boys. (UNICEF India, 2007, available online at < http://www.unicef.org/india/media 3284.htm>)

LESSONS LEARNT

Mass mobilization and support from men and women at all levels has been a significant contributor to

the campaign's success. Thus men are an important part of the programme.

A significant factor that makes the SK-VAW effective in dealing with complex domestic VAW issues is its strategy of working together on a commonly constituted agenda. This common objective approach and agenda has been established, despite the fact that all the organizations who came together in the network were neither primarily women's organizations nor necessarily engaged in issues pertaining to VAW. The SK-VAW initiative shows that the involvement of different organizations, on an issue that cuts across various development sectors (such as VAW), can bring this concern into the public domain.



Women at a meeting to mobilize support to save the girl child, December 2006

Literacy to Education: Women's
Self-Help Groups for Economic and
Political Empowerment

Mahalir Association for Literacy Awareness and Rights (MALAR), Tamil Nadu

Literacy to Education: Women's Self-Help Groups for Economic and Political Empowerment

Mahalir Association for Literacy Awareness and Rights (MALAR), Tamil Nadu

BACKGROUND

Women in Tamil society have traditionally been relegated to a secondary position, both in the home and at the workplace. The strong patriarchal framework of Tamil society leaves women in an ambiguous position. They are described as 'penkal veettin kankal', which means 'women are the eyes of the home'. While this is a reflection on the important position women hold in the home, it also restricts their role to the domestic sphere.

Yet, on several objective parameters related to women, Tamil Nadu does score higher than the national average. The State Human Development Report for Tamil Nadu indicates that the state's Gender-related Development Index (GDI) is much higher than the all-India value, and that its achievement in gender equality is better than that of the country as a whole. In the specific context of Kanniyakumari district of Tamil Nadu, for parameters such as Infant Mortality Rate (IMR), life expectancy, literacy, health and employment participation, the Tamil Nadu Human Development Report 2003, indicates that the situation of women in the district is much better than in other districts of the state. This is evident from Table 1.

Table 1: Some development indicators for Kanniyakumari district

	Sex Ratio (females per	Female	IMR*		MMR**
	1000 males)	Literacy	Male	Female	
Kanniyakumari	1013	85.4	25.80	20.00	1.30
Tamil Nadu	985	64.6	40.10	46.90	1.50

^{*} Infant Mortality Rate (per 1,000 live births) ** Maternal Mortality Rates (per 1,000 live births) Source: Tamil Nadu Human Development Report 2003

The Government has launched several schemes aimed at increasing women's participation in decision-making processes and making them more self-reliant financially.³ However, the functioning of these programmes is largely confined to the cities; they have had little impact in the villages. There is little State support in rural areas for the Mother and Child Welfare Scheme, the Girl Child Protection Scheme

¹The GDI for the districts of the state varied from 0.766 to 0.582, with Chennai faring the best and Dharmapuri and Villupuram the worst. Other districts that fared well were Kanniyakumari, Thoothukudi, Kancheepuram and Coimbatore, the same districts that fared well with regard to the HDI. (Ibid)

²The value for the country's GDI was 0.553 while that for Tamil Nadu was 0.654. Kanniyakumari's HDI and GDI were 0.711 and 0.708 respectively, compared to the state's overall HDI and GDI of 0.657 and 0.654 respectively and the country's HDI and GDI values of 0.571 and 0.553. (*Tamil Nadu Human Development Report*, Government of Tamil Nadu & Social Science Press, D.K. Publishers & Distributors, New Delhi, 2003, pp. 36-37.)

³The most significant achievement was the establishment of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) for Tamil women, which helped women realize their collective strength and organize themselves.

⁴According to the Girl Child Protection Scheme (GCPS), parents who have opted for sterilization and have no male child but one or two girls are given certain incentives like scholarships for education of the girls and a lump sum of money to be used when the girls reach maturity.

(GCPS), or the Cradle Baby scheme. Women in Tamil Nadu continue to face female infanticide, forced marriage, sexual exploitation, kidnapping, humiliation, high dowry demands and other social problems. In some extreme cases, these factors have led women to commit suicide. A major concern is the widespread practice of dowry, both in cash and kind, that is still prevalent in Kanniyakumari. Gold bears great significance in formalizing matrimonial negotiations and large amounts exchange hands before a woman gets married. It is therefore very difficult for people to put together the dowry/money required to get their daughters married.

In such a situation, the work done by Mahalir Association for Literacy Awareness and Rights MALAR, a grassroots organization for women, is commendable. Based in Kanniyakumari, its primary objective is to educate, raise awareness and empower women through economic development. MALAR seeks to challenge social norms that oppress, discriminate and violate women's human rights, such as domestic violence, dowry and alcoholism. The MALAR experience illustrates the metamorphosis of an organization, from its beginnings as a literacy programme delivery mechanism to a self-reliant autonomous women's collective, that has set in motion the process of women asserting and claiming their rights on many fronts. It has also served as a pilot for many federations to emerge, in an educational continuum, within the framework of the Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti⁸ (BGVS). The organization also uses the AIDWA platform to fight against discrimination. Mobilization for economic betterment is not MALAR's sole goal; it also works to challenge the prevalence of violence against women (VAW), especially violence that arises due to alcoholism.

GOOD PRACTICE

- I. **Description:** Women's committees and Self-Help Groups (SHGs) were formed at the village level and members were required to pay a membership fee of Rs.10 (US\$ 0.25°) per member. The groups made a collective decision to use the savings accumulated as loans to group members, thus reducing the chances of the members being exploited by local money lenders who charge exorbitant interest rates ranging from 60 to 120 percent per year. The founders of MALAR made a conscious decision not to accept government funds or foreign donations, as they believed a movement could not successfully emerge if dependent on, or linked to, such funding. Active participation in and contribution to the organization's objective of self-reliance is encouraged within MALAR.
- II. **Evolution:** MALAR emerged out of a literacy campaign in the Kanniyakumari district. When the lack of funds forced the literacy campaign to wind down in 1994, the coordinators and volunteers felt that efforts should still continue, even in the absence of monetary support. The Tamil Nadu Science Forum (TNSF) was the driving force behind the organization of the SHGs for poorly educated women, because the organization felt that the learning and empowering process must continue.
- III. **How it works/methodology followed:** Women's committees at the village level form savings groups. Each group opens a savings bank account at the nearest bank where deposits are made, with

⁵The Tamil Nadu Government launched the cradle scheme under which parents who did not wish to keep female babies could leave them in cradles at government run reception centres.

⁶Generally speaking, around 25 tolas of gold is considered to be the minimum required for a bride to bring with her to her husband's home.

⁷Many women above the age of 35 thus remain unmarried if their families are unable to mobilize the huge amounts of money/jewellery required. Others who take bank loans to meet dowry demands are often burdened for years, trying to repay the sum.

^{*}The BGVS is a registered society sponsored by the National Literacy Mission Authority.

⁹Conversions have been calculated at \$1=Rs 40

each member being encouraged to save at least Rs.20 (US\$ 0.50) per month. Weekly group meetings are held where collective decisions are made regarding small loans and awareness is raised about local socioeconomic/political problems. Asset-building in joint accounts is encouraged and some men are beginning to support their wives in the repayment of loans.¹⁰

In 2007, the federation had 1,588 groups with 31,000 members, who had accumulated savings of Rs.6.66 crores¹¹ (approximately US\$ 1.6 million), excluding Rs. 3.52 crores refunded (around US\$ 870,000). Cumulative loans given to 30,373 members reached Rs.45.06 crores (approximately US\$ 11 million).

Mechanisms that ensure democratic accountability and transparency have been put in place. Monthly account statements are submitted to the village coordinators who crosscheck this with the group's account books. There is a self-balancing, double entry system that helps in tracking mistakes or misuse. Later, the accounts are submitted to the block coordinator, who in turn submits them to the district office, after verification. The accounts of one group are audited by the block coordinator of another group. Group meetings are held for regular assessments of the financial systems.

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

Economic development is advanced through micro-enterprise ventures, for which skills training is provided. MALAR also helps the SHGs to establish links with financial institutions so that they can access loan facilities. This has in turn, allowed them to take on new entrepreneurial initiatives for their economic empowerment. The organization has been rated by Micro-Credit Ratings International Ltd. (M-CRIL), Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI), the Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK), and the National Minorities Development and Finance Corporation (NMDFC); it has also received loans under bulk-lending schemes, in addition to bank linkages and Swaranjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) la loans.

Education continues to be part of the agenda. A monthly newsletter/ resource paper (in Tamil) is produced in-house at the MALAR district office, with inputs and support from TNSF members. This is read and discussed during SHG meetings. It attempts to cover largely socio-economic and political issues that impinge on people's lives, including women's rights¹⁵ and encourages an atmosphere of awareness generation and sensitization. The formation of science clubs for members' children is an instance of the increasingly positive attitude towards the education of girls. Allowing girls to continue their studies, sometimes all the way up to Class XII, is a great change from when most girls were allowed to study only up to the Class VII or till they reached puberty. More access to education has also had a positive affect on local attitudes towards caste: inter-caste marriages are no longer taboo. Now Muslim women are approaching the groups for membership.

¹⁰This is because men benefit from the loans taken by their wives. Often, the loans are taken to help men start a small business or activity, thus making men feel responsible for the repayment.

 $^{^{11}}$ These figures are based on the organization's own records. (Conversion to dollars has been done on \$1=Rs 40.4)

¹²These include the manufacture of umbrellas, candles, soaps, pencils, coir mats, garments, bags, slippers, herbal products, etc. Taking into account the resources available in the area, mushroom cultivation and honey processing are also encouraged.

¹³The National Credit Fund for Women

¹⁴Swaranjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) is a government scheme providing sustainable income to the rural poor. This programme envisions the establishment of a large number of micro enterprises in rural areas.

¹⁵Reading and discussion are important components of MALAR's activities in enabling awareness generation. The regular women's meetings discuss issues such as healthcare, violence against women, HIV/AIDS, and the lack of infrastructure and basic amenities necessary for their villages (such as roads, garbage removal, lack of transport to a Primary Health Centre).

Awareness of female health issues is promoted through women and community resource centres that cover important subjects such as women's reproductive health, child health, tuberculosis, anaemia, HIV/AIDS and dengue fever. This information is provided by resource persons from the Catherine Booth Hospital, Saratha Krishna Homeo College, the Government Medical College Hospital, and other government hospitals.

Political parties have now begun to recognize the significance of these women's groups as important vote banks; many women have also contested local government elections. The empowering reach of MALAR can be seen in the fact that one group member has now become a Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA), and 47 other women have been elected to panchayats at different levels. Government departments and financial institutions have recognized the efficiency and good work of the group and have approached members with schemes for rural development.¹⁶

REPLICABILITY

MALAR's work has influenced women to move ahead by establishing linkages with different forums. The uniqueness of the MALAR model lies in the creation of the federation by sharing and encouraging a democratic structure for self-sustenance. ¹⁷ Its active and empowering women's federation has emerged as a model for others to observe and replicate. Another unique characteristic of the MALAR initiative is that although the groups have dedicated much attention to the savings and credit activities of their members, they have not neglected their literacy programme (which continues to grow).

Organizations from all over the country have visited and studied the MALAR model for its qualities as a self-managed autonomous women's institution. At a Samata-sponsored¹⁸ national workshop in January 1999, representatives from 16 Indian states studied the MALAR model in Kanniyakumari, in order to start similar groups in their own areas. Based on the MALAR model of organization-building, there are now 25,200 groups¹⁹ operational in 16 states.

CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

Initially, the men of the community were suspicious about the formation of these groups and warned women that they were being misguided. There was resistance from male family members who, in order to dissuade women from participating in group meetings, continually reiterated the fact that the women had domestic responsibilities. However, many women felt that this method of saving relieved some part of their financial burden, as the interest rates were lower than what the moneylenders charged. They joined the groups, despite resistance from their husbands and threats from the moneylenders (who saw their business going down as a result of the formation of women's groups).

¹⁶Some group members were identified to audit the ration shop and check for food adulteration and proper distribution. Such auditing has helped in providing people with proper rations, both in terms of quality and quantity.

¹⁷The sharing system for credit is as follows: 50 percent for group members, 30 percent for village coordinators who manage and monitor the process, and 20 percent of the interest income to the federation for meeting administrative/monitoring/training services.

¹⁸Samata is a social justice organization that works for the rights of the tribal Adivasi people of Andhra Pradesh and for the protection of the natural resources and ecology of the Eastern Ghats.

¹⁹These include Prochesta in Assam (which works for the socio- economic upliftment of rural and urban women and has introduced the institutionalization of a non-traditional banking system, particularly in rural areas, which would provide credit facilities under special terms and conditions); Samam in Pondicherry (an education campaign for women's equality); and Saheli in Jharkhand (committed to the implementation of women's right to land and resources for sustainable livelihoods).

The subsequent experience has however helped overcome most doubts and now men are active supporters of the SHGs. MALAR women's groups have spread throughout the district and have organized themselves into a federation, overthrowing private moneylenders, whose interest rates were between 60 and 120 percent, in contrast to the 24 percent per annum, charged by MALAR (which has now been brought down to 18 percent).

Mobilization for economic betterment was not the sole goal of these women's collectives. They have also come together to challenge social norms that oppress women, discriminate against them and violate their human rights. A strong female leadership is being developed at the grassroots level. There are a number of examples of women facing great personal hardships, when they start out as members of individual groups and then going on to become coordinators at village and block levels, and as elected representatives in the three-tier system of local administration. Their ability to constitute local pressure groups and tackle gender issues is now well recognized. Through this shift in perception and attitude, these women have been able to sow the seeds for strong local resistance movements that work for gender justice. However, this politicization and transition from a savings movement into a rights movement is yet to make a significant impact on a macro-level.

Box 1: Pushpam, village coordinator and leader, Ambedkar Nagar

Pushpam is a semi-literate 50 year old Dalit woman, who joined MALAR in 1997. As a result of a government action allotting sites to Scheduled Castes (SCs), hers was one of 150 households relocated to an area where basic amenities were unavailable. People had difficulty finding work and children were unable to continue their studies, as there were no schools nearby. Pushpam heard about MALAR, approached them and soon started a group in her own village. She is a dynamic leader in her area and despite initial resistance from the male members of the community, has been able to start eight groups in her village and three outside it. Under her leadership, the women's group started to voice their concerns by approaching local authorities. The group's weekly meetings provided information to the members, allowing them to learn more about their own village and their right to access various government schemes. The group met government officials and managed to get a water connection for their village, saving them the two to three kilometre walk to get drinking water. The men in their village praised the women for their efforts and their attitude towards the women's group began to change. Through small savings and through loans from the group, women were now able to clear their debts and some of them have started small businesses, such as shops selling foodstuff.

Pushpam was encouraged by the community to stand for the municipal elections, which she won. The first issue she addressed was the lack of land for cremation for her community. She approached the District Collector (DC) and demanded that a vacant area in their village be allotted for cremation purposes (all other communities other than the SCs had areas for cremation ceremonies). Together with other group members, Pushpam convinced the DC to visit their locality and observe their living conditions, firsthand. He immediately sanctioned finances for community toilets, roads and streetlights. This was a great victory for the women's group, who gave MALAR the credit for helping them become more aware of (and claiming) their rights.

Through the 'group loans', two people in the village now own trucks (lorries) and three own auto-rickshaws. Group pressure and discipline has helped maintain savings and recovery of loans. The group has also helped to build up the self-esteem and confidence of the women, earning them the respect of their families and of other members of the community.

LESSONS LEARNT

The decision not to accept government funds or foreign donations from the beginning has made MALAR self reliant today. Group members are the sole decision-makers who run the institution, both at the federation and village level, and this has empowered them.

Transparency and ownership are key to the success of the MALAR initiative. The SHG treasurer is expected to keep the group informed about all details of the SHG's current financial situation. Group members are also trained to read and maintain the accounts books.

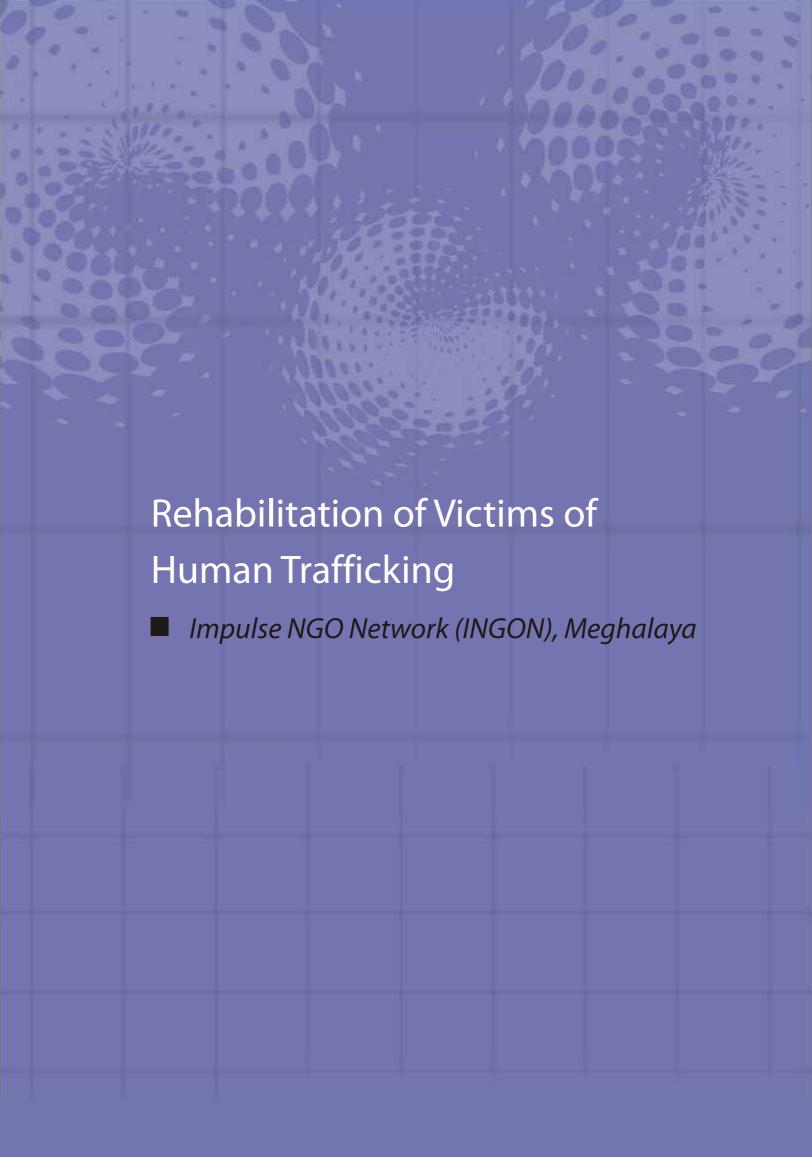
The MALAR experience shows the step by step process from literacy to education and then to economic self reliance and political empowerment. The criticality of education to this process is re-established.

MALAR has also encouraged and empowered different groups (including Dalits) to come together and successfully fight for their rights (see Box 1). Women are

Box 2: Turning the tables: when women take the lead

Sheela says that most people in Moolachal village are landless and lease land in order to cultivate plantain. However, when natural calamities occur (such as the 2004 tsunami), the villagers lose their crops and are trapped in debt. Many men approached Sheela and requested her assistance in starting a group for them. Sheela said this could only be done if the group's rules were strictly adhered to, which the men agreed to do. After prompt repayment of an initial loan of Rs. 50,000 (US\$ 1,236), the men's group was given a loan of approximately Rs. 250,000 (US\$ 6,184), which was also repaid, soon after the harvest season. Now, a bank has come forward to finance the men's group with a loan of Rs. 150,000 (US\$ 3,710) for cultivation purposes, thus demonstrating the positive impact of MALAR on men as well.

coming together to fight for various common issues in their localities such as VAW and women's health. Men are now more alert about the consequences of wife beating, women have more economic independence and status and the contribution of women to the household (through the loans from the SHGs) have made men more supportive of the efforts of the women's groups. In fact, the success of these women's groups prompted the men of Moolachal village to approach the coordinator, Sheela, to start a similar SHG for them (see Box 2), which is a big achievement.



Rehabilitation of Victims of Human Trafficking

Impulse NGO Network (INGON), Meghalaya

BACKGROUND

India has long been a source, a destination and a transit country for men, women and children trafficked for the purposes of forced labour and commercial sex exploitation. The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) estimates that 90 percent of India's sex trafficking is internal.¹ Within the country, women from economically depressed areas often move to larger cities to seek out better economic opportunities;² once there, however, they are often forced into prostitution by seasoned traffickers. Extreme poverty, combined with the low status of women, often results in parents handing over their children for employment or for marriage. In some instances, parents receive payment or the promise that their children will send wages back home.

Law enforcement efforts in anti-trafficking in India have remained weak, despite the presence of a number of private and government organizations working on this issue and a powerful media. The rise in human trafficking in India is exacerbated by the very low prosecution rate of traffickers and the act of prostitution being regarded as a criminal offence (which has been used to arrest and punish women and girls, who are the victims of trafficking). There is, therefore, a growing need to find an effective and comprehensive strategy that encompasses rescue, relief and rehabilitation operations for victims and also provides proper deterrent action against violators.

Lured by the promise of glamorous and lucrative careers in India's metropolises, many young girls from the North-East are forced into prostitution by organized syndicates that specifically target them.⁴ The girls targeted are usually in the 16-18 year age group and are forced by these operators into the notorious and dangerous world of prostitution. Girls from the North-East are in great demand in flourishing prostitution rackets in big cities like Mumbai, New Delhi, Kolkata, Bangalore and Pune.

Due to this rise in the number of girls from the North-East being trafficked for purposes of prostitution, INGON (a Shillong-based rights group that has been working since 2000 on rescuing women trafficked from the North-East), evolved a unique strategy that has come to be known as the 'Meghalaya Model'.

¹US State Department, Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000: *Trafficking in Persons Report 2007*, available online at http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2007/>

²Trafficking is often disguised as migration, commercial sex, or marriage, but what may begin as a voluntary decision often ends up as forced trafficking, as victims find themselves in unfamiliar destinations and subjected to unexpected work.

³India does have adequate laws for addressing trafficking of adults and children for sexual exploitation. Penalties prescribed under the Immoral Trafficking Prevention Act (ITPA), range from seven years to life imprisonment, and criminalize the offences of selling, procuring and exploiting any person for commercial sex as well as profiting from prostitution. In 2007, the Government of Meghalaya conducted at least 43 rescue operations that freed 275 victims of commercial sex trafficking from their exploiters; however, these operations were not accompanied by vigorous prosecution of the traffickers. While this is the result of many factors such as police bribery and judicial apathy, the situation is worsened by Section 8 of the ITPA, which criminalizes the act of solicitation for prostitution. In consultation with civil society groups, the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Trafficking in Persons drafted revisions to the ITPA and submitted the same to Parliament for consideration in 2004. These revisions would eliminate Section 8, thereby affording greater protection to victims of trafficking and stricter penalties for their traffickers and for the clients of prostitution. While a Parliamentary Committee has completed its review of amendments to the ITPA, the Indian Government has not yet passed and enacted them. However, some jurisdictions reportedly have stopped using the ITPA to arrest women in prostitution. *Trafficking in Persons Report*, 2007.

⁴One of the main methods employed by traffickers to woo unsuspecting girls from the North-East to the metropolises is to promise them careers in modelling.

GOOD PRACTICE

- I. **Description:** The approach used by INGON follows a need-based approach that involves various actors and activities. In addition to simply tracing girls who have gone missing, INGON networks with other organizations to gather information about them and assists in rescue and rehabilitation efforts for the girls who are rescued (through counselling and skills-training, as well as providing seed money to start their own businesses). It also employs the media to create awareness about the rise in trafficking from the North-East. This approach has led to the development of an extremely innovative model for dealing with the problem of human trafficking.
- II. **Evolution:** The strategy developed by the organization in rescue, rehabilitation and repatriation operations underwent many changes to accommodate regional requirements. Until now, the police had only focused on rescue activities and in most cases ended up arresting victims from big city brothels while making no serious effort to arrest the traffickers. This distorted sense of justice results, more often than not, in rescued girls getting re-trafficked. As a result of the integrated 'Meghalaya Model' conceptualized by INGON, none of the girls rescued by the organization have gone back to the profession they were rescued from.
- III. **How it works/methodology followed:** There are three stages in the 'Meghalaya Model', each with its own set of activities. Done collectively and simultaneously, they can bring about a significant decrease in the number of girls being trafficked and also assist those who have been rescued.

A. Rescue operations

A needs-assessment study was carried out (via random sampling) by INGON to understand the general situation of children (both boys and girls), based on their age group and the type of work they are involved in. A weekly programme was designed to ensure regular touch with children and to gain valuable insights (such as information about certain groups of people coming from outside the state and recruiting children from the area to work as cheap domestic help in other states). The organization would then contact the families of those children who had been taken away. Often it was found the families had no information about their children.

Networking was the next step. The needs assessment study was shared with different stakeholders in order to lobby for intervention and save young girls from being targeted/ trafficked. Regular lobbying actions were undertaken at the regional level. 6

A letter and e-mail campaign followed, with all Action against Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Children (ATSEC) and non-ATSEC⁷ partners were given information about the organization, its aims, geographical location and the region's cultural diversity and demographic composition. The organization's campaign received positive feedback; in December 2001, an ATSEC partner in Mumbai provided INGON with information about two girls from Meghalaya, who had been rescued from a trafficking ring. INGON was requested to take custody of the girls and repatriate them, which they did.⁸

⁵These programmes were carried out with the help of volunteers. Children were asked to visit their contact points and spent some time with the organization's team in order to better understand their own rights.

⁶Final assessments were shared at the 'First National Action against Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Children (ATSEC) Consultation' in Kolkota, where INGON was elected the State Convenor for ATSEC (North East India) and the State Chapter for Meghalaya. INGON used ATSEC as a platform to reach out to other partner agencies and went on to design another programme: 'Combating ChildTrafficking through Networking in North East India'.

⁷Such as the as the Campaign against Child Trafficking (CACT).

This was the first case received by INGON, who agreed to take responsibility for the two girls, as well as for a girl from Tripura who was rescued by a non-ATSEC partner, in Mumbai.

B. Repatriation

Counselling services are arranged for the rescued girls. While they are initially reluctant to talk about their traumatic experience, these sessions help them to gradually move out of their depression and give them hope for the future. This is followed by carefully studying the family background of the girls. Once this is done, the project members write to the families to inform them that their daughters have been rescued. It have been rescued girls relatives, project members visit their homes to persuade them to take their girls back. If the family members agree, the project members hand the girl over to her family. After returning the girl to her home, INGON continues to follow up with her (via letters or home visits) for at least a year, in order to ensure that she is not re-trafficked.

C. Rehabilitation

Shelter or short-stay homes are required to house rescued girls, until they can be returned to their families. This need is even more urgent for those whose families refuse to take them back. INGON lobbied with the Social Welfare Department to provide shelter facilities; the outcome was that the homes where girls were brought for observation have been turned into 'short-stay homes', where the girls can stay for at least three months. It is important to reintegrate the rescued girls into mainstream society and not keep them isolated. During their stay in the 'short-stay homes', these girls are provided skills training, so that they can earn a living through the practice of skill based vocations and not be forced to return to

BOX: A survivor's story

Rose (name changed), a rescued survivor, is working with INGON after her rehabilitation. Her family refused to take her back and it was INGON that gave her shelter and trained her to do office work; later, they employed her. Rose hopes that society will not look down upon girls like her. She disclosed that she was ten years old when she was lured for a job as a domestic maid and then she was sold. She also described her experiences with pimps and the unscrupulous men and women who make big money through the sexual exploitation of children. Rose feels there is a great need to involve other NGOs and state law enforcement agencies and get the support of the public, to stop the menace of child trafficking from the region.

prostitution, due to economic hardship. Skills training, healthcare and counselling facilities are provided to the girls via INGON's network with other organizations and partners in the state. Apart from imparting skills training (sometimes in more than one trade, so as to give the girls more choices), seed money is provided to the girls to help them start their own small businesses. For this purpose, INGON networks with the corporate sector, private individuals and ATSEC.

It was also felt that unless traffickers are prosecuted, there is a danger that they will re-approach girls who have been rescued. INGON initiated a Legal Support Programme that counselled rescued survivors and obtained more information about the traffickers involved. 11

This can be a very difficult task, as rescued girls are usually reluctant to talk about their families or disclose their residential address. Their confidence is won slowly, by giving them shelter, food, healthcare and companionship.

¹⁰There are cases where INGON does not receive any reply, or families write back to say they want nothing to do with the girl now, due to her involvement in unacceptable behaviour/activities. In such cases, the girl is considered a social outcast and a pariah by her own family.

¹¹Rescued girls are assured protection and with their help, INGON files First Information Reports (FIRs) with the police against the traffickers. As a result of this initiative, and with the support of the media and the Meghalaya Police Department, three traffickers were arrested in 2002.

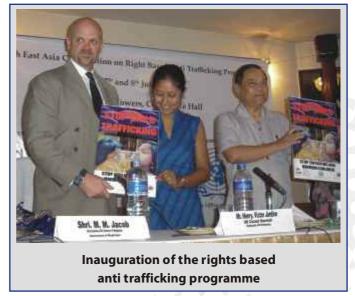
BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships with a number of agencies and organizations are essential for the success of this programme. There are at least five major activities where links and networking is required:

- 1. **Media participation:** In order to build mass awareness on the issue, INGON adopted media strategies and sought to sensitize media personnel on the issue, so that they in turn could create public awareness. Several feature articles and case studies on this subject have been published in leading newspapers and magazines and many press conferences have been held. The creation of public awareness through the media results in a higher incidence of people reporting cases of missing girls to INGON, as people become more aware of where to go and what to do if they encounter a similar situation.
- 2. Lobbying with the government: INGON negotiated with the National Human Rights Commission to include secondary data from all the eight North-Eastern states (Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim) and primary data from the two most vulnerable states (Meghalaya and Assam) in their report. INGON also lobbied with the State Government to reactivate the defunct State-Level Committee on Human Trafficking (created by the Central Government), and tried to pressurize the State Government to design certain preventive measures themselves. For example, efforts were initiated to sensitize police personnel by integrating an antitrafficking course in the Police Training School, and a training manual for law enforcement agencies was developed by the organization. Besides this, a Helpline Resource Directory was developed as was a state-level research report that was supported by the Department of Social Welfare, Government of Meghalaya.
- 3. **Training of stakeholders:** A series of training programmes were conducted for law enforcement agencies, different government departments, medical professionals, members of the judiciary and civil society organizations, in order to sensitize participants to the problem of human trafficking. This also helped in building bridges among different stakeholders to create a coordinated front for combating human trafficking.
- 4. **Conducting research:** Research is an ongoing activity at INGON.
- 5. **Documentation:** INGON has begun documenting and maintaining a case file for each of the girls it rescues. A framework has been developed for this purpose, which provides complete information about a missing girl in order to send regular updates to law enforcement agencies regarding the cases received. Relevant information is also given to the media so that they can publicize these issues.

REPLICABILITY

The model has succeeded in drawing attention to the magnitude of the human trafficking problem in the North-East and is included in Management Systems International's South Asian Regional



Initiative Equity Study, which was supported by USAID for replication in South-East Asia.

The success of the 'Meghalaya Model' has helped extend its outreach to other North-Eastern states as well. With the support of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), INGON has undertaken a project designed to organize state consultations on 'Rights-Based Anti-Trafficking Programming' in all eight North-Eastern states. These state consultations seek to share information on girls who have been rescued and the methodologies used by INGON to contain human trafficking. The consultations also provide a platform for the sharing of experiences and allow an examination of state-specific needs and stress the importance of cross-regional networking in aiding the easier repatriation of the girls who are rescued.



Talking to young children as part of the Campaign Against Child Trafficking (CACT)

CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

The number of shelter homes for the girls who are rescued from human trafficking is still inadequate. Also, there remains an urgent need for the development of directories that provide information about these 'short-stay homes' in North-East India. Another area that needs intervention is the mental rehabilitation of rescued victims. Adequate counselling services are required.

There needs to be more collaboration and cooperation between NGOs and the police, particularly with those groups who work for victims of trafficking. Training programmes need to be conducted to sensitize law enforcement personnel, the media, NGOs and others. Introducing a course on human trafficking issues as part of the police training curriculum may also be useful.

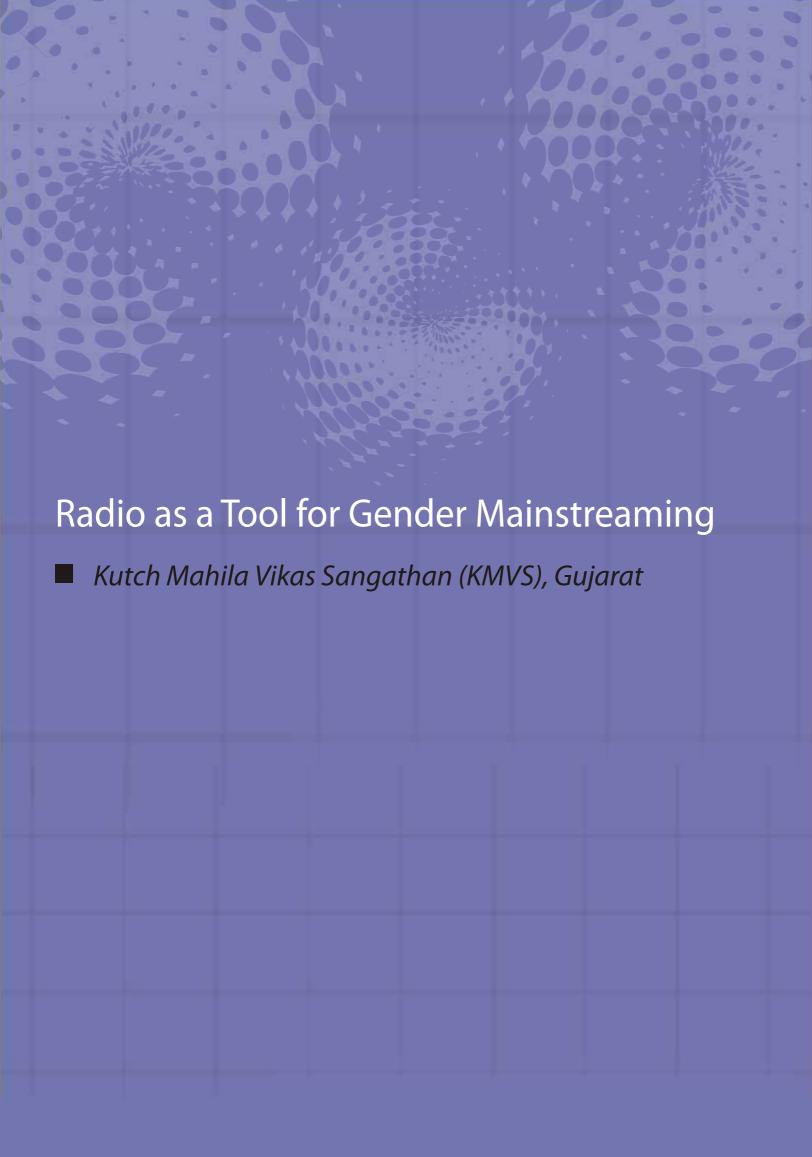
LESSONS LEARNT

There is a strong link between human migration and human trafficking in the North-East. Adequately addressing the vulnerabilities of migrants, thus, can be an important tool in preventing human trafficking.

A sustained media campaign on the dangers of human trafficking (which brings to the fore the relationship between migration and trafficking) has played an important role in raising levels of community awareness, lobbying for laws that prevent human trafficking and punishing traffickers.

Government assistance is required to provide vocational training for the rescued girls. It is important to network with organizations such as ATSEC (North-East chapter), Campaign against Child Trafficking (CACT),¹² the International Justice Mission, Childline and other organizations that have partners in the North-East, as well as with other stakeholders for more success in this initiative.

¹²The international NGO Terre des Hommes launched an international Campaign against Child Trafficking, in 2001. The core objectives of the campaign are to halt the growing exploitation of young boys and girls and to better protect children from human trafficking (available online at < www.stopchildtrafficking.org).



Radio as a Tool for Gender Mainstreaming

Kutch Mahila Vikas Sangathan (KMVS), Gujarat

BACKGROUND

Villages in Gujarat's Kutch region tend to be geographically remote and socially secluded. The incidence of migration amongst men is high, and this, coupled with the frequent occurrence of natural disasters, tends to make the life of women very hard.

The Kutch and Saurashtra regions are prone to drought, cyclones, earthquakes and floods. The lowering of water tables and the shifting of water sources has led to increasing water scarcity and agricultural uncertainty. The Rann of Kutch has been marked as an extremely high-risk earthquake zone; it was at the epicentre of the January 2001 earthquake (along with Saurashtra) that destroyed millions of lives.

These factors and developments have left the local economy vulnerable and in disarray. In the absence of productive job options, women are left with little choice but to engage in home-based work, such as traditional embroidery and crafts.¹

It is against this backdrop that the role of radio assumes great significance. The interplay of dimensions such as distance, illiteracy and poverty make it almost impossible for other forms of media to have the same breadth of outreach for social marketing and for impacting attitudinal changes to gender issues.

The approach and work of the Kutch Mahila Vikas Sangathan (KMVS), a rural women's organization is based on the premise that the empowerment of women involves the interplay of four interrelated and naturally reinforcing components: (i) collective awareness-building, (ii) capacity-building and skills development, (iii) participation, greater control and decision-making power, and (iv) actions to bring about gender equality. From its inception, KMVS has concentrated on building local leadership and creating women's collectives or sangathans. It has promoted women's groups (mahila mandals) at the village level, which collectively form a block-level collective (taluka sangathans). While KMVS staff are not members of these collectives, they act as a resource support unit for the issues raised by the sangathans. Today, the organisation has more than 12,000 rural women members, throughout the five talukas that span 165 villages. There are independent sangathans in each of the five talukas where the KMVS works, two of which are already registered. Each taluka sangathan is led by a taluka committee, comprising of rural women leaders, who give direction to programmes undertaken in the area.

GOOD PRACTICE

Il **Description:** The KMVS uses the medium of radio to disseminate information and awareness on gender issues and to create a demand for literacy, especially among women in the region.

¹From a young age, girls are either pushed into embroidery work as their livelihood or into marriage at the cost of their education. This is reflected in the high levels of illiteracy amongst women in this region. See Ramachandran, V. & A. Saihjee, *Flying with the crane: recapturing KMVS' ten-year journey*, Gujarat: KMVS, 2000.

²The KMVS began working on women's social and political development issues in 1989.

³Ramachandran, Op. cit.

⁴The 50-member team (predominantly women) provides support to the sangathans through seven resource units, each focusing on a particular issue: (i) health, (ii) literacy, (iii) savings and credit, (iv) Panchayati Raj, (v) environment, (vi) handicrafts and (vii) legal aid. A media unit has been established as well, as an off-shoot of the literacy unit, which helps the other units in matters related to media interventions.

II. **Evolution:** The first KMVS intervention to reach women was the literacy programme that aimed at organizing and mobilizing women in remote villages. This programme produced a newsletter, Ujjas Patrika, which kept people (particularly newly elected women representatives in the gram panchayats) informed about KMVS activities. While the readership and popularity of the newsletter soon increased, it also exposed the low rate of literacy amongst the women in the district and the inability of many to access media (due partly to social reasons, exacerbated by the remoteness of the villages in Kutch). At the same time, elected women representatives also expressed their difficulties in reaching taluka headquarters for regular trainings.

One manner in which an accessible flow of information could be enabled, was distance education, to which end KMVS produced an audiotape. The response to this initiative was good and it encouraged the organization to explore the idea of using the radio as a medium to raise issues on gender and good governance among newly elected female representatives. A survey on which was the most popular medium for accessing information was conducted (between the period 1998 to 1999); the results convinced KMVS that radio was the best medium to consider.

- III. **How it works/methodology followed:** Fourteen individuals (both men and women) were selected from the community and trained in reporting. The KMVS, with the help of its partners⁸ in this initiative produced a pilot episode for a radio serial. Gradually, over a span of three serials, the entire agenda, reporting, production and feedback activities were taken over by the KMVS radio team.⁹
 - The strategy used was collaborative, with participants building upon each other's strengths to translate the concept of gender mainstreaming into real action.
 - Capacity-building workshops were held on gender issues to enlarge the team's perspectives and knowledge base.
 - Within the framework and context of developmental issues, gender concerns were woven in, thus building credibility and outreach for the gender mainstreaming process. 10
 - Active community participation (particularly of women) was encouraged, through techniques such as surveys, interviews, opinion polls and debates.
 - As the predominant language spoken in six of the nine talukas is Kutchi, all but one of the radio serials was in this language.¹¹

⁵Ujjas means light, patrika means newspaper, literally the newpaper that enlightens.

⁶The audio tape was titled 'samaj khape sahiyari' (the need to understand collectively).

⁷Approximately 47 percent of surveyed households owned a radio and for 49 percent of the villagers, radio was the primary medium for accessing new information. In the evenings, around 90 percent of villagers (men, women, girls and boys) listened to radio programmes. Most women are not able to listen to the radio in the morning, but everyone could access the evening programmes (Radio Programme Report, April 1998 to March 1999).

These partners included Drishti Media Collective (an organization specializing in development communication) and the Centre for Alternatives in Education (a part of the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad).

The sangathans' role is to provide information, take part in discussions and give feedback, while the Ujjas newsletter publishes synopses of the ongoing serial.

¹⁰Issues of gender were subtly woven around practical information, such as the basics of the new Constitutional Amendment on local governance, the history and culture of Kutch, and the need for rehabilitation after the 2001 Gujarat earthquake. It was only in the fifth serial that the issue of deep-rooted gender stereotypes was directly challenged. Having established the programme's credibility and built up its outreach, it was now possible to take up more basic gender issues and this helped to gradually change people's mindsets.

¹¹Broadcasting the serials in Kutchi enables local people to relate better to the programmes. This is reflected in the feedback postcards the serials receive. After the serial 'Kunajl Paanje Kutchji' was aired, women constituted 16.5 percent of the respondents even though the female literacy rate in Kutch is below 5 percent. (Radio Programme Report, April 1998 to March

- Religious leaders were included in the initiative, by inviting them onto radio programmes to decry practices harmful to women, such as Satta. ¹² This has had a very positive effect on changing attitudes in the community.
- The content of the serials challenged stereotypical gender roles. Women were portrayed in roles traditionally allotted to men, such as that of protagonists/heroes/leaders. The projections were subtle, but still managed to convey key messages to both men and women in the community.

The methods and processes were designed to be women-friendly, encourage participation and provide a legitimate space to women to express themselves.¹³

As a result of the KMVS community radio programmes, more and more women are now being accepted as social leaders and are approached for advice on social (particularly gender) issues. A concerted effort is undertaken by all KMVS staff and sangathan leaders, using a combination of street plays, songs and posters in public places¹⁴ to give exposure to forthcoming programmes. Regular feedback is an integral aspect of the community radio project, for which different participatory methods are used.¹⁵

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

Until 2006 there was no government policy in India regarding the promotion of community radio. KMVS, based on its positive experience¹⁶ of using radio to mainstream gender concerns, (along with other national organisations) lobbied for a redefinition of the national policy to include NGOs and sangathans as well.

By involving themselves with KMVS' activities, women leaders from the sangathans have now expressed confidence in being able to run their own programmes. Communities have increasingly begun to take up gender-related issues,¹⁷ thus demonstrating a change in the way women see themselves and how they are viewed by the community.

¹²Cross marriages between two families is a common practice in Kutch. The custom results in women facing mental and physical torture in their marital homes because if the daughter is not happy in her marriage then her parents harass their daughter-in-law, who has come from the other household and is their son's wife, and vice versa. This leads to a lot of anxiety and mental torture for both women.

¹³Research by teams of reporters, together with different stakeholders in remote parts of the region, helps the team gather views and information on legends, folktales and songs around a issue. A conscious effort is made to discover legends involving women, documenting the positive examples of female leaders, singers, etc. so as to build the issue up into episodes. Songs sung among different communities are also recorded.

¹⁴Bus stands, water collection posts, etc.

¹⁵Reporters use informal methods such as discussing the programme with people at the bus stop or in groups in the village. To facilitate feedback, there are also postcard and phone options available, and opinions are then broadcast as part of the episode. Sometimes, the episode is paused to ask the audience for their opinion on a particular (usually gender-based) issue in the storyline. Formal mid-term and final feedback is also part of the review, which looks into technical parameters such as episode duration, time of broadcast, etc., all the while ensuring gender-desegregated opinions.

¹⁶Surveys conducted by the Centre for Alternatives in Education (of the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad) revealed that during and after the broadcast of 'Kunjal Paanje Kutchi', listenership had gone up to 71 percent. The opinion boxes kept at several public places were widely used, and the radio programme continues to receive a large number of phone calls and letters. While some provide routine feedback, others invite the radio team to their villages to investigate stories or unearth scams. Since All India Radio (AIR) reception reaches the entire Kutch region, the programme is heard in remote villages, where no other media or NGO has been able to reach.

¹⁷Social issues such as that of education for girls, dowry harassment, violence against women (VAW), and female suicide rates were interwoven into the storylines, thus creating a major impact at the family level.

REPLICABILITY

Realizing the potential of radio to change community attitudes, organizations in other states¹⁸ have also developed demonstrable models in community broadcasting. This is an eminently replicable programme.

CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

When the KMVS first conceptualized the idea of using radio to spread gender awareness amongst their communities, there was no favourable national policy on community radio; consequently, KMVS had had no option but to collaborate with the official radio broadcasting station. This first radio experience, however, showed KMVS that many people were not ready to take them seriously ¹⁹ and that KMVS and the women's sangathans needed a space of their own in the mainstream media.



KMVS radio-reaching out to women in Kutch

The challenge lies in maintaining the organization's integrity. The KMVS media unit has begun extending its expertise in media issues to other NGOs. This has, however, proved to be equally challenging, for collaborating NGOs occasionally wish to deliver information on issues other than gender, or on concerns that do not form part of the KMVS agenda. Although this is just the beginning, KMVS has realized that it needs to be firm (when it comes to dissemination of information) and remain consistent in its approach and priorities.

LESSONS LEARNT

The KMVS initiative using radio as a tool to mainstream gender concerns has shown the potential radio carries in a country where the 'participatory' and 'socially responsible' roles of the mass media are extremely relevant. It also shows that the radio makes it possible to reach and mobilize a large number of women, at an extremely low cost. Since literacy is still a substantial barrier to development, small-scale media needs to be encouraged, even as large-scale media formats are invading almost every aspect of society.

While mass media has its own advantages, community radio creates a space for the community to bring in collective participation in all aspects of broadcasting. At the same time, it has the potential to incorporate the culture and language of the area. When local people produce programmes, it not only empowers them, but also brings to light local issues and concerns. Efforts must continue to support and encourage such initiatives, especially amongst marginalized communities such as Dalits.

¹⁸These include the Deccan Development Society (Pastapur, Andhra Pradesh), VOICES and MYRADA (Kolar, Karnataka) and the Shree Ramanna Maharishio Academy for the Blind (Kannakapura, Karnataka).

¹⁹For their first broadcast, the women had planned to discuss environmental degradation and its impact on rural women. The officials of the radio station however asked them to sing festive songs instead and refused to even record the episode that the women had prepared.

Increased Access to Disaster Relief for Women as an Idiom for Women's Rights Ekta, Tamil Nadu

Increased Access to Disaster Relief for Women as an Idiom for Women's Rights

Ekta, Tamil Nadu

BACKGROUND

Extensive damage was caused in the coastal districts of the Indian states of Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and in the Union Territory of Puducherry, by the unprecedented tsunami of December 2004. Tamil Nadu was the most affected state, with 13 coastal districts being directly hit. Cuddalore was one of the districts which suffered the most damage. Fifty one villages (99,704 people) were affected in the district, 617 people were killed, 214 were injured and 15,200 houses/huts were damaged.¹

The situation demanded urgent intervention for the removal of the many dead bodies that lay scattered along the shore and for the provision of immediate shelter and relief to thousands of survivors. Healthcare, food, clothing, clean drinking water and sanitation facilities were other pressing concerns that had to be addressed.

As in most disaster situations, women were particularly vulnerable, physically and psychologically. They tended to be excluded from relief assistance and livelihood promotion activities, from consultations on reconstruction planning and specifically, from decision-making bodies. Compounding the problem was the fact that the fishing communities in Cuddalore (inevitably amongst the worst affected) are extremely orthodox and highly patriarchal. Women are marginalized and invisible. Girls are not given the opportunity to be educated and there is a high incidence of child marriage. The tsunami and its aftermath made girls and single women even more vulnerable, given the discriminatory practices followed by the community.

Ekta (meaning unity), is a training and resource organization that focuses on women's and children's rights. Established in 1990, Ekta is now recognized in Tamil Nadu as one of the foremost organizations for gender training. It conducts gender sensitization programmes for government functionaries, college students, police officials and in communities where Ekta is directly involved at the field level. It is also an advocacy and lobbying organization that promotes women's perspectives and urges gender mainstreaming in national schemes and policies. Located in Madurai, it assists in capacity building of smaller NGOs, especially in the context of women's rights.

GOOD PRACTICE

I. **Description:** Ekta's tsunami relief and rehabilitation programme - Protection and Promotion of Childhood in Cuddalore District - was initiated in 2005. The intervention covered 21 villages that were largely inhabited by fishing communities. It focused on girls and women, who were the most affected and the most destitute after the tsunami. Ekta's emphasis on child rights, with special focus on the

¹Source: Government of Tamil Nadu. Available online at < http://www.tn.gov.in/tsunami/>

²Post-tsunami, women had to deal with the shock of the disaster and the loss of family members and/or belongings. There were a large number of female-headed households now, due to the loss of male relatives. Many men, who did survive, lost their livelihoods and felt incapable of taking care of their families; many of them turned to alcohol for comfort. This in turn put women (and children) at greater risk of physical violence.

³Since most rehabilitation efforts were focused on men, they did not address the needs of women such as their physical or mental health, their need for livelihoods and the education of girl-children. These needs were insufficiently addressed even before the tsunami and now faced further neglect.

girl-child, is the key thrust of the organization's tsunami intervention. Ekta works with the community, Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI) members and government functionaries to address the issues affecting girls and single women. It is through this interaction and gender-sensitizing process with the different stakeholders that Ekta takes forward the gender mainstreaming process.

- II **Evolution:** After the tsunami struck, Ekta, along with other women's organizations, lobbied with the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, the State Relief Commissioner and the district administration, to address the special needs of women and girls.
 - The efforts of most NGOs were concentrated in Nagapattinam (which had the highest number of casualties) and in a few select areas of Cuddalore. Ekta took a decision to reach out to areas where little concerted work was being undertaken and decided to provide a comprehensive package to offer shelter to orphaned girls and those with single parents, to assist and enable them to continue to pursue their education and to access healthcare facilities and life-skills training. Ekta continued its relief and rehabilitation activities in these areas even after relief efforts dried up and other organizations had moved out.
- III **How it works/methodology followed:** Ekta identified the special needs of girls and women and advocated gender-sensitive disaster relief policies. It organized capacity-building trainings and legal camps, in the process educating and urging women to organize themselves to claim basic rights such as housing. The components identified for Ekta interventions were: education assistance for girls, shelters/homes; legal aid and health camps.

Those considered particularly vulnerable in the aftermath of the tsunami were:

- Adolescent girls: Dropouts and uneducated adolescent girls were the target group for participation
 in trainings organized by Ekta on computer literacy, health and vocational skills. The girls were also
 sensitized to rights issues at these trainings.
- **Single women:** Efforts were undertaken to provide single women with adult education programmes and help them access platforms (such as SHGs), to articulate their needs. In the future, Ekta seeks to organize these women into collectives and assist them in obtaining access to special government schemes and in taking up income-generating activities.

Despite Ekta's gender focus, the organization also sought to address the special requirements of the differently abled. Differently abled women are doubly vulnerable, first as women, and second, because of their being differently abled. The organization realized the need to integrate the concerns of these women into the larger concerns of the community; thus, it attempted to get the voices of such women heard in the gram sabhas, in discussions with PRI members and with government functionaries, so as to help them to access to schemes, grants and facilities intended for them.

Areas of Intervention:

Three areas for intervention were identified – education, healthcare and legal aid.

⁴In the course of distribution of relief it was observed that care packets handed out did not contain petticoats, sanitary towels and other essential items for women. Similarly, consideration was not given to the special needs of aged-women or children.

⁵At discussions with Ekta's field team, single women (widows and single mothers,) voiced their concerns. These included their not being eligible for widow pensions, if they have a son over the age of 18; neglect by adult sons, forfeiture of pensions (in some villages) to obtain the benefit of ration cards; poor financial status; lack of awareness about the fate of their tsunami related petitions and depending on neighbours for food, shelter and clothing.

⁶Ekta is in the process of identifying livelihood options that are available for single women. Subsequently linkages will be forged with financial institutions and entrepreneurial skills trainings will be imparted, keeping in mind the feasibility and viability of alternative livelihood options in these areas.

Education:

A key component of the programme was that it was not limited to routine education. Ekta's programme provided opportunities for children to be informed of their rights and to participate in camps⁷ that encouraged a process of learning and awareness creation. It evolved criteria that provided a basis for selection of beneficiaries for educational assistance. The criteria provided special consideration to girls a) affected by the tsunami, b) who had to drop out of school due to poverty, c) came from families with more than one girl-child, d) had a single parent, or e) came from women-headed households. The Ekta team made regular home visits to follow up with parents and teachers regarding the progress of the girls and weekly meetings were held at which parents and their children were present. These activities have helped the community understand the importance of education for their girl-children; many more girls are now being allowed to finish high school, which has resulted in an increase in the age of marriage in the area.

Computer Literacy Programme (CLP): A six-month Computer Literacy Programme (CLP) was introduced especially for adolescent girls who have completed education upto Class X and XII.¹²

Healthcare:

Women tend to not regard their health as a priority and are therefore most vulnerable to general and reproductive health problems. Ekta's interventions in this sector are particularly significant and have resulted in an increased awareness about healthcare, hygiene and nutrition and an understanding of health as a rights issue, especially for the girl child. Health cards and iron tablets were provided to children, who were encouraged, along with the women to visit Primary Health Centres (PHCs) to access healthcare facilities. The organization's interaction with the staff of PHCs and healthcare providers also catalysed these institutions to become more proactive in their service delivery. Health camps were held to create awareness amongst women (and the community at large) about women's nutritional needs. Interaction with the State Health Department sought to find ways of making the healthcare system more accessible to women.¹¹

Legal camps:

Disdavantaged groups such as the Dalits, Irulas, ¹³ and single women (deserted and widowed) were in the most difficult position. Most of them were not being compensated (or sufficiently compensated) by the government for the loss of livelihoods and cattle. Many had submitted petitions to the government, but

⁷Children's camps, in which girls and boys participated, were conducted, thereby helping the Ekta team to closely interact and identify the strengths of the children. These camps were primarily held in government schools. The staff of the schools developed a rapport with local leaders and the community, enabling Ekta to negotiate with community leaders on issues concerning the rights of women and girl-children. With education, girls have become proactive in bringing change to their villages.

⁸It was clear at the outset of the programme that educational aid needed to be concentrated on the girl child. As the programme progressed and because all the children participated jointly in camp activities, Ekta realized that boys also needed such support,

 $^{^{9}}$ Women were organized into Self-Help Groups (SHGs) that were involved in monitoring the education of the children.

¹⁰Teachers are now also more conscious about the school attendance of girls, thus ensuring that girls continue their education to higher classes.

¹¹Since hospitals are usually more than five to six kilometres away, women need to know how they can avail of medical facilities in an emergency.

¹²In the last three years, 41 adolescent girls have completed the Diploma in Computer Application (DCA) programme. Twenty students are employed in local schools, computer training centres, data entry points and as tuition teachers with NGOs.

¹³The Irulas are a Scheduled Tribe group located mainly in the Thiruvallur district of Tamil Nadu. They are traditionally catchers of snakes and rats, today their main occupation is fishing and working in the fields at sowing and harvest time.



Literacy Programme

were unaware of action taken, if any. Ekta held camps where people could articulate their grievances regarding the compensation. It assisted them in assessing their losses and provided information on government schemes they could apply for. In addition, information was given on legal issues that are pertinent to women,¹⁴ thus allowing them to articulate their problems and discuss solutions. This has also made men more aware of the legal consequences of violence against women.

Through the Tsunami Coordination Committee, Ekta brings to the Government's notice the highly gender-discriminatory criteria that characterizes the Government's benefit schemes.¹⁵ Ekta has also urged candidates contesting elections to be more gender

sensitive and called for an end to discriminatory practices.

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

Ekta networks with other local NGOs and has established relationships with panchayat functionaries, and with officers of the police, health, education, civil supplies and social welfare departments. It has interacted with the juvenile justice board and with Annamalai University. Ekta's linkages are not limited to just coordination or service delivery, but also involve a process of gender sensitization and awareness creation on ground realities.

Ekta is a member of the Tamil Nadu Tsunami Resource Centre (TNTRC). ¹⁶ This district-level resource centre in Cuddalore was inaugurated in 2006, with Ekta as the convening organization for the first year. This is a platform for NGOs to come together and lobby with the district administration on various issues. The first issue that was taken up was that of the relief packages not being women and child-friendly. The second issue was that female-headed households were not considered as heads of households and were therefore denied the compensation that other tsunami-hit families received. ¹⁷

REPLICABILITY

The experience of Ekta has shown that there is a need to identify and focus on the special needs and requirements of women in disaster situations. Women are affected very adversely in times of disaster and their natural vulnerability increases. Government schemes and initiatives often leave women out of the picture altogether and patriarchal communities make things worse. The need to identify the special needs of women and to persuade governments and NGOs to address these needs is imperative across the country and the Ekta initiative is very replicable.

¹⁴Such as the Marriage Act, the Dowry Prohibition Act, laws on the woman's right to property and land, legislation to combat VAW, government schemes for single women/widows/the aged, and the country's declining sex ratio.

¹⁵For example, to be eligible for government benefits, widows require to be over the age of 45, not have sons above the age of 18, nor be a holder of any property or land; similarly, physically-challenged applicants must also be over the age of 45, with a 75 percent disability (in case of a 90 percent disability, anyone over the age of 30 can claim assistance); and to claim old age pension, the applicant should be over the age of 60, have no sons and must reside alone.

¹⁶ After the tsunami, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) facilitated the establishment of district level resource centres in affected areas through the TNTRC.

¹⁷At the time of this study, all these collaborative efforts were in their initial stages.

Voices

"I am Janaki from Indira Nagar. My father is a wage labourer and my mother works at home. I have three elder sisters and a brother. I completed class X and was sent to Salem to work in a mill. It was at that time that the tsunami struck my village, so I returned to see what had happened and meet with my family. As there was a break in my job, I was not paid as per the contract agreement. Even though the work in Salem was difficult, I decided to return, as it would be one less mouth for my parents to feed. On completion of my contract in Salem, I returned home and joined an institute in Chidambaram to get my Diploma as a Medical Laboratory Technician (DMLT), with the support of the NGO World Vision. They paid the fee (Rs. 10,000) and I completed the course. My parents refused to give me the money to collect my certificate from the institute. It was at this time that Ekta staff encouraged me to join the computer literacy programme. I am happy that I am now learning a new skill that will help me earn the money to pay for my certificate."

- Janaki from Indira Nagar



Participants at a training programme

CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

Ekta's activities on the ground have received a great deal of cooperation from the community. Initially, there was some resentment from the community, because the people felt that facilities were being provided only to the girls. However, since many of Ekta's subsequent initiatives sought to include boys as well, the goodwill of the community was soon gained.

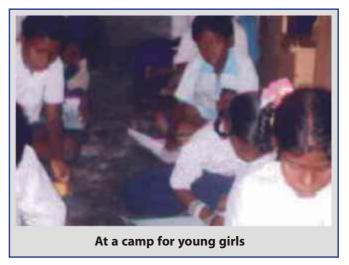
LESSONS LEARNT

Ekta's experience shows that the gender mainstreaming process can be greatly facilitated

by encouraging dialogue and interaction between community leaders, government officials and women. Representatives from all these groups participate in state and district level fora, thereby sensitizing the authorities to women's special needs.¹⁸

Ekta's continuous interactions with the schools has reduced the drop-out rate and activated parent-teacher forums. Through community participation, students who had dropped out of school were motivated to rejoin school. Giving support to anganwadi teachers and public recognition of their contribution has motivated them to identify and bring children-at-risk to the centre.

Educational support can provide the leverage to reach out to young girls and this has been used effectively by Ekta. It also demonstrates its gender and developmental focus and its willingness to challenge gender stereotypes and address issues relating to



¹⁸ For instance, the issue of destitute and widow pensions has been repeatedly discussed in these fora and attempts are being made to relax the norms specified for the Government's pension schemes.

women in the family. Ekta has attempted to break these barriers and in the process has organized activities where boys can participate too. The organization has used this opportunity to create awareness



and inject gender sensitivity among young people. Ekta has enabled adolescent girls to be more aware of their rights and develop the self-esteem and confidence required to move into areas where they would never have thought of venturing earlier, such as computer technology.

Ekta has also brought the highly discriminatory criteria used by the government in assessing the impact of disasters like the tsunami and the consequent assessment of relief to the notice of the Government. The Government of Tamil Nadu, in turn, has responded positively to many of the suggestions and acted upon them.



Empowering Single Women

Ekal Nari Shakti Sangathan (ENSS), Rajasthan

BACKGROUND

There are over 33 million widows in India accounting for about eight percent of the country's total female population. Despite such a large percentage, little is known about the actual living conditions of widows and the quiet deprivations that they experience on a daily basis.

In Rajasthan, women have a low status in society, the result of a variety of factors the fact of a patriarchal society, an oppressive caste system with feudal customs and values, high rates of illiteracy and extreme poverty. Several of the practices prevalent in the state even today such as sati,³ purdah,⁴ child marriage, restrictions on widows and female infanticide/foeticide reflect this low status of women in society. In this context, being a widow is painful and humiliating and involves additional discrimination and ritual sanctions.⁵ These rituals mean that not only does a widow have to deal with social and economic upheaval but she is also physically and psychologically isolated from the rest of the community.⁶ Single women⁷ are made to feel like social outcasts.⁸ The same cannot be said for single men, single men are socially acceptable and percentage-wise, men usually do not remain single for long, they remarry.⁹ There are few social security measures aimed at widows and none at all for separated/abandoned women.¹⁰

²Widows are rarely mentioned in the literature on poverty, in public debates on social policy, or even by the women's movement itself. *Widows in India: social neglect and public action, Martha A. Chen (ed.), Sage Publications, New Delhi,* 1998.

³Sati is a Hindu funeral practice in which a widow would immolate herself on her husband's funeral pyre. The Indian Government enacted the Rajasthan Sati Prevention Ordinance on 1 October, 1987, and later passed the Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987. This Act makes it illegal to abet, glorify or attempt to commit sati. Abetment of sati, including coercing or forcing someone to commit sati, can be punished by death or life imprisonment, while glorifying sati is punishable by up to seven years in prison. However, enforcement of these measures is not always consistent.

⁴Purdah is the practice of preventing men from seeing women, and takes two forms: physical segregation of the sexes and the requirement for women to cover their bodies/conceal their form. Purdah exists in varying forms in many parts of India.

⁵Life as a widow can be fraught with violence: she can be chased out of her in-laws'/parents'/sons' home; any land/property she owns can be snatched away (thus leaving her with no recourse to livelihood or social security); some people, think widows are witches and indulge in cruel practices such as stoning them to death; a widow's children can be taken from her; and she may be denied food and/or clothing. Some people also believe a widow's presence is inauspicious at festivities such as religious or marriage ceremonies. In addition, Indian society still has reservations regarding the idea of widow remarriage.

⁶Reddy, P.A., *Problems of Widows in India*, Sarup Publications, New Delhi, 2004.

⁷For the purposes of this study, single women include widows, divorcees, women thrown out of their homes and 'elderly' unmarried women (this often refers to women as young as 30 in India).

Traditionally, a single woman is considered the responsibility of the extended family, until she is married off. When a woman is not married, it is automatically assumed that there is something wrong with her. Single women are barred from participating in religious festivities/marriage celebrations because they are considered unholy or inauspicious.

⁹Census of India, 2001, Widowed: males 97,28,919 and females 3,42,89,729. Divorced, separated persons: males 9,88,095 and females 23,42,930.

¹⁰ There is a government pension scheme for widows (under which a widow can get a monthly stipend of Rs.400, and some ashram grahs (homes) for shelter, but these are difficult to access due to bureaucratic procedures and the pension is inadequate.

¹Census of India, 2001, Government of India.

Offering a solution beyond ashram grahs and government pensions, the Ekal Nari Shakti Sangathan¹¹ (ENSS) or the Association of Strong Women Alone (ASWA) initiative has helped organize single women (largely widowed or separated women and also older unmarried women) to fight for their rights and to live with dignity. They change the quality of their lives by mainstreaming the concerns of single women in different sectors, such as property rights, health and education. ENSS was promoted by Astha,¹² (which means deep faith/conviction), an organization which enables those facing economic marginalization, feudal oppression, gender discrimination, inequality and environmental degradation, to organize themselves into community and issue-based groups and networks that work on claiming/reclaiming their basic human rights.¹³ Astha has faith in the strength and ability of the poor and marginalized. Astha addresses development issues following the 'rights-based' approach, motivating groups to initiate action to claim their basic human rights (the right to life, to live with dignity, to work, to food, to health, to land and to livelihood).

GOOD PRACTICE

- I. **Description:** ENSS believes that if people organize themselves, they can form a 'critical mass' that is large enough to bring changes in state policies, caste and in community customs and laws. ¹⁴ Astha realized the importance of getting widows together so that they could help one another and pave the way for better entitlements. The initial realization made way for the initiation of a state-level widows' convention and then, the top-down approach ¹⁵ was used to promote a state-wide association of widowed women, who very soon expanded their association to include separated and abandoned women too.
- II. **Evolution:** In collaboration with another NGO, Hadoti Shilp Sansthan (HSS) from Rajasthan's Kota district, Astha began their work in 11 districts of Rajasthan. Thus began the organization's efforts to bring widows 'in' from the margins of society and to help them to recognize their own strength. The first ever convention on widows took place in 1999 and was attended by 425 widows from 21 districts in Rajasthan. This was the first time any initiative had been taken to get widows together on a single platform, with the aim of empowering them. A follow-up committee decided that a state-level association of widows was required, and that the sangathan/association should not be restricted only to widows; rather, membership should be given to all single women from the lower income groups, as they face more or less the same problems.

¹¹A collective of women (in this case of single women) who take up their own issues and empower themselves by putting these concerns forward.

¹² As tha was established in 1986, in Rajasthan, and works with marginalized people to help them equip themselves to overcome the socio-economic obstacles they face.

¹³While taking up issues of livelihood, globalized economic policy, land displacement, local self-governance, budget analysis (for economic, social and cultural rights or to see that the budget expenditures are in line with the stated priorities), etc., Astha has also promoted strong sangathans of single women, of tribal people and associations of women working exclusively for bringing about change in their communities.

¹⁴Wichterich, C., H. Subramanyum and P. Esteves, *Changing context, changing roles: a study on the transformation of roles and relationships between NGOs and community-based organizations*, Bonn: Church Development Services (CDS) & Palmyrah Workers Development Society (PWDS), Madhurai, 2006, pg. 91.

¹⁵ASWA was formed by the Follow-Up Committee of the convention on widows. That Committee became the State Level Committee of ASWA, which then formed Block Level Committees in the first 20 districts (now 28 districts out of 33 districts in Rajasthan). The Block Level Committees were made up of single women Members of the Association, with a total of three women per gram panchayat. In this way, a state-wide, State Level Committee reached out and formed an association that reaches gram panchayats throughout the state. By the end of 2008, there were Block Committees in 92 of the 237 blocks in Rajasthan and also in 11 towns and cities of the state. There were 26,216 members as of December 2008. There are 84 state-level representatives (three per district) from different blocks. Block Committee members (about 30-40 in each block) deal with cases at the village level. The role of the State Level Committee is to lobby with the government regarding issues which are of concern to the members.

- III. **How it works/methodology followed:** The ENSS uses a three-pronged approach to reach its objectives: (i) to increase membership by reaching out to as many single women as it can;¹⁶ (ii) to deal with social issues directly at the community level;¹⁷ and (iii) to take up entitlement issues directly with the government administration. Since its formation, the ENSS has focused on reclaiming the rights of single women through various interventions:
 - Right to human dignity: working towards breaking social norms that dehumanize single women, such as not allowing them to dress/eat/celebrate festive occasions



enss women take to the streets as a show of strength to celebrate

Women's Empowerment Day

- like married women do or subjecting them to other forms of physical and verbal violence.
- **Right to property:** rectifying practices that take away a single woman's right to own and have possession of land, housing or other property.
- **Right to livelihood:** building women's capacities and enhancing their livelihoods by helping them claim/access their entitlements under various government schemes (such as drought relief work, employment guarantee schemes, pensions, BPL cards, etc.).
- **Right to education:** helping the children of single women access free educational facilities. ¹⁸
- **Right to health:** working towards policy changes for issuance of health cards for single women, pension scheme benefits etc.
- **Right to political participation:** encouraging ENSS members to contest local self-government elections, to participate in gram sabhas, to vote.

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

ENSS is a sangathan an organization of struggle, constructive action and support; it seeks to put pressure on the government through the medium of women's groups and has linkages with a number of organizations and campaigns. ENSS members participate in a number of campaigns such as the drought campaign (demanding more work); the Forest Rights campaign and is active in the Right to Food campaign. ENSS, with Astha's help, is currently

VOICES

"Before joining the ENSS, I would peep from the crack of the window when someone knocked the door and dared not open it. But today, even if a policeman in front of me is doing something wrong, I don't mind holding him by his collar and making him do the right thing!"

- Mohinibai

 $^{^{16}}$ Within a short span of eight years, the organization has garnered more than 26,000 single women members in Rajasthan.

¹⁷Rather than wait for traditional community leaders to give permission to change social customs or rituals, ENSS believes in taking immediate action itself. The collectives always support their members and are ready to face the backlash from the community, when a social custom is defied.

¹⁸ENSS has also worked towards getting a Government Resolution (GR) waiving school fees for the children of single women, so that more such children can access educational institutions. The organization closely monitors cases where schools violate the GR and brings the latter to the notice of the concerned authority.

helping to strengthen and expand work with single women and to build partnerships with Ekal Nari groups in eight states, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand and Bihar.

REPLICABILITY

The idea of organizing and empowering single women throughout the state is one that is now being replicated in other Indian states as well. Following demands for similar interventions in other states, Astha and ENSS members have initiated efforts in Jharkhand and Himachal Pradesh for such sangathans. These state-wide associations of single women are designed to function independently and have now been established in both these states. The approach was similar to the approach followed in Rajasthan: state-level conventions in Jharkhand and Himachal Pradesh have resulted in the formation of state-level committees and block-level structures are also being formed. It is understood, however, that although the approaches are similar, methods will vary depending on the local environment and culture. Initiatives like these have resulted in awareness and a deeper understanding of the process of institutional development, thus increasing the likelihood of initiating similar movements in other states as well. The long-term goal is to establish a national forum or federation of state associations of single women, where women can raise their demands, help each other and bring about social change to mainstream their concerns.

CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

It has been difficult to change social customs that have been part of Rajasthan's culture for centuries. Many of the ideas and activities of the ENSS are difficult for local people to accept. The organization's biggest challenge remains trying to break down deep-rooted patriarchal stereotypes and trying to convince local populations of the need to accept widows and other single women as part of mainstream society.

LESSONS LEARNT

Astha started with the assumption that widows and separated women belonging to low income families are strong women, not weak women that

VOICES

"...the ENSS has given us another birth. We thought we were dead after we became widowed..."

- Widow from Lohargadh village, Udaipur



Breaking social customs, in training programmes and camps, women begin to wear 'bindis', bangles and henna again

they need organizing, not ashrams. It recognized the stree shakti / women's power which has been locked up for centuries.

Another important learning that emerged was that a sangathan exclusively of and for single women can be an important lobbying and pressure organization. While members of such sangathans can be members of other institutions as well, it is imperative that single women are organized collectively, since they face similar problems and can provide the understanding and support required to fight common problems.

It is also necessary to recognize that the organizational process should be undertaken

directly by single women themselves, instead of their waiting for their concerns to be addressed by ongoing government/NGO programmes. While a top-down approach serves to open-out the issue initially, it is quickly converted into a rooted, mass-based bottom-up approach, as women begin to express their concerns and take action themselves at the local level.

Broadening the scope of the movement from addressing the concerns of widows alone, to encompassing all single women, has given it greater outreach. This has enhanced solidarity across identities and encouraged self-reliance and a positive self-image against the socially negative connotations associated with widows and single women. Cultivating good leaders has also worked in the sangathan's favour. Literacy is not regarded as a condition for leadership, but it is emphasized that women must become literate once they assume positions of leadership.

The strategies described have been tried out and have worked well for ENSS. They have immense potential to be successfully adapted as part of similar initiatives in other states; and can ensure that single women, young and old, claim their basic rights and live with dignity.



Women as Agents of Change in Combating HIV/AIDS

The Karnataka Health Promotion Trust (KHPT), Karnataka

BACKGROUND

It is estimated that at present there are approximately between 2 to 3.1 million people living with HIV/AIDS (PHLIV) in India.¹ Karnataka is considered to be one of seven Indian states² with the highest population of people living with HIV/AIDS, (around 0.81 percent of the state's adult population). North Karnataka has been identified as a particularly high-incidence area, due to the widespread practice of the Devadasi³ system here, which leaves girls and women extremely vulnerable to the contraction and spread of HIV/AIDS.

The Government of India's National AIDS Control Programme (NACP)⁴, is implemented by the National AIDS Control Organization (NACO) through its state AIDS control/prevention societies. In Karnataka and Rajasthan, these efforts are assisted by the India-Canada Collaborative HIV/AIDS Project (ICHAP).⁵ There is a strong rationale for capacity-building and expanding the HIV programme in Karnataka. HIV prevalence is high and the epidemic has reached all corners of the state. It is also one of the few states where rural prevalence of HIV exceeds that in urban areas. The high rural population in the district of Bagalkot (in northern Karnataka) was an important factor in considering it a site for the demonstration project on comprehensive rural HIV/AIDS prevention and care. Other factors that made Bagalkot suitable for this project were its high rates of both in-migration and out-migration and the wide prevalence of the Devadasi tradition.⁶

The project covered the six talukas (administrative blocks)⁷ that make up Bagalkot. When CIDA funding for this initiative ended, it was continued by the University of Manitoba (Canada) and the

¹Estimates put national adult HIV prevalence in India at 0.36 percent. See UNAIDS, 2007 AIDS Epidemic Update, Geneva, 2007, pg. 21. Available online at < www.unaids.org >

²The others states are Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland and more recently Goa. See National AIDS Control Organization, 'HIV Sentinel Surveillance and HIV Estimation (2006)', available online at < www.nacoonline.org >

³The Devadasi (literally meaning 'female servant of god') system has historically been practiced in the districts of north Karnataka, south Maharashtra and in parts of Andhra Pradesh. The tradition involves the dedication of young girls (some as young as six), mostly from the economically weaker sections of society, to a Hindu deity. This brands the girls as servants of God and makes them responsible for taking care of the temples as well as having sex with the temple's priests, who are considered synonymous with the deity. They are then temple concubines and the priests regularly hire them out to any man who wishes to have sex with them. Devadasis are not allowed to marry and are not paid for the sex they have to engage in; as a result, many Devadasi women turn to commercial sex work to support themselves. (See Nair, P.M. 'A Report on Trafficking in Women and Children in India', National Human Rights Commission, Government of India, 2004, pgs 195-199).

⁴The NACP's three phases aim at implementing various projects, amending rules regarding blood safety and establishing a decentralized mechanism to facilitate effective state-level responses to HIV prevention programmes. NACP I (1992-1999) and NACP II (1999-2006) are over; the government is currently preparing for NACP III (2007-2012).

⁵Established in early 2001, the India-Canada Collaborative HIV/AIDS Project (ICHAP) is a five-year project funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and implemented by a consortium of three Canadian agencies: the University of Manitoba, Mascen Consultants (Ottawa) and ProAction (Montreal). Besides institutional capacity-building in Karnataka, the project also built demonstration projects, the first being the rural HIV prevention and care project in Bagalkot. The project ended in March 2006.

⁶Migrants and sex workers are both considered to be at high risk of contracting HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections due to high incidence of casual sex and multiple partners.

⁷These are Badami, Bagalkot, Bigli, Hungund, Jamkhandi and Mudhol.

Karnataka Health Promotion Trust (KHPT) through the Samastha project an integrated HIV and AIDS prevention and care programme in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh funded by USAID.⁸

GOOD PRACTICE

- I. **Description:** The project identified three priority areas that required strengthening of programmes and services: (i) rural HIV prevention among most at risk population both men and women and pregnant women (including raising awareness about service availability); (ii) care and treatment for people living with HIV and AIDS and orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs) and (iii) strengthening existing systems within the district for sustainable change.
- II. **Evolution:** The Samastha project realized early on that its approach would have to be gendersensitive and involve both men and women in HIV prevention and care activities including creating and fortifying community-based structures such as village health and sanitation committees. At the same time, the implementers were aware that the project would have to be sustainable, with community ownership and state responsiveness. Thus, in contrast to most HIV/AIDS interventions under the NACP II (which were mostly urban-based), the Samastha project is based in a rural district focusing on risk and vulnerability to HIV in the rural areas. When the project started in 2003, interventions were initiated in all villages in the district. All the villages were profiled based on risk and burden of care. In 2006, the Samastha project consolidated the interventions in the district by focusing on 250 villages for intensive interventions ¹⁰. An integrated approach that included all programme elements such as Information, Education and Communication (IEC), sexually transmitted infections (STI) management and condom promotion, focused prevention, voluntary counselling and testing, care and support for PLHIV was employed.
- III. **How it works/methodology followed:** A human resource-intensive implementation model was carried out in the selected blocks through a cadre of supervisors and link workers.¹¹ Existing healthcare services at the village level were strengthened by imparting training to different government departments and private healthcare providers.¹² Since the project's approach was community-based, it involved the community from the stage of making assessments and designing to the implementation of the programme. Link workers were recruited from the villages, in consultation with the village leaders. An enabling environment was created, from the beginning, by mobilizing support of community leaders to change the discriminatory attitudes of community members towards sex workers and PLHIV.¹³

⁸The US\$22-million project is funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and is being implemented over a period of five years in the rural districts of Bangalore, Tumkur, Kolar, Davangere, Bellary, Gulbarga, Mysore, Hassan, Dharwad, Bijapur, Bagalkot and Belgaum in Karnataka. Besides four districts in Andhra Pradesh are also part of the project.

The challenges posed to the Samastha project at the district level included an inadequate and underdeveloped health infrastructure, high rates of in and out-migration and home-based rural female sex work (the Devadasi tradition).

¹⁰These were villages having high-risk behaviour as a result of high concentrations of Devadasis and regular migrations of women (both in and out of the state) for sex work. These villages also had higher number of PLHIV.

 $^{^{11}}$ There were three field coordinators, 12 supervisors and 128 link workers covering a population of 600,000 people.

¹²The project trained doctors, nurses and anganwadi workers on HIV-related issues and also assisted the district team during their Pulse Polio campaigns. The project is involved in developing a district HIV prevention and care plan (under the leadership of the District Commissioner) that aims at integrating all government and non-government initiatives in this sector. The component of gender mainstreaming was built into the design, as trainings were gender-sensitive, raised issues related to women's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS; highlighted factors of gender-based violence (GBV) and drew connections between HIV/AIDS and gender.

¹³The project is led by a steering committee and in order to reinforce the importance of gender mainstreaming in the process, 40 percent of the members were women. In many villages, village health committees have been formed to facilitate community responsibility of HIV-related activities. Half of the members in these committees are women.

Awareness was raised on the importance of female healthcare. Since healthcare institutions are often at great distances from the villages, health camps were organized that allowed rural women access to healthcare facilities. Women were encouraged to voice and address their concerns and men were taught about responsible sexual behaviour and respecting women's dignity and their specific needs. Also, since HIV behaviour-change strategies are mostly partner-dependent, it was crucial to improve both women's negotiating and decision-making skills in their homes and families and men's responsibility and accountability for safe sex. This was done through a training kit called Stepping Stones, ¹⁴ which is used as a tool in building knowledge and skills among both men and women in the community.

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted close to the women's homes, in order to encourage them to participate. Through these discussions, women were encouraged to disclose their health concerns and seek health-related information and means of accessing appropriate healthcare for STI, Reproductive Tract Infection (RTI) and related problems.¹⁵ The outreach strategy also organized HIV-positive men and women into groups, so that they had space to discuss their special needs and find solutions. STI-awareness camps, held by male and female doctors, allowed women to access information and services they previously had little or no access to.¹⁶

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

The project had the commitment of institutional sponsors at both the national (such as NACO) and international (CIDA and USAID) levels, as well as the support of the district administration and the

community. An important factor in selecting Bagalkot as a project site was the enthusiasm shown by the community members and the district officials. Initial village/community meetings and consultations between ICHAP and district leaders were very encouraging, with the latter recognizing the gravity of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in their area, the need to address the situation and the importance of supporting a prevention and control programme. Establishing linkages with NACO and its state AIDS control/prevention societies in Karnataka also helped in covering as much ground as possible. The project was helped along by local



A village health committee meeting in progress – both men and women take active part in these meetings

¹⁴Stepping Stones is a participatory approach to HIV, sexual health and gender, which was first developed in Uganda, in 1995. It has since spread to over 100 countries and has been recognized as a 'best practice' by UNAIDS, for the way it addresses the gender equity aspects of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. In India, many organizations have been using Stepping Stones to break the silence about sexuality and HIV to address patriarchy, violence, partner communication and related issues that increase vulnerability to HIV/AIDS. The manual was adapted by KHPT and Action Aid India, for India, in 2005.

¹⁵In addition, almost 25 percent of condom depot volunteers were women, which allowed other women to feel at ease while receiving information about safe sex and STI management. Women volunteers actively raised concerns and disseminated information on how HIV/AIDS can be transmitted and emphasized the importance of blood tests prior to marriage, stopping child marriages and refusing to give or take dowry under duress. As a result, increasing numbers of pregnant women voluntarily underwent to the Integrated Counselling and Testing Centre (ICTC) for HIV tests.

¹⁶It was noted that more women than men accessed these services (almost three times as many women as men), thus reflecting women's greater physical/sexual vulnerability and the inadequacy of existing healthcare facilities for addressing ailments specific to them (such as RTIs).

NGOs¹⁷ that were sub-contracted to implement the programme in two of the talukas (with KHPT directly implementing the project in the other four talukas).

REPLICABILITY

The project is designed as a comprehensive HIV/AIDS prevention-and-care project for rural areas and its implementation offers many lessons for innovation and replication. The strategies are partner-dependent and community-oriented, in that they seek to



promote safe sex and health-seeking behaviour as per individual and community norms. This is done through male and female link workers engaged in outreach and the provision of referral linkages. Important components of this HIV strategy lie in making prevention and care services available and accessible for men and women across age groups, addressing vulnerability issues like gender inequity, violence and discrimination (along with risk for HIV) in the community. Building ownership and accountability within the community for this process of change and building community capacity to sustain this change are other important aspects. This model has now become part of the national programme under NACP III and is being replicated in the all the A category districts in the country.

CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

Initially, there was minimal participation by the women who felt apprehensive about speaking freely in a public place dominated by men and upper-caste leaders. This is likely to be a challenge in any newly established project. Though the project has tried to address gender inequity in various forums and has created space for men and women to discuss how gender inequity makes one vulnerable to HIV, attitudes and practices take time to change. It has been a challenge to change gender related attitudes of the link workers who belong the same community but have to facilitate the change process within the community. In a project of this scale, managing quality across all sites is another challenge.

LESSONS LEARNT

The process of including men and women as partners in the project had a very positive impact. This has empowered the women and has made the men more responsible. Women (young and old) have begun to speak about sex and discuss their concerns in this regard, which is a major achievement. The men have started taking responsibility for their behaviour. Involvement of sex workers in the programme's awareness-raising activities made the interventions more effective. In several instances, Devadasis who were accused of spreading the disease came forward to fight against its proliferation. They are now not only taking necessary precautions but also insisting that their partners use preventive measures. Today even the larger community has accepted this as being in its broader interest.

¹⁷In Mudhol, KHPT worked with Belgaum Integrated Rural Development Society (BIRDS) and in Jhamkhandi, it worked with Ujwala Rural Development Service Society (URDSS).

¹⁸Capacity of link workers who are from the villages, the village health and sanitation committees, anganwadi workers etc was built to help prevention and management of HIV at the village level.

The setting up of services at the taluka level was important because it made health care more accessible. ¹⁹ These clinics were later decentralized to the village level with the support of the panchayati raj institutions, thus making it more accessible and convenient for women. This new proximity to clinics and testing facilities, combined with the awareness and sensitization process, has meant that women have begun to visit the clinics to seek health information about STIs, HIV/AIDS and other infections.

approach to HIV/AIDS.

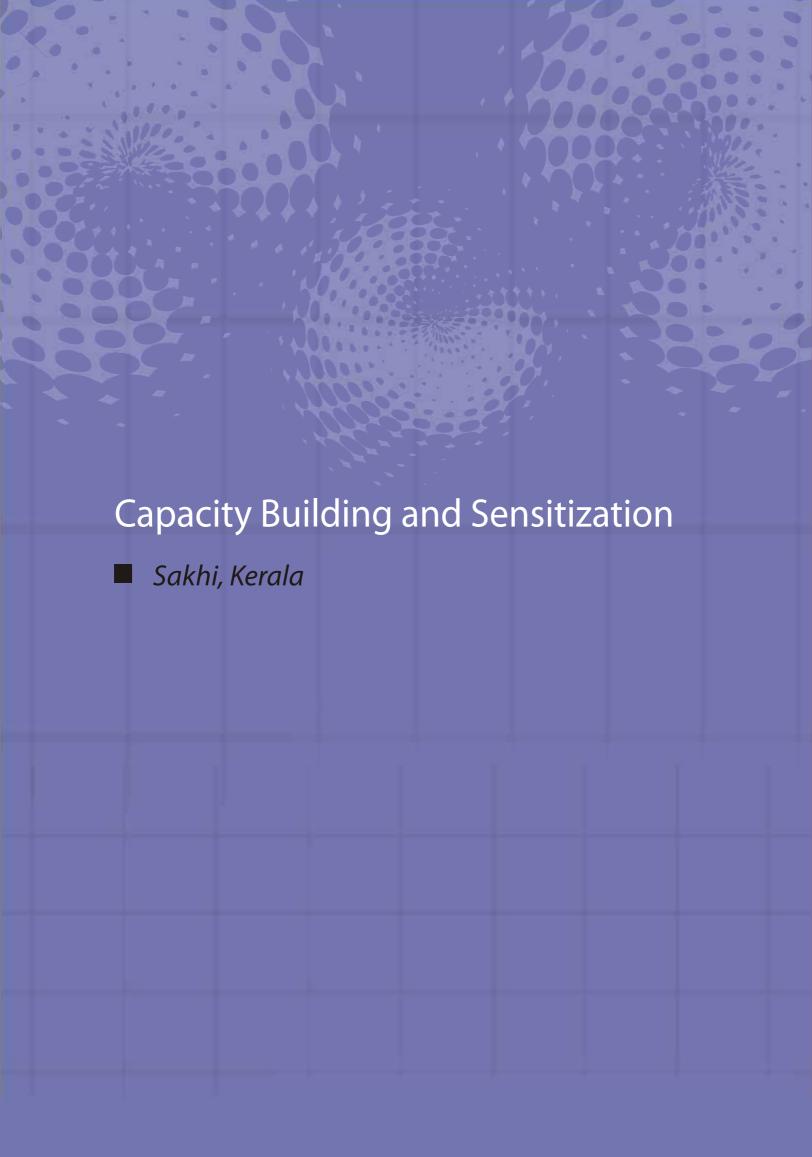


A link worker in a one to one session with a woman from the village

Concern for the health and well-being of their children has also persuaded women to overcome their fear of discrimination and approach the clinics for necessary help and support. Recruiting HIV-positive people as link workers was another important initiative and they have been accepted by the village community. The Karnataka Positive Women's Forum trained some of these women on nutritional needs for HIV-positive people, which the women have subsequently shared with the rest of the community. Thus, even though there were some apprehensions in the initial stages, today the men and women in Bagalkot have a very different understanding and

¹⁹The number of men and women who came forward voluntarily to be tested encouraged the project to set up clinics first in Mudhol and Jamkhandi (areas of high HIV/AIDS incidence).

²⁰The Positive Women Network was formed in 1998 by women living with HIV/AIDS (WLHA) to address the need for a support system for WLHAs and to improve the quality of life for them and their children. They are an important resource group, as they reach out to HIV-positive women in the communities, provide counselling and support and link them up with other NGOs to provide livelihood skills, etc.



Capacity Building and Sensitization

Sakhi, Kerala

BACKGROUND

Despite a comparatively low per capita income, ¹ Kerala has achieved a quality of life that is better than that in all other states in India, and the state leads in indicators such as literacy rates, ² life expectancy at birth ³ and infant mortality rates ⁴ (IMR). Kerala also has a highly favourable sex ratio, 1,032 females per 1,000 males, while the sex ratio for the country as a whole is 933 females per 1,000 males ⁵. The state is often commended for its achievement in human development, which is comparable to levels in relatively developed countries. While development indicators show that the status of women in Kerala is comparatively high, there is a growing uneasiness about a number of paradoxes that exist in the state. These relate to issues such as the lack of female autonomy/decision-making power in the home; high incidence of violence against women (VAW), low female work participation rates (FWPRs), differential wage structures for men and women and inequities in the land ownership patterns for men and women ⁶, etc. In recent years, population data in Kerala shows an increase in the number of male children in the 0-6 year age group ⁷.

 Of particular concern is the very poor rate of female representation and participation in political life⁸, despite the Indian Government's 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts (1992)⁹ which make it

¹Kerala's per capita Net State Domestic Product (NSDP) was Rs.13, 832, in 1996-97, compared to the average per capita NSDP for India at Rs.11,434. Kerala's rank was number eight, in terms of per-capita NSDP; in the first place was Goa, with per capita NSDP of Rs 27,859 (1996-97 at current prices). Daily status unemployment rates in the state were around 21 percent in 1999-2000, the highest of all the Indian states and almost three times that of the country as a whole (7.3 percent). (See Government of Kerala, <<u>www.kerala.gov.in</u>>)

²Literacy is the highest in Kerala: 87.9 percent (women) and 94.2 percent (men). For the whole of India, literacy rates are only 54 percent (women) and 75.6 percent (men); (Government of Kerala, State Human Development Report, Thiruvananthapuram, 2005).

³Life expectancy at birth in Kerala was 70.4 years for men and 75.9 years for women (1993-1997). (Ibid, pg. 25).

⁴In Kerala, out of every 1,000 children born, only 14 die before attaining their first birthday, whereas in India as a whole IMR is 71 per 1,000 live births. (Ibid, pg. 51). Recent data estimates the IMR for India at 58 per 1,000 live births. (Sample Registrations System Bulletin Office of the Register General and Census Commissioner, October 2007). https://doi.org/10.1016/journal.org/

⁵Census of India, 2001.

Women hold only 23.18 percent of operational holdings in the state and own only 17.16 percent of the total area under operational holdings. (Source: Economic Review, Kerala State Planning Board, 2001).

⁷This is an indication that sex-selective abortion is being practiced and that the state is gradually going the way of other states such as Punjab and Haryana, where preference for the male child has led to extremely low sex ratios. This is largely due to increasing dowry demands, thus making the female child an unwanted burden for her family and raising the chances of a female foetus being aborted (Sakhi Kerala).

⁸Despite Kerala's high socioeconomic levels, women belonging to vulnerable and marginalized communities (such as tribal groups, fishing communities and the urban poor), continue to face neglect and poverty.

⁹In 1994, India adopted a quota system at the local governance level, through the 73rd and 74th Amendment to the Constitution of India. This is considered a milestone in the process of establishing democratic decentralized administration through local bodies and taking administration to the doorsteps of the people to ensure economic and social justice. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act relates to governance structures at the local level in rural areas (panchayats) and the 74th Constitution Amendment Act relates to urban local bodies (municipalities).

mandatory for one-third of the seats in local self-government bodies to be reserved for women.¹⁰ While these amendments have given women an opportunity to come out of their homes, contest elections and become panchayat leaders or decision-makers in their respective villages, block and district panchayats, yet of the 144 seats in the State Legislative Assembly, the number of women representatives has never been more than 13 (which is less than 10 percent). Women's representation is also low in the various decision-making bodies of the political parties and the trade unions.¹¹

- An impetus to engender public and political spaces in Kerala has come through the presence of a large number of women who were mobilized through Self-Help Groups (SHGs), Kudumbashrees, NGOs, religious groups and even by political parties. This massive mobilization for economic empowerment brought together approximately 3,500,000 women into the SHG networks. These women are now key players in the decentralization programme in Kerala.
- The decentralization process initiated in Kerala in 1996 is unique in that it has decentralized not only powers but money (35-40 percent of the State Plan funds) and devolved officials to the Local Governments (LGs). Out of the money given to LGs, it is mandatory to spend 10 percent for women under the Women's Component Plan (WCP).

Established in 1996, Sakhi's main objectives were to mainstream gender into the public discourse on Kerala's socio-economic development, empower and build perspectives of groups at the grassroots level and help women's organizations build their leadership capacities.

GOOD PRACTICE

I. **Description:** Sakhi builds the capacities of elected women representatives (EWRs), SHG members and the community at large. One of Sakhi's initiatives to mainstream gender in local governance was through the 'Decentralization Support Programme' (DSP) of the Department of Local Government in 2006. The objectives of the initiative were to (i) formulate a training strategy on the WCP¹³; (ii) create a pool of state-level trainers on gender and development issues; (iii) prepare a comprehensive manual on WCP and gender planning, budgeting and auditing; and (iv) identify a shelf of project ideas that could be adapted into the plan formulation of local self governments (LSGs) and the WCP.

¹⁰The Kerala Panchayat Act (1994) laid provisions for a three-tier system of panchayat for the first time at the village, block and district levels. Panchayats were vested with the powers and responsibilities of the economic development and social justice of the state. The panchayats were also responsible for the implementation of developmental schemes and setting up of a Finance Commission for reviewing the financial status of the panchayats. Additionally, the Nagar Palika Act made major structural changes in order to restore municipalities as democratic units in the present system of governance and to give decision-making powers to people at the grassroots level.

¹¹Sakhi Kerala. Available online at < <u>www.sakhikerala.org</u>>

¹²Inspired by the successes of participatory development initiatives in Kerala, in the 1990's, the Government of Kerala set up the Kudumbashree Mission, in 1998. The mission aims 'to eradicate absolute poverty in ten years through concerted community action under the leadership of local governments, by facilitating organization of the poor for combining self-help with demandled convergence of available services and resources to tackle the multiple dimensions and manifestations of poverty, holistically'. Kudumbashree operates through the setting up of community based organizations of poor women called community based societies. See www.kudumbashree.org

¹³Keeping in view the socio-economic condition of women in the society, an integrated approach was adopted towards empowering women, through the convergence of existing services, resources, infrastructure and manpower available in both women-specific and women-related sectors. To this effect, the Ninth Plan adopted a special strategy the 'Women's Component Plan' through which not less than 10 percent of the funds/benefits are earmarked for women in all the women-related sectors. It also suggests a special vigil to be kept on the flow of the earmarked funds/benefits through an effective mechanism to ensure that the proposed strategy brings forth a holistic approach towards empowering women.

II. **Evolution:** In light of the government initiatives supporting gender mainstreaming (GM), Sakhi decided to utilize this receptive climate to create a gender database through the WCP.¹⁴ Sakhi's close links with LSGs began with the Kerala government's decentralization programmes in 1996. The organization's action-research illustrated how gender concerns could be integrated into the functioning of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) through gender analyses and studies on the status of women. It carried out institutional analyses and studies on SHGs and other community-based organizations (CBOs) and focused on vulnerable groups.



A meeting of Kudumbashree members of the coir unit

III. **How it works/methodology followed:** Research and action were the core elements of the methodology employed by Sakhi to ensure GM in local governance. This was facilitated by Kerala's PRI model and the WCP. Various initiatives undertaken by Sakhi included building networks and capacities of elected women from different districts, conducting a study on the status of women in Kerala, (identifying women's needs, so that they can be accommodated in local-level planning) and sensitization of all stake holders. ¹⁵ Sakhi provided gender training to master trainers/ state-level trainers and to government officers.



BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

Sakhi worked closely with the panchayats to help both EWRs and the larger community become aware of the importance of the decentralized governance system. It assisted panchayat committees in forming jagratha samitis¹⁶ to address the problems that surfaced from the organization's studies on the status of women in the state (such as VAW and other rights violations). A significant result of Sakhi's interventions in these panchayats is that it encouraged the samitis to directly address cases of VAW.¹⁷ Such interventions

¹⁴The objectives of developing the database were to develop gender policy in the panchayats; to use panchayat funds to address practical gender needs, and to use the WCP budget to address strategic gender needs. To make this possible, it was essential to strengthen the capacities of the EWRs.

 $^{^{15} [}Initially piloted in four panchayats, the methodology was further developed and has expanded to 60 panchayats.] \\$

¹⁶The jagratha samitis are bodies constituted at the LSG level by a Government Order. The elected president of the local body is the chairperson, elected women members, local police, the doctor from the PHC, an advocate from the area, selected social workers including a representative from the SC/ST are members and the ICDS supervisor is the convenor. These vigilance cells act as the eyes and ears of the Kerala Women's Commission. They play a major role in the prevention of crimes (for instance, if a woman has been forced into prostitution or is subjected to violence as a result of a husband's alcoholism, it is the duty of the jagratha samiti to take up the issue and settle it at the local panchayat level itself). When issues require assistance from higher authorities, the jagratha samitis approach the district-level samiti that is headed by the District Collector. If the matter cannot be settled even at this level, the issue is brought to the notice of the Kerala Women's Commission.

¹⁷These samitis were set up through the State Commission for Women, and so far, 832 jagratha committees have been constituted.

have helped build a large base of empowered women who have had gender training and have imparted their training to other women at the local level, through SHGs and other processes of collectivization. Therefore, the GM process is beginning to have an impact across villages.

In collaboration with the Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA), Sakhi undertook a review of GM efforts made in the decentralization process, over the past 10 years. Based on this review, they helped to develop handbooks and manuals on gender planning, budgeting and auditing, to be used by LSGs. After the action-research, capacity-building of the PRIs, it was felt that a manual was needed to help the PRIs effectively manage their gender budgeting and planning; Sakhi helped in developing this training tool. The manual was meant for elected representatives, officials, experts, NGO and CBO representatives and all those associated in the process of planning and implementing the idea of a gender-just society. It was intended to help local governments uphold the rights of women by involving them in identifying their needs and, with their participation, finding possible solutions.

REPLICABILITY

Sakhi worked closely with seven panchayats to help both the EWRs and the larger community become aware of the importance of the decentralized governance system. For the EWRs, the focus was to look at planning and budgeting through a gendered lens: where earlier the practice was to use the WCP allocation for women's general needs, there are now several examples where these needs are being met from the PRI's general funds (such as education, community infrastructure, etc.), while specific and strategic needs are being taken care of from the WCP. The interventions



have also brought about a change in the way socioeconomic unit initiatives are applied, moving away from traditional modes of income generation to experimenting with non-traditional sectors.

The action-research that Sakhi conducted illustrated how gender concerns can be integrated into the functioning of the PRIs. The methods identified for GM included gender analysis; a study on the status of women; institutional analysis; study on SHGs and other community-based organizations; and focus on vulnerable groups, which can be used by other organizations too.

CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

During the action-research undertaken by Sakhi to gauge the challenges encountered by elected women members, a major gap that was identified was the lack of understanding among the members regarding the concept of panchayat budgeting and its ramifications for women. Sakhi felt that it was important to equip the elected women members with a tool by which they could understand gender budgeting, gender planning and auditing, both in the general projects and in the WCP. Therefore, a manual on the subject was developed.

Sakhi's initiatives have met with mixed response. While some PRIs were very positive and actively participated in the trainings and discussions in order to better their governance systems, there were other PRIs which were not very cooperative. It has been noted that gender is an issue that parties in power do not feel comfortable dealing with, as it means challenging the existing power relations. However, a

very gradual change is taking place in Kerala, facilitated by the introduction of the WCP and the initiatives taken in leadership development and GM.

Sakhi conducted a review of the WCP in a district where women have ventured into previously male-dominated vocations such as driving heavy vehicles, masonry, vermi-composting, servicing household appliances, paramedical training, etc. Not only was skills training provided but women were encouraged to organize themselves into cooperatives and work units. For example, the women's transport cooperative runs two buses and the drivers and conductors are female. The women masons have also formed a collective that is linked to local contracting bodies and builds houses and female-friendly latrines. This collective has also been supported in its efforts to begin production of and establish marketing centres for prefabricated building materials, which is a major achievement.

LESSONS LEARNT

It is important for women to spearhead campaigns aimed at mainstreaming gender into local governance systems. Building the capacities of EWRs and other women has made the women feel more interested in ensuring the existence of gram sabhas; and they are available for any surveys/studies required by the government (such as the verification of the Below Poverty Line [BPL] list); they are the channel through which the mandatory 10 percent of funds allotted for the WCP is spent, etc. It is significant to note that the majority of the women, who participate in local governance, come from BPL families.

A conscious effort was also made to represent all communities in the field-level study team (including minorities, Dalit and adivasi¹⁸ communities, etc.) based on the population covered by the panchayat.

The EWRs now look at planning and budgeting through a gendered lens: where earlier the practice was to use the WCP allocation for women's general needs, there are now several examples where these needs (such as education, community infrastructure, etc.) are being met from the PRI's general funds, while specific and strategic needs are being met from the WCP. The interventions have also brought about a change in the way initiatives are being taken in the socio-economic field, moving away from traditional modes of income generation to experiment with non-traditional sectors.

BOX: Raji brings change to Vilayur panchayat, Palghat district

Despite its proximity to Palghat town, the Vilayur panchayat was considered backward until very recently. Today, it is an active panchayat, and five of the 14 panchayat members are women. Now a PRI member, Raji was a timid, young widow who began her engagement with Sakhi as a group enumerator, when the organization was conducting a status study of the panchayat.

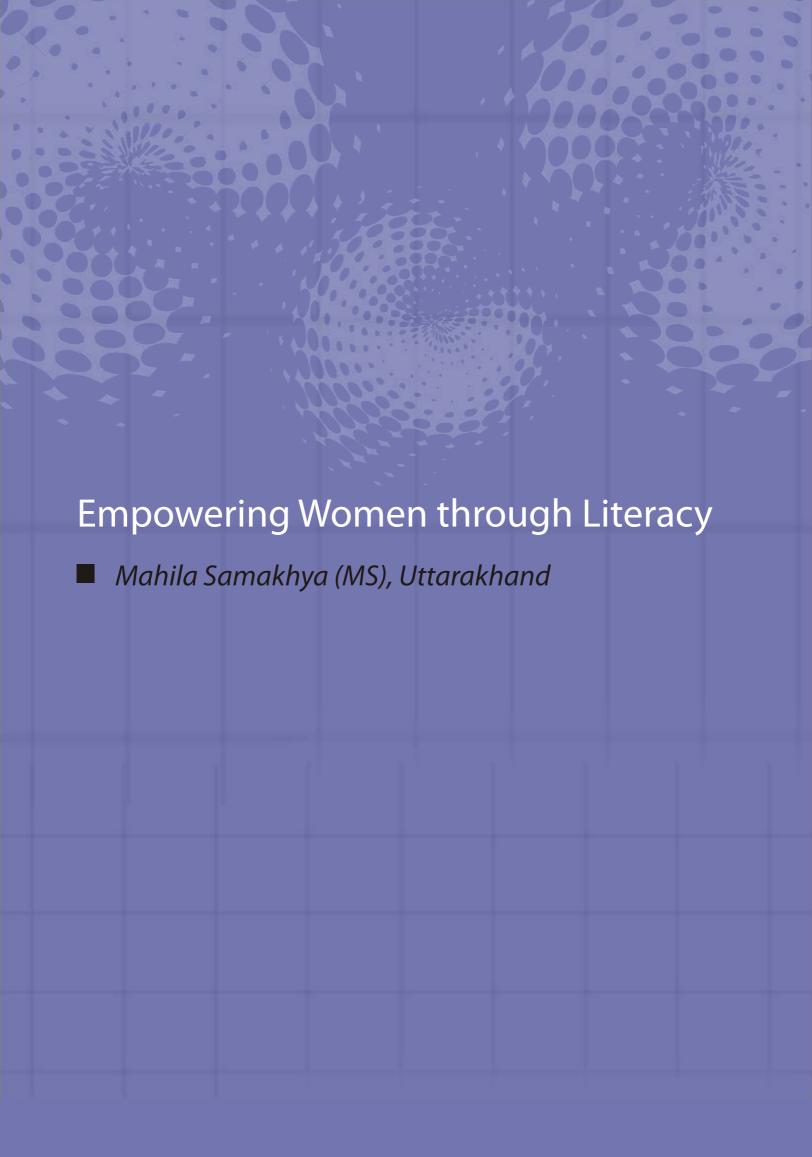
After undergoing gender training, Raji decided to become a trainer herself and held gender trainings for Kudumbashree members. In the process, Raji felt empowered enough to contest the local elections, which she won. She is currently an elected leader and chairperson of the standing committee on welfare. Raji uses her position in the panchayat to highlight cases of particular importance to women like her.

Gopala Krishna, the panchayat president, was keen to make his panchayat gender-sensitive and ensure that the budget and WCP were effectively used. After attending gender training sessions and engaging in discussions with Sakhi, he admitted that there were a whole host of gender-related issues that impacted women's well-being, issues that men were completely unaware of (such as reproductive health needs). Through his panchayat, he took the initiative to organize a health camp where women could come to be examined and have their reproductive health ailments attended to.

¹⁸ Adivasis make up a substantial indigenous minority of India's population. Officially recognized by the Indian Government as Scheduled Tribes in the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution of India, they are eligible for certain affirmative action measures.

Since CBOs are by and large male-dominated, such support groups help in initiating a gender sensitization process within them.

Finally, it is imperative to sensitize the larger community, so that men understand the issues affecting women and realize that their support is instrumental in moving towards a gender-just society. Sakhi's capacity-building initiatives do not include only elected women as prospective leaders but also members of SHGs. Sakhi also helps develop local resource teams, comprising experts and support groups, which help in preparing the ground and enlisting the confidence of stakeholders.



Empowering Women through Literacy

Mahila Samakhya (MS), Uttarakhand

BACKGROUND

Despite being the backbone of Uttarakhand's¹ primarily rural economy and forming a significant proportion of the state's unpaid labour sector upon which households survive, women have only very recently become the subject of concern for policy-makers. Discriminatory cultural practices and beliefs embedded within a deeply patriarchal framework reflect the poor status accorded to women in the society of this hill state. These are reinforced by gender-biased mores in daily rituals and practices that further ensure that women remain socio-economically inferior to men and have very few entitlements.

Rural women are particularly vulnerable in Uttarakhand. Since agricultural returns are low in the hills and remunerative employment opportunities are absent, most men migrate from the mountain areas to cities and towns located all over the country, in search of employment. As a result of this large-scale migration of able-bodied men, women become the main workforce in agriculture (mostly subsistence farming). They also take care of cattle, collect fuel wood and fodder from the forests and do all the household chores. Their condition is made worse by the fact that they suffer from poor nutrition, making them vulnerable to many diseases including chronic anaemia and tuberculosis. It is in this context that the Mahila Samakhya (MS) programme has brought about a significant change, by creating a legitimate space for women to come together to voice their concerns and discuss gender issues.

Initiated originally in Karnataka, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh in 1987, the MS programme is the largest state-sponsored programme for women's education in the country. It recognizes the family, community and state as institutional bastions that encourage the subordination and disempowerment of women and thus aims at empowering women through processes of education and capacity-building to address gender concerns while moving forward to attain gender equality. The MS programme focuses on six major components: (i) education, (ii) health, (iii) the panchayati raj system, (iv) legal literacy, (v) sanghas (women's collectives working for self-reliance), and (vi) economic development programmes (EDPs). For the purposes of this report, the good practices that are highlighted are primarily in the areas of legal rights, gender-based violence (GBV), political participation and health and literacy.

GOOD PRACTICE

I. **Description:** The MS programme focuses on empowering women through collective organization and educational processes that challenge gender and other forms of discrimination and thus bring about a change in gender relations and the status of women.

¹The state of Uttarakhand, comprising the hilly areas of Uttar Pradesh, came into being in 2000. The state has 13 districts, which are divided into two divisions, Garhwal and Kumaon. According to the 2001 Census, Uttarakhand's population was 8.49 million people, of which 4.33 million people were male and 4.16 million were female. (See Planning Commission, Government of India, available online at http://planningcommission.nic.in)

²Government of Uttarakhand, Annual Plan 2007-2008, pgs. 11-12 & 41-42, available online at < http://gov.ua.nic.in>

³Although sponsored by the Government of India, the programme is implemented primarily through state-level autonomous bodies. (See Department of Education, Government of India, available online at http://india.gov.in/sectors/education/mahila_samakhya.php)

 $^{^4}$ The panchayati raj system refers to the system of local governance with the district, block and village as its three tiers.

- II. **Evolution:** The programme emanated from the National Policy of Education (1986) and its Programme of Action (revised in 1992), which gives education the mandate to work for women's equality and empowerment. The mandate attempts to not only provide equal opportunities in education, but also to transform the entire content and process of education, so as to achieve gender equality and realign gender roles. Currently, the MS programme runs in 11 states and impacts women in approximately 21,000 villages. States and districts are identified for the MS programme depending upon their literacy rate⁵ or gender-related status.
- III. **How it works/methodology followed:** Women are contacted via meetings, where they can discuss their concerns and formulate an agenda that designates women as the primary actors. The grassroots functionaries, called 'sahyoginis', cover at least 10 villages each and support the formation process of the sangha, the primary unit of women's mobilization at the village level. Literacy classes are run by facilitators called 'anudeshikas' and guides called 'sahelis' promote and give direction to youth groups (kishori sanghas) at the village level.



Recognizing the all-pervasive existence of violence in women's lives, the MS programme in Uttarakhand works on providing women facing violence, with a space (the sangha) where they can share and reflect on such issues, receive support from one another in dealing with the problem, seek ways of confronting it and identify methods of overcoming violence through collective action. As a first step towards empowering women to resist GBV and demand their rights, MS Uttarakhand decided to impart, legal information and legal education to sangha women.¹⁰

• **Apni Adalat:**¹¹ The Apni Adalat (Own Court) body has emerged as the organizational support structure for the MS programme's violence against women (VAW) agenda. A small number of women

⁵States and districts which demonstrate the lowest educational attainments for women and/or weakest overall indicators for the status of women are chosen. As the basic administrative unit, blocks are selected for programme initiation on similar criteria. In Uttarakhand, there is a wide gap in literacy rates between males (83.3 percent) and females (59.6 percent). (See Government of Uttarakhand, Annual Plan 2007-2008, pgs. 11-12 & 41-42, available online at http://gov.ua.nic.in)

⁶Sahyogini means someone who assists/helps

⁷To encourage sustainability, the MS programme encouraged the evolution of a mahasangha (large sangha) from the sanghas, to function as the women's representative forum and as an independent member organization at the block level.

⁸Anudeshika translates to instructor.

⁹Saheli literally means friend.

¹⁰The training process is case-oriented and experiential, exposing women gradually to the nuances of legal issues and legislation relevant to each individual case. According to a member of the mahasangha, 'violence is analyzed within the framework of gender subordination, so as to enable women to realize that violence is not an acceptable form of assertion, even in a marital relationship and that the household is not a sacrosanct space for men to behave as they will.'

¹¹Aapni Adalat translates as 'our court' and specifically addresses violence-related issues. It serves as an alternative space for delivering gender-fair justice. Such experiments have been implemented successfully in other states where the MS programme is active, notably in Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh, as well as in a slightly different format in the 'Mahila Panchayats' by the NGO Action India's Sabla Sanghs (grassroots forums for women) in certain slum and resettlement colonies of Delhi.

are selected for intensive training on the legal provisions and frameworks required for implementation of cases related to crimes against women. This platform¹² – supported by the mahasangha at the block level serves as a forum for women to establish their credibility as agents of change and simultaneously enables them to explore new leadership roles in the social sphere. The formation of Apni Adalats in Uttarakhand reflects the level of legal awareness and maturity attained by local mahasangha members on issues of concern to women. It also demonstrates the members' ability to analyse and negotiate change in



gender relations. Although it is an alternative rights institution, its influence is evident in the fact that panchayats are increasingly seeking women's opinions; women are now increasingly being recognized as actors and decision-makers at the community and societal levels.

• Engendering panchayats and the political process: The MS programme seeks to strengthen women's interventions in the panchayati raj system of decentralized governance. This is regarded as essential in giving women equal say in decision-making processes and in ensuring that women's issues are incorporated into grassroots development plans. To achieve this goal, MS uses a two-pronged approach: (i) providing women with information about the panchayats and associated processes, so as to enable women to engage effectively with the grassroots institutional framework and (ii) involving women in campaigning for and demanding from political parties the inclusion of women's issues in the political agenda.

Apart from issues of GBV and political participation at the grassroots level, a number of other commendable educational and institutional practices have been undertaken to mainstream gender concerns in other sectors. Health and literacy are two sectors that are briefly discussed here:

• **Health education:** Health education plays a significant role in teaching women about the importance of empowerment and equality. The women's health programme of MS is aimed at eliminating local superstitions and traditional views about female health, developing a scientific approach to health and influencing local communities to recognize women's health as a critical component of social development. To eliminate factors that result in the poor health of rural women, women-run women's health centres have been set up at the village and cluster levels, which

¹²The methods used are of objective inquiry, wherein people submit a written record of their disputes; the complainant is charged a nominal fee of Rs.25. Both parties are then called to discuss the cause of the dispute in a neutral (non-accusatory) environment. Discussions related to and decisions of each case are recorded, to which both parties are signatories.

¹³Uttarakhand's Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) stands at 42 per 1,000 live births, which is lower than the all-India rate (58 per 1,000 live births). However, two major areas of concern with respect to IMR are (i) the large difference between urban and rural IMRs (22 in urban areas and 57 in rural areas), and (ii) the relatively high IMR among female infants. The health status of women and children in the hill areas is particularly poor. According to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) 3 (2005-2006), only 44.8 percent of pregnant women receive antenatal care, institutional births account for only 36 percent of all births, and 61.5 percent of children below the age of three and 47.6 percent of women suffer from anaemia. (Government of Uttarakhand, Annual Plan 2007-2008, pgs. 9-10, available online at http://gov.ua.nic.in)

acknowledge the importance of traditional healthcare systems based on local resources and medicine.¹⁴

• **Literacy:** Within the MS context, the educational agenda encompasses not only literacy skills but also knowledge about women's issues and how women can best engage in areas that impact their welfare. The chief method of improving literacy has been through the establishment of literacy camps.

BOX: Apni Adalat: the People's Court

The adoption of the title 'Apni Adalat' (own court) and not 'Nari Adalat' (women's court) as prevalent elsewhere, may be interpreted as indicative of a shift from a women-focused institutional framework to one that is gender-inclusive. Some may argue that this is a dilution of the process, as an explicit title on behalf of women would establish a more pro-women identity. However, the mahasangha members believe that the 'Apni Adalat' title creates space for negotiation while preventing defensive posturing and makes each individual responsible for the processes involved. This shifts the onus of gender justice on all, instead of it being the responsibility of women alone.

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

Although sponsored by the Government of India, the programme is implemented primarily through state-level autonomous bodies, with the chairperson being the Secretary of the Department of Education, of the respective state. As the demand for learning has risen across villages, the NGO Nirantar and the Government's Women's Development Programme (WDP) have provided literacy inputs to small groups of women.

REPLICABILITY

Efforts to strengthen healthcare initiatives based on local knowledge systems, which simultaneously educate local women about the use of new technologies in the health field, have been effectively replicated in other regions. Linkages with the state machinery have encouraged government departments to become more responsive to women's needs. For example, a mahasangha recently negotiated with the

VOICES

"Earlier he used to beat me, and I would tell the Sahyogini to stay away and think this was okay and all men can beat their wives, it is their way. We understood that it is not men's right to beat us, it is their way of showing their control over us and our bodies and we always live in fear...

I will not be afraid anymore for myself or for my sisters....(It) is a violation of me and my rights. How can any person think his right can be more than mine and that I am of no consequence?"

government health department, on behalf of some of its members who had received health training, to be recruited as 'ashas' (rural health volunteers) in the department's National Rural Health care Mission (NRHM). The mahasangha sees this as a convergence of women's interests and an integration of traditional knowledge systems into the state's healthcare mechanism. The potential of these health volunteers to reach a wider audience and integrate their previous learning into the NRHM is considered invaluable in promoting gender mainstreaming in the health sector.

¹⁴A village-based 'alternative female health centre' known as the Sanjeevani Health Centre emerged in response to women's demands for healthcare options based on local resources and recognition was thus given to traditional (female) health practitioners and local herb experts. This centre is not a commercial venture, but functions under the ambit of the mahasangha.

CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

Many of the challenges to gender mainstreaming come from the state machinery. For example, the task of integrating the gender component within the training and processes of the NRHM is currently thwarted by an overwhelming focus on limited targets and deliverables that are often in conflict with holistic health practices. The challenge here lies in institutionally influencing the NRHM so as to incorporate these elements into ongoing processes and to make state health practices more relevant in their methods and content of deliverables.¹⁵



To provide women with access to bridge schools, the MS literacy programme established Mahila Shikshan Kendras (MSKs) that have now been transformed into bridge learning centres for adolescent girls. Although these are successful in reaching out to girls who hitherto had no access to education or who had dropped out of school, the initiative does not really address the problem of finding an appropriate solution to the issue of women's literacy, an issue that remains hidden in the MSKs' concentrated focus on adolescent girls.

Recognizing the success of the MSK processes, the Government of India has decided to implement its National Programme for Education of Girls to Elementary Level (NPEGEL)¹⁶ though the MS programme, thus once again marking an attempt to mainstream the latter into state department activities. However, the orientation offered by MS karyakartas (fieldworkers) at all levels tends to ignore the vital gender component that is the MS's core strength. It thus becomes an attempt to mainstream the MS programme into state frameworks, which are trying to meet Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), rather than an attempt to ensure quality and efficacy (both in terms of outreach access and content).

Merging the agenda of girls' education with the MS programme shows increasing evidence of negation of the programme's very successes. The additional programmes, as part of the SSA, are likely to overwhelm the processes and strengths of the MS programme due to two reasons: (i) the scale of resources and finances that these programmes entail draws the latter into a different mode of programme delivery, taking them away from their initial process-oriented initiatives; and (ii) the shift in agenda and delivery indicators are in stark contrast to the present programme's mandate and structure. The administrative requirements for these programmes is high and the lack of additional staff for implementation suggests that the sahyoginis and resource persons are overburdened, with the likely result being that the processes of gender mainstreaming and empowerment are eclipsed.

¹⁵Another instance is in women's struggle against alcoholism among men and consequent spousal violence and how this is aided by the State's role as promoter of liquor retailing. In the past, women have challenged local liquor mafias in order to reduce rates of alcoholism in their localities. However, they are now impeded in these efforts, as the State itself has opened liquor shops in their districts.

¹⁶A separate and distinct gender component plan of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) scheme, NPEGEL provides additional components for the education of girls at the elementary level. The SSA was started in 2001 with the objective of universalising elementary education; NPEGEL is implemented under the SSA umbrella but has a distinct identity. (Government of India, Department of Higher Education, available online at http://www.education.nic.in/npegl.asp) The Kasturba Gandhi Swatantrata Vidyalaya (KGSV) programme has also been allotted to the MS programme for implementation, due to the latter's reported success in outreach and retention of Dalit and underprivileged girls in education.

LESSONS LEARNT

Promoting an organizational structure that is based on collective action and solidarity is an important contributing factor in translating a learning agenda into an action process. A collective federation identity allows women to effectively participate in the process, assert their demands and negotiate for gender spaces at all levels within mainstream institutional frameworks. Through experiential training and the programme's organizational modes, MS enables women to intervene in gender power relations and move towards equality.

VOICES

"...even though many women may not come out in public protest, each one of us is negotiating change at her own level and determining her own boundaries and means to test those..."

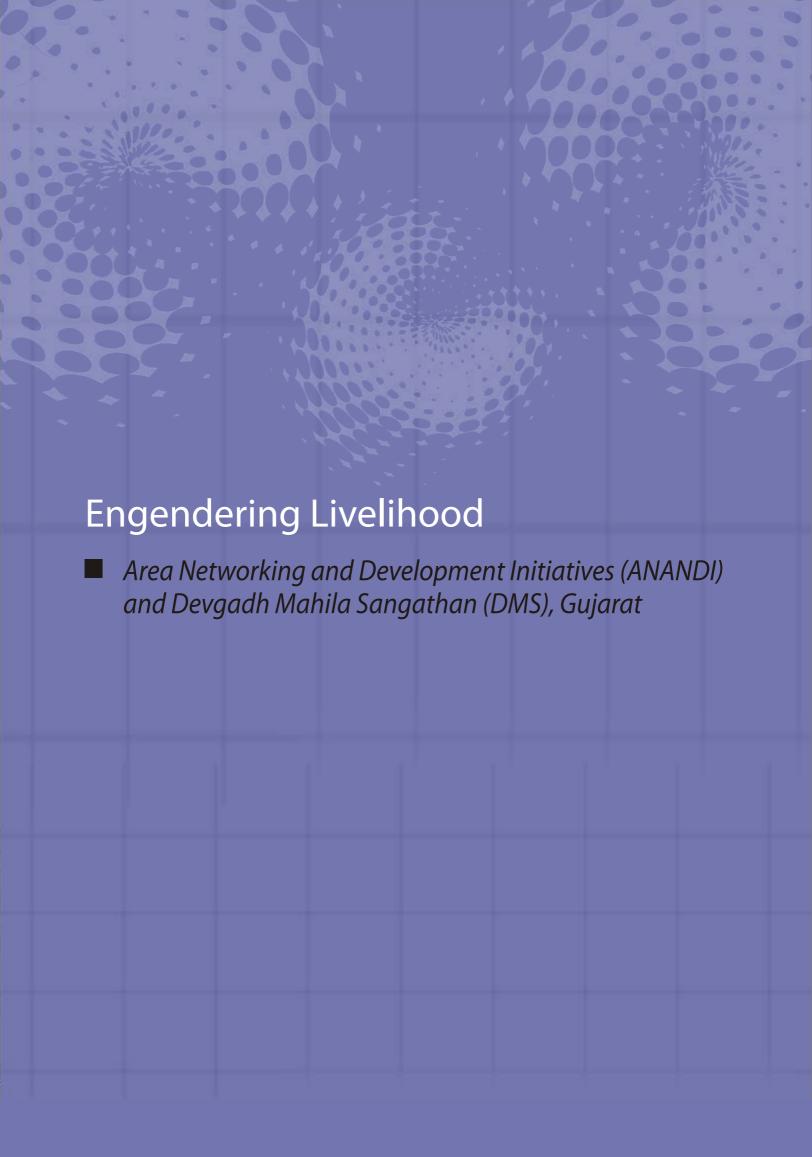


The formation of multiple forums (mahasanghas, Apni Adalats, sangha groups and cluster sanghas) provide opportunities for women's learning and leadership at multiple levels. This is an effective strategy for internalization and reinforcement of learning and enables women's formations to support each other in pushing forward the collective agenda. It also provides an alternative support structure that is oriented towards women's interests and towards representing women in various fora.

Including the MS programme into other government programmes brings it under the

purview of the state department, thus implying possible loss in the programme's autonomy in defining its own priorities (as it has done thus far); this is a serious concern for the gender mainstreaming agenda. ¹⁷

¹⁷The superimposition of the government NEPEGL and KGVN programmes has raised fears that they could overshadow the MS agenda and reduce the MS programme to being merely an implementation wing of the national and state government (whose immediate priority is to deliver education to girls using the MS programme team and infrastructure). There have been instances of conflict between the State Department of Education and sangha women, who have reported on the various inefficiencies in the department's programmes and demanded action for effective delivery of the same. Such action is only possible due to the programme's autonomous position, even through it is under the ambit of the government.



Engendering Livelihood

Area Networking and Development Initiatives (ANANDI) and Devgadh Mahila Sangathan¹ (DMS), Gujarat

Background

The state of Gujarat presents a paradoxical picture. On one hand, the state has high growth rates and contributes significantly to India's national income² and on the other hand the state has high disparities in income,³ poverty⁴ and food security.⁵

Rural populations constitute approximately 63 percent⁶ of Gujarat's 50.05 million-strong population. The proportion of tribal in the population is around 15 percent.⁷ The tribal regions⁸ are very vulnerable economically, ecologically, socially and politically. Repeated occurrences of natural and man-made disasters⁹ have rendered the Panchmahaals and Dahod regions even more susceptible. Disasters in distant Saurashtra (such as drought and earthquakes) also impact upon these regions, as many people migrate from here to Saurashtra each year, in search of work. The region is marked by high mortality ratios and high morbidity rates, low literacy rates¹⁰, especially among women¹¹, compared to the state average.

Large sections of Gujarat's population, especially the tribals, are vulnerable to seasonal fluctuations in food availability and high levels of indebtedness. Decreasing access to forest and natural resources, small and fragmented landholdings, rural indebtedness, health emergencies, erratic rainfall and dependence

^{&#}x27;The documentation of this case study has been undertaken together with leaders of the Devgadh Mahila Sangathan and draws extensively upon the experiences of staff and documentation available with ANANDI. Efforts to analyse the shifts in strategies and processes were also discussed with them to highlight the perspectives that inform their decisions especially on issues related to gender mainstreaming.

²Gujarat's per capita income in 2000-2001 (at 1993-1994 prices) was Rs. 12,975 which is 27 percent higher that the per capita income at the national level - Rs. 10,254- in the same year. (Hirway,I. and D. Mahadevia, *Gujarat Human Development Report*, Mahatma Gandhi Labour Institute, Ahmedabad, 2004, pg 21).

³Only 6.3 percent of workers are regularly employed in rural areas, while the corresponding figure in urban areas is 34.1 percent. (*Ibid*, pg 35)

⁴According to the Planning Commission, the incidence of poverty in Gujarat is 13.17 percent in rural areas and 15.59 percent in urban areas (1999-2000). In terms of both rural and urban poverty, Gujarat holds the fifth position amongst major states in India. (*Ibid*, pg 49)

⁵Food security is a necessary (but not sufficient) condition for ensuring nutritional levels of a population. As a result of frequent droughts, Gujarat is a food grain deficit state and relies heavily on the Government's public distribution system (PDS). Malnutrition levels are high in the state due to food insecurity. (lbid, pg 245-246).

⁶Census of India, 2001.

⁷*Ibid*, pg 258.

The eastern tribal belt region starts from Banaskantha (east) to Sabarkantha in the north to Valsad and Dangs in the south. The tribal districts of Dangs, Dahod, Panchmahaals, Narmada and others are ranked at the bottom of the Human Development Index (HDI), and in terms of economic growth (including agricultural growth), and for income poverty and human poverty. (*Ibid*, pg 228)

⁹Such as drought (2000-2003), floods (2004-2005), and communal riots (2002).

¹⁰The morbidity rate in Panchmahaals was 97.85 (per 1000 population), while the morbidity rate for Gujarat was 55 (per 1000 population). According to the Directorate of Economics and Statistics Village Amenities Survey, in 1991, only 27 percent of villages in Panchmahaals had access to any primary health facility. (*Ibid*, pgs 127 and 305).

¹¹The male and female adult literacy rates in Panchmahaal, in 2001 were 76.62 and 45.43 percent respectively. In the district rankings on education, the district was ranked at number 21 out of 25 districts. (*Ibid*, pgs 276 and 302)

on rain-fed agriculture, together with systemic maladies such as the irregular functioning of the public distribution system (PDS) and inefficiencies in government schemes render the people increasingly vulnerable. The high incidence of seasonal out-migration from the region, in search of work and the lack of investment in the region (in the sectors of infrastructure and services) reflect decreasing livelihoods security and the lack of sustainable options. Women remain the main breadwinners, working the land in harsh conditions and foraging from increasingly sparse forest sources; water and other basic infrastructural needs are scarce besides inequitable access and control over these resources and state control further marginalizes such communities.

Area Networking and Development Initiatives (ANANDI) was established in 1995 by five women, to define alternatives that can address rural poverty, through a gendered approach. ANANDI has initiated work with the poorest and most marginalized communities in remote villages in Gujarat. The organization has focused specifically on working with women in the eastern tribal belt of Panchmahaals and Dahod and in Saurashtra region in western Gujarat, so as help them to expand their choices and uses a women-focused approach.

GOOD PRACTICE

I. **Description:** For ANANDI the process of empowerment of poor and marginalized women is a building block in the process to change the status of women and ensure justice and people's entitlements. Their strategy is based on their recognition of education and awareness, as significant factors in the process of capacity development. The organization seeks to enhance women's capacities to analyse, engage in and negotiate change on issues that affect their lives and those of their communities. ANANDI has facilitated the formation of an autonomous women's' organization, Devgadh Mahila Sangathan (DMS), in the Panchmahaals and Dahod area to work with tribal women, so as to bring an improvement in their lives and in the livelihoods opportunities for their communities.

Nurturing women leaders, building capacities respecting the traditional knowledge and skill of women and substantiating this with information, creating spaces for negotiation by understanding the local issues and its global context have been the steps for mutual learning for ANANDI - a group of urban educated women along with the rural non-literate but experienced women leaders.

ANANDI believes that the ability to negotiate and understand of the issues of the poor and marginalized among the leaders of DMS is a model of development and empowerment of women, with women as its leaders. These women leaders, as agents of change for their entire community have a significant role in enhancing the quality of life and standard of living.

- II. **Evolution:** Over the past few years, ANANDI has enabled the emergence of tribal women's federations that have played an increasingly important role in the struggle to claim rights and entitlements for poor and marginalized populations. The organization has enabled ¹² the DMS to emerge as an autonomous organization that is progressively taking on policy decisions and bringing about changes not only for its members but also for the region as a whole, and for tribals and other marginalized communities in particular.
- III. **How it works/methodology followed:** ANANDI's vision of bringing women's concern to the centre of all development processes was translated by training of young tribal women as Umang¹³ fellows. Umang youth for change and development, was a programme of National Youth Foundation coalition of organizations working with youth in India. The trained fellows were the first cadre of field

¹²ANANDI does this by enabling women to organize and assume positions of leadership, integrating elements of research, adopting methods and tools to deepen analysis and understanding of various issues, and creating strategies around such issues.

 $^{^{13}} The\, Umang\, programme\, of\, ANANDI\, was\, supported\, by\, Janvikas, which\, was\, the\, western\, region\, coordinator.$

facilitators in ANANDI, at the village and cluster levels, to identify issues and concerns of the communities for further action.

ANANDI initiated its engagement with the community through a training programme (with elected women sarpanch¹⁴ and panchayat members) for leadership on governance and sensitizing women leaders to take up issues of Adivasi, Dalit and other marginalized communities so as to strengthen the gram sabhain the panchayati raj system.

Through a process of group formation and mobilization of women's groups on one hand and training in grassroots democracy (with elected women sarpanchs and mahila mandal¹⁵ members) on the other, ANANDI encourages alliance-building and grassroots mobilization for women and enhances their ability to intervene in complex political processes. In fact, this process of political awareness, understanding about the structural inequities, injustice, marginalization, and causes of denial of women's rights are the foundation for mobilization of the women as a federation. ANANDI supported the federation by building and strengthening the leadership of DMS (see Box 1). Apart from strategies that provide information and encourage collective strength in demanding basic entitlements, ANANDI has sought to initiate alternative action to improve condition and position of women by enabling women's have increased access to and control over resources at home and in the community. This was done in the form of ensuring entitlements from the PDS, primary health centres, forming seed and grain banks, releasing mortgaged lands and women's right to property, providing training in agriculture and horticulture for subsistence farming, etc.

In their interventions in the political sphere, these women have recognized the importance of using their gender and tribal identities, as a means of challenging the denial of power and rights, based on class and ethnic grounds. Articulations on gender are as much about violence against women (VAW) as they are about atrocities committed on the basis of tribal identity.

VOICES

"We would come to the Pani Purvatha Office (block level office of Gujarat Water Supply and Sewerage Board) early morning before the office opened and sat till the officer sent the machinery and men to our village... because that was the only way left to ensure that the hand pump came to our hamlet and was not taken away by some influential people."

Box 1: The Formation of the Devgadh Mahila Sangathan (DMS)

The mahila mandals at the village level and the groups at the cluster level collectively took up the issue of access to drinking water in remote hamlets. Mahila mandal members along with women GP members and sarpanchs collectively sat on dharna asking for hand pumps. ANANDI supported the groups to approach other voluntary organizations that had a mandate of cleaning wells, during droughts and in times of drinking-water scarcity. Some of the women showed remarkable skills in site selection, parity and honesty in taking decisions with regards to work selection, monitoring of water, quality of work as well as equal access to the new water resources.

This was followed by a collective of 30-40 women leaders negotiating with the Deputy Conservator of Forests to sanction the entire nursery-raising works to women's groups rather than to individual male farmers. As members of the national campaign to 'Feminize our Forest' and to high light the role of women in protecting the forest and sustaining livelihoods of the families, the women raised largely forest species. The process of planning, training for nursery-raising, monitoring, maintenance, record keeping, intra-group monitoring etc built the collective's confidence to form a sangathan. Women realised that the collective nursery -raising initiative was very different from being a labourer on a nursery of the Forest

¹⁴Panchayat leader

¹⁵Women's coalitions at the village level

Department. Women joined the national campaign to demand that the nursery-raising activities in forest areas be given to all-women's groups.

In 1998, ANANDI and the agewans¹⁶ of DMS decided to undertake a padyatra¹⁷ to dialogue with women and other communities to understand the notion of health amongst them. The padyatra built awareness around people's right to health care, the role of Auxiliary Nurse and Midwives (ANMs)¹⁸ and other issues ailing the health system. Street plays portraying the existing health system were performed by theatre troupes (drawn from the women of the mahila mandals known as Adivasi Kalakar Tukdi and ANANDI staff). The padyatra traversed through villages, encouraging interactive and informative discussions amongst the people about issues such as corruption, VAW and women's health, motivating others to join in this struggle for rights and the life free of exploitation. The padyatra, gave the informal forum a new visibility and identity as a sangathan.

ANANDI helped the sangathan form and meet in cluster level forums for peer sharing and learning known as Patti meetings, a structure was determined with each village mahila mandal having representation at the cluster level and the cluster being represented on the sangathan. A core committee was elected from among the sangathan leadership to take decisions and guide the work of the sangathan. The sangathan structure was established with decision making roles very early on, and supported by ANANDI in enhancing their capacities and establishing processes for democratic and gendered institutional development.

The Devgadh Mahila Sangathan (DMS) was organized (September 16, 1998) into several issue-based and thematic committees, such as Food Security, Health, Nyaya (Justice) and the Adivasi Kalakar Tukdi (Tribal arists group which functions as part of the education development/communication team) which worked as its communication arm.

DMS emerged as a strong forum with regard to the cash dole given to pregnant women during drought relief works. As per Government regulations, the DMS leaders ensured that no pregnant women put herself at risk on drought relief work sites. They got all pregnant women to have their ante natal care tests done. DMS helped the women to get medical certificates, which was the key document that entitled them to get Rs. 15/- in cash dole each day. However in spite of eight months of consistent follow-up by the applicants and the sangathan leaders, from the Primary Health Centre, to the block and district level officials to the relief commissioner, payments were not made regularly. Three days of dharna by over 300 women during the 2001 monsoon months, changed everything, and galvanized both the local leaders and entire State machinery.

The sangathan ensured that those who had registered for cash doles, got their money and all eligible pregnant women, destitute and old people received their cash doles on time. By this action alone, the sangathan acquired an independent identity

VOICES

"The impact of disasters on women is manifold, as we are expected to run the house and provide food for the family."

it was a victory won on the strength of the number of members, combined with the force of information, honesty and commitment.

¹⁶ Initiative-takers, a term used to denote responsibility rather than power, as a leadership trait.

¹⁷Journey by foot.

 $^{^{\}rm 18}$ The grassroots health worker of the Government's Health Department.

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

ANANDI and DMS collaborated to demonstrate a 'drought proofing' programme in the villages Bara and Gajapura. The programme was women-led and focused on on food and fodder security, through soil and water conservation interventions instead of traditional relief works of road and building works.

Since the previous experiences of rural development programme works (roads and water-pond constructions) had little impact on the lives and livelihoods of the people, the eight mahila mandals¹⁹ in Gajapura village undertook fresh initiatives to ascertain ways in which to develop the land and increase productivity.



Members of the DMS and the mahila mandal, along with men from the village, undertook mapping and Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) exercises; topography, soil erosion, and water-flow patterns were analysed in five faliyas (hamlets) and projects for land development were identified.

In the 'drought proofing' work at the village level, initially the village-level samitis, which were formed to monitor the work, were made up of both men and women from the community. After the first year, however, a decision was taken to have only women in the samitis, as it seemed that the men were placing personal interests over community interests, which in turn led to conflicts. DMS leaders supported the village committees in their decision to resolve the conflict by defining the role of the programme committee and advisory committee (most of the male advisors were interfering the decisions of the programme committee).

Similar labour focused soil water conservation work was undertaken through the Sampoorna Grameen Rojgar Yojana (SGRY) - the food for work programme of the government which was executed by ANANDI and DMS in 13 villages with over 40 women leaders trained as Eco workers monitoring and ensuring works on private lands of marginal farmers and single women headed households. Traditional knowledge about structures and site selection, quality monitoring, mobilizing labour etc was done by DMS, while ANANDI provided technical as well as administrative support in the exercise.

Food insecurity in the region and the imperative need for a strategy to secure livelihoods was another issue on which ANANDI collaborated with the DMS and many other people's organizations and voluntary organizations and formed Anna Suraksha Adhikaar Abhiyaan (ASAA), Gujarat- a state level campaign on Right to Food and Work. The Supreme Court orders in the public interest litigation of PUCL vs. Union of India became the basis for the mahila mandals and DMS to undertake monitoring and reporting of activities of the mid-day meal and the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) schemes, the public distribution system, and the functioning of the fair price shops. The monitoring reports were shared in the public hearing in Devgadh Baria convention of the ASAA and followed up in the gram sabhas.

Grain banks and seed banks managed at the village level ensured emergency support to the poorest members of the sangathan. DMS focused on preparing people's plans and needs assessment for collective procurement of grains in the lean season, with the support of a government programme. Efforts were directed towards bringing together information about peoples' food and livelihood security

¹⁹ Women's solidarity groups

in way that it could impact government policy. The DMS leadership played a significant role in monitoring and reporting in this area (See Box 2).

To enable the access of women to the 2001 Panchayat elections, the Lok Adhikar Kendras²⁰ (LAKs) are information for rights-awareness, legal support and handholding support from nyaya samiti²¹ in ensuring entitlements. Campaigns against witch hunting, child marriage, domestic violence, denial of women's right to land and property, alienation of tribal and single women from forest lands, violence against women are some the cases LAKs have taken up. ANANDI and DMS both play the role of education and advocacy on these cases. To ensure women's property rights, LAKs work to register land in women's names. They help register women's names in ration cards and voter card lists to ensure their entitlements. LAKs use the Right to Information Act to find out about women's ration cards, their right to their husband's land, etc., and assists in filing cases and registering demands for rights to maintenance. The paralegal workers, sangathan activists and the ANANDI team work with the assistance of a lawyer to spread rights awareness in communities.

ANANDI's role in this process has been that of asking the critical questions that will enable the sangathan leaders to direct and inform the process, as well as in providing critical capacity development inputs for women to come into a range of roles from implementers and technically sound workers in areas of land development etc, to management and decision making for all activities of the sangathan.

VOICES

"Jhanpa khuli gayaa" - the flood gates of learning suddenly opened up for us through this new experience; we realized many facets that strengthened our collective struggles as well as recognized the many dimensions of exploitation and together we explored ways of challenging it."

Jayanta ben

Box 2: The Campaign for Two Square Meals a Day

Food security became a big issue during self-help group (SHG) meetings in 2004, when concerns were raised regarding the increasing rates of migration due to lack of food and work availability in the region. Once the women learnt about government schemes related to food security, such as the Mid-Day Meal scheme, the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) and the targeted public distribution system they began intervening, monitoring the fair price shop (FPS) licensee and reporting about black marketing. Checking of the FPS licensees, who were engaged in black marketing of government food rations, led to greater vigilance among groups about other schemes, the DMS decided to monitor the Food for Work Programme as well, to ensure food security and to curb migration.

An analysis of the lending patterns revealed that 77 percent of the loans taken by women were for the purchase of food grains and 20 percent were for the treatment of health ailments. Discussions on health practices would lead to dismay among women who would ask how one could talk about a nutritious diet when there wasn't enough food available for two meals a day. This revealed the urgent need to address the issue of food security, as a major prerequisite to bringing about change in health status and livelihood security. A key slogan that emerged as a goal for the food security campaign was 'be tak na rotla' or 'two square meals a day'. The survey was followed by public hearings where information about leakages in the PDS, ICDS and mid-day meal schemes and in fraudulent listings in the Below Poverty Line (BPL) lists came to light. A case of death by starvation was also highlighted despite furious denials by the State Government.

An analysis of the mid-day meal programme revealed the inadequate quantities and poor quality of the food supplies, the mahila mandal decided to monitor the availability and quality of food and raised these issues at the panchayat and sangathan levels.

²⁰Community Centre for Gender Justice

 $^{^{^{21}}}$ Justice committee

Discussions were held on malpractices rampant within the Food for Work Programme; the need for this scheme to be implemented in a timely manner was highlighted, as was a revision of practices so as to provide work when it is required, ensure payment at the time of work and thus prevent distress migration. This emerged as a campaign led by the DMS to demand regular work for the tribals and linked their struggles to the larger National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) campaigns taking root in Rajasthan and the country. Since February 2006, the sangathan has



been ensuring their member's right to work by getting their Job cards made, ensuring that their demand for work is acknowledged and provided work in the stipulated 15 days. DMS also mobilizes the community to participate in gram sabhas and to play an active role in preparing village plans and shelf of works. This campaign is called 'Roji Roti Lokjumbesh' People's Campaign for Right to Food and Work

REPLICABILITY

The first collective initiative of the DMS was significant in demonstrating the strength of collective effort to place demands, seek support, solve problems and work in solidarity to challenge family/community resistance. Sharing incidents relating to violence and/or health crises gave women the strength to support each other, while working on claiming their rights from the government.

The Grain Bank is now an increasingly decentralized programme, with a core samiti existing within the DMS to make decisions, monitor and ensure its effective planning and operation. Norms have been defined for repayments to be done. The DMS provides leadership in overseeing this function of the samiti and in giving guidance on conflicts and major issues. Each Grain Bank samiti has an account and its own savings, the vision being to gradually become self-reliant over a five-year period, by raising its own resources, projecting its own demand, purchasing at optimal cost from the federation and returning the same regularly. By charging an annual interest of 12 percent on grain loans, it is envisaged that the model will be able to accomplish these goals.

CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

Establishing a decentralized grassroots structure for action at the community level has provided the space for women's leadership to evolve at multiple levels. While the sangathan provides the overall leadership structure, its foundation is based on sound leadership at the cluster and village samitis and mahila mandals. The decentralized decision-making process that ANANDI has encouraged for different programmes and themes has enabled women to learn and facilitate change in a gendered way across various sectors.

Designing livelihoods interventions in a holistic manner so as to be able to move from one needs-level to the next; on one hand provisioning for the availability of work to assure wages and on the other, enhancing access to and developing resources so that long-term solutions are strengthened is a continuous challenge. Farm forestry activities have had a significant impact on productivity (such as planting fruit trees and grasses for fodder on private land). Increased availability of water for irrigation allowed produce-diversification and the growing of two crops where before there was only one. Poor women's households were given priority in the process of selection of works, allowing them to enhance

their incomes and release long-mortgaged lands. Problems of fuel and fodder availability were other challenges that have been addressed. Work opportunities have now become available within the village, thus vindicating the success of the initiatives. Most importantly, the women have gained visibility recognition and respect as community leaders even as they negotiate change in a gender framework; they are now consulted on panchayat decisions and their views are taken into account in actions that impact them as well as the community.

The challenges that confront the ANANDI and DMS today lie in their ability to establish and sustain gender-friendly development practices that encourage the well-being of their communities and to be able to take the success of engendering the processes and practices, to the regional and macro-levels, such as the NREGS and the forest rights-related campaigns

LESSONS LEARNT

The strategy adopted by ANANDI to organize and provide critical information has enabled the DMS to make informed choices and define its course of action on issues that concern its members. Making information easily available and providing opportunities for women to learn, reflect and determine courses of action has been instrumental in DMS evolving its own political identity and mission (supported by ANANDI). In the course of its engagement with strategies addressing poverty in the region, the issue of gender equality has emerged as a critical and non-negotiable right, a goal beyond poverty alleviation, so as to reach sustainable livelihood and development targets. As women have gained strength from their collective struggles, in addressing issues of livelihood security, they have also taken up other causes that demand a focus on women's rights. The nyaya samiti works on creating, within the larger framework of rights, an environment of rights assertion by women, thus making it an inalienable component of the rights discourse and compelling the local panchayats to engage with them in the delivery of justice especially in cases relating to women in the region.

Using strategies that build on people's knowledge and enable them to develop skills and alternatives that make them part of the solution and give direction to the efforts of the government, rather than be mere observers of its shortcomings. This is the key factor in bringing about people-centred change.

The insistence upon women maintaining control over decision-making processes in the DMS (while willing to negotiate and work with men in the communities), reflects an increasing ability to determine future actions based on existing alternatives and realizing that the values they have worked to establish are fragile and need to be protected from those seeking short-term gains. It is this wisdom that now informs the functioning of the DMS and assures its sustainability.

Gender mainstreaming thus has occurred not by accident but by design, by being embedded in the structure of the organizational framework, as much as by the critical processes that have informed its work and evolution and engagement with other institutions in society or with the state over the years. Women in the Devgadh Mahila Sangathan are articulate about the connections between their struggles for livelihoods sustainability and the struggles for peace and self-determination.

"In past 13 years of work of ANANDI with the women's groups and the DMS, we understand that a complex web of factors influences a woman's means of living which include her food and nutritional security, right to good health and health care, violence free home and community, access to and control over resources (land, water, finance, property, etc), decision making power, mobility, and most importantly, dignity.

Livelihoods are also affected by the play of power relations, control over resources, issues of access and distribution and the internalization of patriarchal values by both men and women. Our learning is that most positive outcomes are realized when livelihood interventions with women engage with the above dimensions." (Ref:ANANDI Documents'Living on the edge'-Partnerships for Reducing Vulnerabilities of socially, economically, politically marginalized communities living in semi-arid and arid regions of Gujarat)



Police Public Partnership for Combating Violence against Women

Parivartan, Delhi

BACKGROUND

Violence against women (VAW) has emerged as a major concern for law enforcement agencies all over the world, with rape and sexual violence being the most dehumanizing and stigmatizing forms of such violence. In Delhi, sexual violence has become an increasing problem that needs urgent attention. The incidence of sexual assault and rape has acquired alarming dimensions.

Public outcry, critical media coverage and self-reflection prompted the Delhi Police to respond seriously to this growing problem. Thus, they conceived and put into motion an innovative programme called 'Parivartan' (which means change), which aims to combat VAW in Delhi.

The primary objective of Parivartan has been to substantially reduce VAW in Delhi, particularly rape, and to create an atmosphere of safety and security for women in the city. The intervention targets were (i) to decrease the annual growth rate of incidence of rape and sexual assaults from 18 percent to 12 percent; (ii) to reduce the proportionate contribution of the north-west district in the overall incidence of rape in Delhi; (iii) to lower the rate of rape by strangers to a level of 3 to 4 percent; and (iv) to bring down the overall incidence of VAW, particularly the incidence of rape in the north-west district of Delhi.

GOOD PRACTICE

- I. **Description:** The radically new programme required substantial modifications to the existing methods of police operation, the gendered configuration of field staff, the modes of patrolling, the methods of communication with the community and to the site where victims of crimes filed reports. In addition, the mindset of the police force and the style of functioning was sought to be changed. Hence, the programme was aptly called Parivartan.² Parivartan was designed to operate at two levels: (i) organizational (to initiate changes in police functioning) and (ii) community (to redress societal evils). In the initial stage, the programme was launched in 20 beats³ in the north-west⁴ district of Delhi.
- II. **Evolution:** To get the campaign off the ground, close interaction was sought with social scientists, members of civil society organizations, gender specialists from UN agencies, lawyers, psychologists, community leaders and police officers in the field. A brainstorming session convened on the causes of

¹The rate of crime in Indian cities is comparatively higher (20.3 percent) when seen against the national rate (14.7 percent). Of 35 large cities surveyed in 2006, Delhi accounted for 18.9 percent of total crimes. With reference to crimes against women, Delhi accounted for 31.2 percent of rape cases, 34.7 percent of kidnapping and abduction cases, 18.7 percent of dowry deaths, 17.1 percent of cases of cruelty by husbands and relatives and 20.1 percent of molestation cases. (National Criminal Records Bureau, Crime in India 2006, New Delhi. Available online at http://ncrb.nic.in/cii2006/CHAP3.pdf>)

²To ensure qualitative consistency, quality policy and standard operative procedures were evolved. The Parivartan project received ISO 2001:9000 certification by the Standardization Testing and Quality Certification Directorate (STQC) in 2007.

³ A beat is the smallest territorial unit used in policing.

⁴The northwest district of Delhi covers Alipur, Narela, Shalimar Bagh, Jahangir Puri, Rohini, Ashok Vihar, Rani Bagh, Keshav Puram, Sultanpuri, Mangolpuri, Kanjhawala, Mukherjee Nagar, Adarsh Nagar and Model Town (based on the fact that these areas of the district have police stations). Details available online at < http://delhigovt.nic.in/newdelhi/police.html>

incidence of VAW in Delhi revealed many insights into the primary reasons behind the perpetration of crimes against women (CAW). In the light of these findings, a comprehensive strategy and time schedule was designed, and Parivartan was officially launched on 29 August 2005.

III. How it works/methodology followed: At the organizational level, Parivartan undertook the innovative measure of training and introducing 40 women police constables (WPCs)⁵ in the beats of north-west Delhi. This was a fundamental change in the history of Indian policing; this was the first time WPCs were posted in the field. They were now empowered to monitor localities with populations ranging from 10,000 to 50,000 people, a job previously performed only by their male counterparts. Another significant initiative was the gender sensitization of police personnel (adoption of gender-sensitive procedures in everyday policing methods, introduction of a women's helpline and door-to-door contact programmes with target populations). Structured daily schedules were prepared for the WPCs, who engaged in door-to-door policing and maintained a three-month special focus on the women in the community. They identified the grievances of the women and tried to build sustainable relationships with them. The WPCs also formed, within each beat, a group of 20 women from the community to be trained as area counsellors. These women would then in turn extend the awareness campaign about safety measures for women and girls, both within and outside the four walls of their homes.

At the community level, Parivartan took upon itself the challenging task of altering social mindsets by attacking the root cause of the problem - patriarchal ideology. This was done through a programme aimed at changing socialization patterns; implementing gender-neutral curricula and practices in schools; popularizing gender knowledge through the enactment of carefully scripted street plays; providing gender sensitization training to the police force by academic experts; and involving civil society and government leaders in providing services such as healthcare, counselling and day-care centres for the children of poor working women.



A Delhi-based NGO, Jagran, has held over 500 pantomime performances to create awareness. These were enacted in beats prone to incidences of CAW, rape and sexual assault, and intended to sensitize communities in poor slum colonies as well. Each performance explored three different themes (harassment for dowry, domestic violence and rape) under the umbrella of the theme 'safety of women'. Each performance was interactive and involved audience participation by way of question-and-answer sessions after the performance. The pantomime performances helped in nurturing the notion of community policing, whereby the

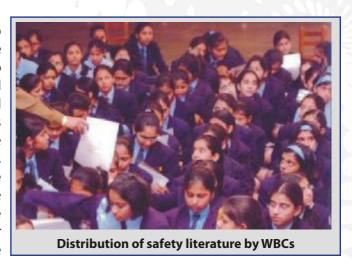
community began to perceive the police in a more positive role (as helpful crime prevention agents willing to work with other stakeholders in the community).

With the assistance of a psychologist, Parivartan conducted workshops in district schools. The objective was to highlight the possible preventive measures that could be taken by children (especially

 $^{^5}$ The WPCs were deployed as an implementation team under a Nodal Officer of the rank of Deputy Commissioner of Police.

The performances attracted huge crowds, with some communities requesting repeat performances. In some instances, the plays acted as instant catalysts, with women voluntarily approaching WPCs after the shows, to talk about the violence they had experienced, or the lack of safety they felt.

adolescent girls), teachers and parents to improve the safety of women and children. The workshops also offered a confidential helpline to students regarding life skills, social skills and counselling on issues related to violence and sexual crime. The workshops and interactions with the students served to generate baseline data for a survey conducted at the micro-level, within the Parivartan programme, regarding the present safety status of girl children in the district. This was done to provide inputs for the programme's long-term objectives. Senior police officials met with Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs) and parents to discuss



issues of child safety and domestic violence. Psychologists and sociologists met with teachers and community counsellors to impress upon them the need for gender sensitivity, and spoke to girls to educate them about such issues. Finally, in 2005 Parivartan participated in an international campaign called '16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence', this was particularly significant because it was the first time a police department had participated in such a campaign.

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

The formation of Parivartan was aided by technical, social, methodological and logistical support from district police officials, representatives from the prosecution branch, the Delhi Police's Crime against Women (CAW) Cell, the Delhi Police Research Cell, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the National Commission for Women (NCW), various Rape Crisis Intervention Centres (RCICs), Family Counselling Centres and the University of Delhi. In addition, during the last quarter of 2006, Parivartan representatives visited various organizations, academic institutions and attended conferences abroad to discuss the initiative (such as the London School of Economics, CENTREX⁸ in London and the International Chiefs of Police [IACP] Conference in Boston).

REPLICABILITY

A review conference held on the completion of one year of Parivartan (in August 2006) indicated that the programme had shown positive outcomes and developed a framework of institutional collaboration. A documentary film on WPCs was released to acquaint a wider constituency with the scope of Parivartan's work. Researchers from universities and colleges are now approaching the Parivartan cell to learn more about the initiative and showcase it as a replicable model. The extension of the Parivartan initiative is being considered for other parts of Delhi. The introduction of gender sensitization courses including a discussion of Parivartan, in Police Training Colleges across the country is also proposed.

⁷This is an international campaign originating from the first Women's Global Leadership Institute in 1991, when participants chose the dates of 25 November (International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women) and 10 December (International Human Rights Day) to symbolically emphasize that VAW is a human rights violation. The 16 Days Campaign has been embraced as an organizing strategy by a broad spectrum of individuals and groups around the world to call for the elimination of all forms of VAW, through activities ranging from media programmes to demonstrations, conferences, exhibitions and performances. (UNIFEM, available online at < http://www.unifem.org/campaigns/vaw/16days.php)

⁸The United Kingdom's Central Police Training and Development Authority.

[°]For instance, the Department of Social Work now regularly sends interns to the cell.

CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

The main challenges that Parivartan faced are: the shortage of women officers, particularly at the supervisory level, the non-availability of patrolling vehicles for women staff and the lack of funds for organizing activities and publicity. The lack of studies/experts in the field has also been a limiting factor. Building this sensitization and gaining the confidence of the community requires specialized skills, which need some time to develop.



LESSONS LEARNT

The introduction of WPCs helped build the confidence of women in the community with respect to safety; women now feel more comfortable about approaching law enforcement agencies for assistance in matters that they may have been reticent to discuss with male police officers. The training of Delhi Police officials (at all levels) on gender issues and VAW-related concerns has made the police system more sensitive to the grievances brought to their notice, by women. The decision of the parent police department to create a special cell in the north-west district of

Delhi to educate people on VAW and on how to prevent its incidence has assisted in raising awareness on this very important issue. Other lessons are:

- A general reduction in crimes, and particularly rape and sexual assault cases, shows that such initiatives can discourage crimes against women.¹⁰
- As a result of increased awareness amongst women, there was increased reporting of sexual assault
 cases.
- Realizing that the police is serious about issues relating to women has resulted in better and increased flow of information to the police about potential sexual abusers.
- Women have begun to actively participate in decision processes intended to make their environments safer.
- There has been an improvement in the general behaviour of men towards women in the area, in both the domestic and the public sphere, reflecting societal change.

¹⁰Most of the results achieved are measurable and can be compared with statistics of the period prior to the intervention. The recorded data clearly indicates that these results are the direct outcome of the skills, tools and techniques applied during the intervention. In 2006, there was a decline of 5.5 percent in the incidence of rape in Delhi (623), as compared to 2005 (658). The incidence of rape in the north-west district fell from 29 percent in 2005 to 27 percent in 2006. The number of rapes by strangers remained between 2 and 3 percent. There was a decline of 11 percent in the overall incidence of VAW in the north-west district (169 cases) in 2006, as compared to 2005 (192 cases). (See National Criminal Records Bureau, Crime in India 2006, New Delhi. Available online at http://ncrb.nic.in/cii2006/cii-2006/Table%205.2.pdf> & National Criminal Records Bureau, Crime in India 2005, New Delhi. Available online at http://ncrb.nic.in/crime2005/cii-2005/Table%205.2.pdf)



Engendering Institutional Spaces

Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), Delhi

BACKGROUND

Gender mainstreaming in the workplace is a process that seeks to eliminate discrimination on the basis of gender and to provide equal opportunities to both women and men. It recognizes the reproductive roles that women play and accordingly seeks to furnish them with certain privileges that facilitate their work lives.

India's growing economy has resulted in an increasing number of women entering the workplace, a space that was until only very recently, dominated by men.² To encourage this trend, it is necessary to create a conducive and enabling environment that is founded on principles of equity.

While equal rights for women and gendersensitive policies and rules at the workplace are advocated by a number of organizations, in practice it has been found that there is little gender sensitivity or appreciation of the special needs of women. Workspaces are designed for



Staff at work during a half-day workshop on gender mainstreaming, at PRIA

use by men and the standard of ethics that prevails is often gender discriminatory³. For both men and women to work together, the workplace requires norms and policies that address and protect both sexes equally. The Government of India has taken steps to ensure women's access to labour welfare and social security and has passed legislation⁴ aimed at improving working conditions for women. However, even though a comprehensive legal framework has been formulated for ensuring gender-sensitivity at the workplace, the implementation has been inadequate.⁵

¹The 'reproductive role', refers to the childbearing/rearing responsibilities and domestic tasks done by women that are required to reproduce and maintain the labour force. Moser's 'triple roles' schema draws planners' attention to the way in which the gender division of labour places a range of demands on women's time and impacts their ability to participate in planned interventions. (Moser, C, Gender planning and development: theory, practice and training, London: Routledge.)

²According to the 2001 National Human Development Report 2001, the percentage of women in the labour force in rural areas in India (1999-2000) was 45.6 percent, while the corressponding figure for men was 85.4 percent. In urban areas, it was 24.6 percent for women as compared to 78.6 percent for men, for the same time period. (Planning Commission, Government of India, available online at http://planningcommission.nic.in/reports/genrep/reportsf.htm>)

³The Indian experience indicates that it is easier for organizations to integrate gender into their programmes rather than into their own organizational structures, since the latter requires unwavering commitment from organizational leadership, formulation of strong policies that imbibe this commitment and prioritization of the need to bring about gender sensitivity in the work environment.

⁴These include the Minimum Wages Act (1948), the Plantation Labour Act (1951), the Factories Act (1952), the Maternity Benefits Act (1961), the Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act (1966) and the Equal Remuneration Act (1976).

⁵Mukherjee, M., 'Women and work in India: a collage from five decades of independence' In Ray, B. & A. Basu, *From independence towards freedom: Indian women since 1947*, New Delhi: OUP, 1999.

Over the past few years, the Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) has carried out activities in gender mainstreaming, with a view to creating and promoting a gender-friendly environment within organizations. To make women feel safe and valued within the organization, the work environment needs to be gender sensitive, should discourage sexual harassment and adequately address any such cases when they arise. This role is played by the Committee for Gender Awareness and Mainstreaming in PRIA (CGAMP), which builds staff capacities on gender issues, advocates relevant policies to be adopted within the organization and deals with issues of sexual harassment.

GOOD PRACTICE

- I. Description: The objective of CGAMP in adopting gender-friendly policies and practices is to bring about equal opportunities for both women and men at the workplace, so that women feel comfortable and confident in expressing themselves and both men and women are able to adequately balance their professional and personal lives. CGAMP also challenges the stereotypical roles of men and women in their lives outside work and has tried to initiate policies that encourage men to take up more responsibilities relating to child rearing in their own homes.
- II. **Evolution:** Founded in 1998, CGAMP was formerly known as the Committee against Sexual Harassment (CASH), in conformity with the Supreme Court of India's Vishaka guidelines. Initially, its function was to prevent and address sexual harassment cases within PRIA, but it became clear over time, that the committee should also address gender-fair work policies and other gender-related issues. Consequently, CASH evolved into CGAMP. Mandated by PRIA's Governing Board, CGAMP is an independent and autonomous body. It has the authority to carry out independent investigations and to call upon any PRIA employee (senior or junior) for questioning, if required.
- III. How it works/methodology followed: Capacity-building activities which raise awareness and share information about gender-related issues are encouraged. It is important for all PRIA staff to understand the basic gender concepts and be aware of the myriad issues related to gender, such as gender-based violence (GBV), domestic violence (DV), eve-teasing, sexual harassment in the workplace and dowry. All staff members are provided with information about appropriate behaviour in the workplace and films dealing with gender issues are regularly screened. Education is provided on HIV/AIDS and the resulting gender implications are discussed. Attention is given to gender stereotypes portrayed in the media and how these reinforce people's notions about the roles men and women play. New employees undergo an orientation in gender sensitization.

The various components of the programme are as follows:

Sexual harassment: The organization is deeply committed towards establishing and maintaining a 'Zero Tolerance Zone against Sexual Harassment'. Awareness-generating and capacity-building exercises are provided to employees to make them understand that sexual harassment issues are widespread and require special mechanisms for addressing them. When such instances do occur at PRIA, strict disciplinary action is taken⁷ and can even result in the perpetrator's dismissal from the organization.⁸

The Supreme Court of India issued the Vishakha guidelines in 1997. These are mandatory sexual harassment prevention guidelines for the workplace, applicable all over India. All employers or heads of institutions are required to institute certain rules of conduct and take preventive measures to stop sexual harassment in the workplace.

⁷The CGAMP deals with each case in a sensitive manner, using proper procedures that are laid out in its terms of reference.

If those accused of sexual harassment are found guilty, they face suitable disciplinary action, depending upon the gravity of the nature of the accusation. In cases of a more serious nature, punitive measures include transferring the accused to another department, stopping increments or, in some cases, the individual is asked to leave the organization. Suitable disciplinary action is meted out irrespective of the designation of the accused.

Paternity leave: Paternity leave has theoretically been incorporated into government policies and service rules. It is still however a new and relatively little-used facility in most organizations. When it was seen that only three men had availed of this facility at PRIA, CGAMP decided to review the system and made consequent modifications in the paternity leave pattern, which encourages male employees who have recently become fathers, to assume their new responsibilities.

Rest for pregnant mothers: The pregnancy period for a working woman carries with it more stress and compromises than that of a woman who does not work outside the house. More than 50 percent of organizations¹¹ in India have facilities for pregnant/lactating women.¹² At PRIA, expecting mothers are supported and encouraged to lie down for 30-40 minutes after their lunch break, so as to give them the rest they require.

Child support: At PRIA, both men and women are free to bring their children into office in case there is no help at home. If possible, a caretaker accompanies the child. A special room in the office has been designated for childcare activities, and it is not uncommon to see children of the staff in the office, particularly during school vacations.¹³

Part-time work: In order to convince mothers not to give up their jobs, PRIA allows women to work half-days (five hours or more) depending on their specific home situation. When the mother feels she can resume full-time work, she is given the opportunity to do so.

Flexible hours: All PRIA staff has the option of choosing their work hours within a given timeframe. While the standard timings are 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., staff can choose their working hours any time between 8 a.m. and 7 p.m., thus helping parents balance the dual roles they play, both at home and in office.

Working from home: While working from home is not official company policy at PRIA, it is possible in certain situations, depending upon the discretion of the concerned supervisor. Both men and women have availed of this facility, usually when a child has been unwell.

⁹In India, 54 percent of organizations have initiated the facility of paternity leave. In 86 percent of the organizations that provide this facility, it was noted that neither the employer nor the employees were convinced of the efficacy of this leave, thus affecting its proper utilization. Most men do not avail of this facility, nor are they encouraged to do so. Many organizations have not created a corresponding culture that enables and supports men in taking on their new roles and responsibilities.

¹⁰Paternity leave allows new fathers to assume the responsibilities that come with parenthood and ease the responsibility assumed by the women in their families. Originally, 15 days leave was granted from the date of the child's birth (including Saturdays and Sundays), with the assurance that men on paternity leave would not be recalled to duty during this period. Men were ready to use the facility of paternity leave in only 15 percent of the organizations providing it. There were also instances of men on leave being recalled to office due to work pressure (See PRIA et al, 'Engendering workplaces: framework for a gender policy', New Delhi: PRIA, 2007, pgs. 70-71).

¹¹lbid, pg. 105.

¹²Such as short rest periods during the day, relaxation from field-based activities, accommodation in desk-based activities, baby-sitting facilities for infants, breaks for breastfeeding, etc. Several organizations have a policy that is designed to promote exclusive breastfeeding of infants for six months. This has resulted in the maternity leave period in many places being extended to six months (lbid).

¹³The entry of more women into the workforce has contributed to the metamorphosis of the Indian family, with many couples now opting for nuclear families rather than being part of a joint family. This has created new needs for the parents of young children (especially when they are between two and eight years old). There may be occasions or emergencies that necessitate that a staff members spend time with their young children. This can come into conflict with working hours and workplace commitments. Since taking leave is not always an option, due to work exigencies, parents prefer to bring their children in with them to work. Current trends show that 46 percent of organizations in India are open to the idea of their staff bringing their young children to work if it is an emergency or simply a holiday at school (lbid).

Gender sensitivity evaluations: In the annual performance appraisals, all PRIA staff members are evaluated on their gender sensitivity, which shows that gender sensitivity is taken very seriously.

BOX: Participatory lunch helps break gender stereotypes

Participatory lunches are one of the most popular events at PRIA. A coordinating team, consisting of eight to ten members, is selected to organize and coordinate a lunch (a new team is chosen for each lunch, so that everyone gets a chance to lead a team). The entire staff, from President to peon, is divided into groups, based on the number of menu items decided by the team. Each team then decides the recipe to be followed, method of preparation and costs. The participatory lunch has proved to be an effective ice-breaker; discussions and activities around food, cooking and menu-planning are normally considered a woman's domain, but this gender myth gets debunked during the participatory lunch process. There is no role in this process that is considered male- or female-specific. Individuals participate in all stages of the process, and there is no pressure to conform to any stereotype. This activity is held once every three to four months and is supported by the management. It is where new staff members can be introduced and welcomed, weddings, births and farewells can be announced and where a good time can be had by all. The participatory lunch has contributed substantially to the breaking of gender stereo types within PRIA.

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

The guidelines of the Supreme Court of India have helped PRIA keep to its commitment, thus proving that, to some extent, national legislative reforms do help in bringing about desired social change. In this context, the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Bill, 2006 has brought in varied responses from many organizations (both public and private) throughout India.

The initiatives that PRIA took with regard to institutional gender mainstreaming through gender policy have not remained confined to PRIA. It has partnered with a number of organizations such as Sahbhagi Sikhan Kendra, Lucknow; Unnati, Ahmedabad; CENCORED, Patna; Lok Jagriti Kendra, Madhupur; Himalayan Action Research Centre (HARC), Dehradun; Samarthan, Bhopal and Sahayi, Thiruvananthapuram. A gender audit has been done and recommendations made. Good practices like having a committee to deal with sexual harassment and having gender sensitive HR policies were the results of those efforts.

PRIA has also reached out to almost a 100 civil society organizations in its own network, by conducting capacity building sessions on mainstreaming gender within the organization. At the end of each of these sessions, action planning was undertaken, where organizations made their own plan about what they would do and how they would take gender mainstreaming forward in their organizations.

REPLICABILITY

PRIA has invested resources in replicating these internal gender mainstreaming efforts into the networks of its partners and other civil society organizations (CSOs). Capacity-building support is provided to CSOs to help them develop mechanisms that address sexual harassment, form gender policies and modify their human resource policies. The CGAMP and the gender team replicated the efforts. The first round of replication was done with PRIA partners (as mentioned earlier).

To guide organizations on how to engender workplaces, PRIA has developed a resource manual, in collaboration with UN Solution Exchange, 'Engendering Workplaces: Framework for a Gender Policy'. This book was developed on the basis of PRIA's experience and interaction with 13 organizations in five states.

At present, PRIA, in close partnership with Women Power Connect (WPC), is developing a proposal, in which capacities of 20 organizations will be strategically built, to help them mainstream gender and develop gender policies of their own.

CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

When the CGAMP was being established at PRIA, many staff members were uncomfortable about the use of the term 'sexual harassment'. There was some initial resistance to the setting up of such a committee, since it implied or admitted the existence of sexual harassment within the organization.

There continues to be considerable reluctance on the part of organizations to the idea of providing special facilities for pregnant women and new mothers. Since workplaces have traditionally been dominated by men, the existing work culture finds it difficult to accept the idea of an expecting mother and a working woman as two sides of the same coin. As a result, many organizations do not even consider providing any additional support to pregnant women to ensure their physical and mental well-being.

PRIA has faced many challenges during its attempts to motivate other organizations to incorporate gender mainstreaming. Major obstructions to the agenda's progress include lack of commitment from organizational leadership; resource constraints due to the low priority attached to gender issues; limited staff capacities to address sexual harassment; the absence of systems and structures within organizations (i.e. the lack of a human resource policy); and little or no female staff representation in small CSOs.

LESSONS LEARNT

The PRIA experience shows that concerted efforts on the part of employing organizations can go a long way in ensuring gender sensitivity in the workplace. If heads of teams endorse the need for gender awareness and equality, these concepts will percolate down to all the employees and reiterate the importance of this concern.

It is important for employing organizations to have mechanisms that address gender-related concerns, particularly sexual harassment, as this is a major but still unaddressed problem in most workplaces. Efforts should also be made to ensure that such a mechanism is unbiased and effective and that employees are aware that no one, regardless of position or rank, is immune from its jurisdiction. Encouraging discussions on gender issues amongst men and women employees is a good way of breaking existing gender stereotypes and inculcating gender sensitivity in the workplace.



HAQ, MV Foundation and Chak De! India

The Girl Child: A Collage Documentation of Good Practices

HAQ, MV Foundation and Chak De! India

"That the principle which regulates the existing social relations between the two sexes the subordination of one sex to the other is wrong itself, and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement; and that it ought to be replaced by a principle of perfect equality, admitting no power or privilege on the one side, nor disability on the other..."

John Stuart Mill
 'Subjection of women'

The perception of a woman as a burden is widespread in India. While the birth of a male child is seen as cause for celebration, the birth of a daughter immediately leads to concerns about dowry, marriage, security (physical and sexual) and the family name.

Daughters are seen as leading to a lowering of the family's social status, an investment that will have no financial or emotional returns. The low sex ratio in India is a testimony to the sad fact that many female children are not even given the chance to live.

Gender perceptions and 'responsibilities'

Gender roles and expectations discount individual capabilities. Systems of patriarchy have deep roots in Indian society and have governed women's lives for centuries. Contempt for women is expressed through various channels and occupies all spaces where the two genders interact, be it the home, the street or the workplace.

However, inspite of the low status accorded to women in society, the Constitution of India recognizes children as persons entitled to fundamental rights (India ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child² (CRC), in 1992). Therefore, the girl child enjoys the Constitutional Right to Life. The Constitution, legislation enacted by the Government, the CRC and schematic interventions of the Government³ provide a framework for action. The Supreme Court of India has reiterated the rights of children in its judicial pronouncements and has also stressed the importance of the CRC⁴.

The following brief descriptions of HAQ and MV Foundation find mention in this document because of their work in the areas of child rights, countering gender inequity and ensuring that the right to education is a reality. The last segment of this collage is a discussion of the film Chak De! India and its unusual depiction of women.

HAQ: Centre for Child Rights - Ensuring Justice and Protection for Girls coming in contact with the Legal System

BACKROUND

HAQ: Centre for Child Rights is a Delhi-based group that seeks to place children's issues at the centre stage of public debate and mainstream children's concerns into the development agenda. HAQ works primarily

¹Mill, J.S., *The subjection of women*, New York: Prometheus Books, 1986. University of New York Press.

 $^{^2}$ The Convention on the Rights of the Child is available on UNICEF's website. (http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm)

³These include the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan (SSA), the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme, Kishori Shakti Yojna (KSY), Balika Samridhi Yojana (BSY) and the the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000.

with issues of governance and child protection, through research, training, public education, advocacy and legal aid and assistance for children. In all this, HAQ concentrates particularly on the most vulnerable, the girl child.

All these areas of work are interconnected and draw from each other to form an integrated approach to the recognition, promotion and protection of children's rights. In the last few years, HAQ has been closely associated with the Ministry of Women and Child Development and the Delhi High Court's Committee on Juvenile Justice. Ensuring children their right to express themselves and be heard is integral to HAQ's work and approach and is recognized as an acknowledgement of children's selfhood. It is about giving children an identity that is not dependent on their relationships with others. HAQ understands this in two different ways; first, it is important to provide opportunities to children to participate in decisions at different levels regarding matters that concern them and that they can relate to. Second, not only must children's opinions be sought, but they must also be heard and taken seriously. This is possible when adults make sure that the decisions are taken jointly by explaining choices available and the reasons for the decisions, in ways and in language that children can understand. In doing so, naturally, the age and maturity of the children in question must be kept in mind.

At the same time, children may be 'heard' through representation as in the case of judicial hearings where they are represented through their lawyers or advocates. In the context of child protection in particular, HAQ seeks to ensure that children get a fair hearing in judicial processes in which they are involved. Therefore, the child, as a victim, or as a defendant, must be adequately represented in the Juvenile Justice Board or in a regular Court, or given an opportunity to be heard before the Child Welfare Committee (CWC).

With approximately 440 million children, not only does India have the world's largest number of children but it also has the largest number of vulnerable and/or poor children. Of these children, nearly 44 million children live in 'difficult circumstances'. About four million children are in government-run homes established under the provisions of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2000.

India has recently witnessed an increase both in crimes committed by children and in crimes committed against them. Both categories of children come in contact with the law and the legal system, and therefore need information, legal counselling, legal aid and other forms of assistance, in keeping with their basic human rights. While in the former case, children are produced before the Juvenile Justice Boards for a judicial enquiry, in the latter, they are brought before the regular courts as victims and witnesses. Many children who are victims of crime, may also come in contact with yet another quasijudicial body established to ensure their care, protection and rehabilitation: the Child Welfare Committee.

While the judicial system is well laid out to meet the ends of justice, children are seldom aware of their rights—the right to legal representation, the right to legal aid and assistance and the right to appeal or approach higher courts if needed. This is particularly true for girl children, who suffer routine discrimination and inequity, despite Constitutional guarantees.

In the last three years, HAQ has worked closely with the CWC situated in the Nirmal Chhaya Complex on Jail Road in New Delhi. The CWC receives girls who are in need of care and protection and provides them immediate shelter and protection by placing them in suitable institutional care facilities and rehabilitation programmes, or by handing them back to their parents, keeping in mind the principle of the child's best interests. Many of the girls brought to this CWC are victims of violence, abuse, exploitation

⁵This section is largely extracted from a submission made to the Committee on Rights of the Child, and is entitled 'Children's right to be heard in judicial processes, India. 2006'. The full text is available on http://www.haqcrc.org

and neglect. While these girls are represented in the courts through state-assigned Public Prosecutors, they also require counselling and other legal assistance to help them fight for justice. Public Prosecutors are seldom sensitive to the needs of the victims.

The first task at hand for HAQ is therefore to approach the concerned Public Prosecutors and offer all possible assistance, which includes passing on information that will ensure sensitive handling of the victims in the courts. Such assistance is always welcome and does not threaten the existence of the Public Prosecutors in any way, as they do not feel that someone is trying to take over their role. While the courts may allow a private lawyer to stand up for the victim, provided the Public Prosecutor does not object to it, HAQ believes that, this is not the ideal strategy. HAQ believes in building the capacity of the Public Prosecutors in this process, which is both a sustainable and replicable solution, as these state lawyers are available within the judicial system across the country, while HAQ, or any other agency or lawyer doing pro bono work may or may not be available, each time to assist the victim.

The other important task is to build the victim's confidence in herself, so as to enable her to depose and testify to the facts of the case. Shattered by the traumatic experience of the crime and perhaps an alien or unfriendly environment in the shelter, coupled with the social taboos and biases attached to a victim of sexual abuse, such children tend to feel guilty all the time and need counselling and support to regain their self-esteem and confidence. Experience shows that with counselling and legal aid, victims no longer feel ashamed of sharing the fact of crime in the court and are able to handle the cross-examination process very well.

Sometimes legal aid work implies filing the First Information Report (FIR), medical examination of the victim, recording of her statement under Section 164 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CPC) before a First Class Judicial Magistrate, producing the child before the CWC, finding her immediate shelter, care and protection, conducting a home study to establish that sending the child back to her family will not pose any further mental or physical risk to her and is in her best interest. At HAQ, the team has to be multifaceted and able to deal with all these situations. HAQ's in-house lawyer is therefore also a qualified social worker. In addition, HAQ ties up with mental health professionals, lawyers and shelter homes to assist in this task.

GOOD PRACTICE

Since 2005, HAQ has provided counselling, advice, legal aid and other forms of assistance to girls, who have been sexually abused, trafficked, physically exploited as domestic workers, or subjected to corporal punishment in school.

HAQ has a team of professional social workers, lawyers and counsellors who work in the field of child justice and child protection. What makes HAQ's efforts creditable is their multi-pronged strategy

Box1: HAQ's interventions - often informal but effective

Interventions by HAQ reflect a good practice that is often difficult to formalize, as it is based on negotiation, presence of mind and the ability of the grassroots workers to assess the situation sensitively and act accordingly. Both formal and informal means of co-operation and coordination are used to achieve results. Through their informal conversations with law enforcers and other concerned authorities, HAQ often manages to make them understand how vulnerable children are and persuades them to carry out their duty properly.

and integrated approach, which applies lessons learnt from grassroots processes in order to achieve results. The team is always thinking of creative and innovative strategies to deal with uncomfortable and difficult situations.

With their expertise and long term experience, the HAQ team is able to intervene to assist the victim, decide whether and when to approach the media and when not to do so. HAQ is conscious of the fact that

while media attention is necessary, exposing a victim to the insensitivity of the press can be dangerous and may lead to further victimisation and a blatant violation of her rights.

HAQ's achievements are the result of following the theory of 'what works' at various levels. The organization's efforts can be seen as small initiatives that are bringing about a shift in the deeply patriarchal mindset of the vast Indian majority, including those in positions of authority, be it men or women (who are themselves victims of a socialization process that stems from patriarchy and its structures).

HAQ is well supported by the laws passed by the Government of India, but often, the rights of the victims are only made a reality through its interventions, implementations and partnership initiatives. HAQ avers that NGOs cannot take on the government's role, and indeed, in doing so, only help the State abdicate its responsibility. This tenet is central to the concept of sustainability that underlies all actions undertaken by HAQ. The organization believes in finding solutions, building partnerships with various actors and building capacities, while continually ensuring that children's rights are upheld.

Although still at a nascent stage, HAQ is seeking to establish a panel of child rights lawyers and counsellors, who will render their services to children who require help. The idea behind establishing such a resource group is to ensure that children get the requisite assistance when needed. The CWCs and the Juvenile Justice Boards, as well as other courts of law, should also be able to use these services when needed.

II The M.Venkatarangaiya Foundation (MVF): Education for all Children, especially for Girl Children

The M. Venkatarangaiya Foundation (MVF) uses formal education to mainstream child rights issues and eliminate child labour. The MVF programme is based on the premise that every out-of-school child is a working child; its only agenda is to ensure that no child goes to work and that all children go to school. Thus, the programme's target group is all children who are out of school.



Chandrayangutta Residential Bridge Camp for Girls

In Andhra Pradesh, child labour is most prevalent in domestic work, tea shops, restaurants, dhabas, roadside vendors, cottage industries like beedi rolling, shepherding, bonded labour or in agricultural labour. Currently, the MV Foundation is working in 2041 villages in Ranga Reddy, Adilabad, Nalgonda, Kurnool, Warangal and Hyderabad districts of Andhra Pradesh. The programme has motivated parents and the community to embrace formal education as a means for ensuring the advancement of their children. It has also changed the lives of many children hitherto constrained by the shackles of child labour.

VOICES

"The root cause of child labour is not just poverty but the community's apathy towards education. This is playing a greater role in weaning away children from school. Unless the rural poor are made to believe in the existing education system, the situation will not improve in the near future."

R. Venkat Reddy
 Coordinator, MVF

School enrolment rates in rural areas are abysmally low and drop-out rates are high. The initial task was to understand the causes for this. It was found that these included: poverty; unwillingness of parents to send their children to school; apathy towards the child's welfare and growth and the general belief that formal education is futile in getting a job. The struggle is even harder for the girl child, who is bound by gender roles and expectations that deny her more than just the right to education.

The programme has been able to shatter some popular myths that have restricted and inhibited initiatives in children's education, especially for the poor. These include:

- Economic compulsion prevents parents from withdrawing a child from labour;
- Parents do not think school education is essential for their child; and
- Children prefer working to going to school.

GOOD PRACTICE: The programme is built on the firm belief that there is no excuse for child labour and that child labour can be eradicated. MVF takes the uncompromising stand that 'no child should work, face drudgery and lose his or her childhood' and that any child not attending school is probably a child labourer. It targets parents, communities, children and all child related institutions in a multi-pronged approach to bring about a holistic change in the lives of the children of Andhra Pradesh.

The organization spreads awareness about visible and exploitative forms of child labour, as well as the host of insidious forms of child labour that need to be tackled. Most people are aware of child labour only in its most blatant forms, typically children working in urban areas and those engaged in hazardous work. Often ignored are working children in the rural domestic sector. Children belonging to the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) were found to be amongst the most illiterate, and the MVF programme has a special focus on them, as well as on girl children.

Motivation centres and Residential Bridge Course (RBC) Camps were set up for child labourers in the 9 to 11 year age group. The RBC camps were devised as part of the overall strategy of smoothing the transition of children from work to school. These children need an accelerated learning programme and a consistent process to adjust. Therefore, three-day motivation-camps were held each month to slowly withdraw the children from the environment in which they worked. Parents gradually understood that they could manage without their children's supplementary income, for a few days initially and over time for longer periods.

The strategy applied considers age and gender factors to be of paramount importance. Older children (in the 9 to 14 year age group) join bridge courses that enable them to go further and join regular schools. For younger children, direct admission to formal schools is sought. A special programme was launched for girls in the 12 to 14 year age group. They were enrolled in a two-year residential programme to prepare for Class VII exams and then admitted into formal school. At the camps, children were trained to be able to reach the level of their peers in formal school. When the camp ended, the children were allocated space in free hostels for the SCs, STs and Other Backward Classes (OBCs), run by the Department of Social Welfare.

Community involvement was integral to each step of the process. The cooperation of the panchayats was sought in the villages where residential education-orientation camps are held (usually for 200-250 children). This facilitated change in the mindsets of the dominant forces in the villages, and they soon changed their attitude to the children in the residential camps that were held (even though a majority of the children belong to Scheduled Castes).

Mandal-level⁷ meetings were held and attended by stakeholders. It was found that local schools lacked the space and teachers required to absorb the additional numbers of children being motivated to join schools.

⁶The literacy rate amongst the SCs (above the age of seven) in Andhra Pradesh is 53.52 per cent, while that for the STs in the state is 37 percent; both are considerably lower than the state's average literacy rate of 60.5 percent (Census of India, 2001).

⁷Village-level coalitions

It was therefore decided to revive the defunct Parent Teacher Associations (PTA) in the villages. The community thus acquired a stake in the new initiative. The PTA encouraged contribution of materials and free labour to build temporary classrooms, persuaded the community to contribute to the salary of the government school teacher and in almost every village, recruited one young person to help the teacher.

Over the years, the programme has been supported by the Government of India, CRY, the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour⁸ (IPEC), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and HIVOS. The European Union, CONCERN, DWHH, FNV, SKN, ACTIONAID, The Tata Trust, CRS, Broadridge Financials, AXIS BANK and Qualcomm amongst others. Today, it encompasses elected representatives, employers and government school teachers, apart from parents and children themselves. As the programme has expanded, MVF's role has shifted from that of an initiator to that of a facilitator.

The programme has expanded its area of operation from three villages to more than 2000 villages and has succeeded in making 1500 villages child-labour free. Between 1991 and 1999, bridge course camps were conducted for over 25,000 children and currently more than 50,000 children have been mainstreamed through the bridge camps alone. More than 23,000 adolescent girls have been assisted in accessing education. More than 7,000 bonded labourers have been released and a forum of government school teachers (comprising 2,400 teachers) is carrying forward the campaign against child labour.

MVF has thus created a platform for the rural poor, upon which they can build a new future for themselves. Some of the learnings and outcomes of this initiative are:

- The role of the child as an earning member of the family has gradually been taken over by other family members, thus allowing the child the time to concentrate on education.
- The programme has reiterated the importance of community involvement in ensuring school attendance and quality.
- It has proved that irrespective of their economic status, parents have a desire to educate their children.
- The communities' attitude towards children (particularly girls) has become more positive. Socially-sensitive issues such as the age of marriage for girls have come under scrutiny, with a number of girls insisting on remaining in school.
- Another positive impact of the campaign has been on working women, who have begun to demand that employers pay them higher wages for their work.

BOX 2: Shashikala, Mamta and Aruna, all back to school

Shashikala was only a year old when her father died. Her family forced her elder sister to work at a biscuit factory in the Kattedan Industrial Area, outside Hyderabad and Shashikala joined her soon after. She earned between Rs. 15 to Rs. 20 per day, depending on how fast she worked. Now, under the MVF programme, Shashikala and others like her are preparing for their Class VII exams, at a residential school for girl drop-outs.

Mamta, a 12-year old girl, had to leave school when her step-mother told her to fend for herself. She began to work in a factory at an early age, but she is now free and back in school.

"I fought with my step-mother and came here," says Aruna. "I want to study more and more, as long as there is something more to be studied." Aruna wants to become a teacher, like her current teacher and instruct under-privileged children who drop out of school.⁹

⁸IPEC is a project of the International Labour Organization (ILO).

⁹MVF website. Available at http://www.mvfindia.in

The MVF model has served to inspire similar ventures in other states, such as in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan and in the cities of Kolkata and Mumbai. M.V.Foundation also provides technical support to programmes in Honduras, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda, Morocco and Nepal.



III Chak De! India: Bollywood unmasks the new Indian girl

BACKGROUND: Media shapes and influences public mindsets and opinions. This is particularly true of the film industry and the ability of some films to influence larger social debates and issues. If the Indian film industry, with its great mass appeal and reputation for cashing in on the portrayal of stereotypes, decides to discuss and spread awareness about a specific social issue through the medium of a film, then this may also be termed a good practice.

The film Chake De! India deviates from the popular stereotype of the Indian girl, and makes an effort to break new ground and present a completely new dimension to the abilities, perspicacity and worth of Indian girls.

Gender discrimination, which has hitherto occupied only peripheral and small spaces of exposure in the Indian entertainment industry, has now been addressed through this film. This is the first time that a mainstream Bollywood¹⁰ film has given space to the biases that an Indian girl faces. To understand the film's impact, it is important to understand how it was created and the impact it has had on the perception of both girls and boys in Indian society.

The film starts out with the story about a fallen hero of India's national sport (hockey), whose loyalty to his country has been questioned because he is a Muslim. The role of Kabir Khan, played by the well-known Indian actor, Shah Rukh Khan, ensures audience sympathy and creates the foundation upon which the film can explore other issues. Under the dual slight of being declared unpatriotic and of possessing a weak character, Kabir Khan takes it upon himself to restore his lost reputation and prove his loyalty to his country. He returns to the sport after a seven-year break, to coach the Indian women's hockey team, a challenge no one is willing to take up.

The members of the Indian Hockey Association have very patriarchal attitudes and think that women should stay at home and take care of the house and family; they feel that the women's hockey team has no chance of success. As the film progresses, the task of making the team perform looks more and more impossible, because the team is ridden with internal rivalries and contradictions. But the more difficult the task, the more commendable the hero's will and determination. The screen play creates many spaces where the hero is pitted against the strength and capability of the female hockey players, thus portraying the latter as an equally (if not more) determined and focused element.

GOOD PRACTICE: Chake De! India cleverly drills holes in the prevailing attitude to gender, by subtly throwing in important facts about prevalent gender discrimination in the country. Using the 'drilling hole' method, the film relies on its characters to break established notions about girls in India.

Komal Chautala is the young girl from Haryana, who manages to break out of the traditional role society designates for Indian girls and makes it to the national-level hockey team, despite her father's protests. Her rivalry with the other striker in the team, Preeti Sabarwal, shows the audience the internal

¹⁰The Indian film industry, based in Mumbai.

rivalries that exist within a team. Preeti, from Chandigarh comes from a very different background and has many secret ambitions. She is not particularly loud or expressive like her team-mates, but is nonetheless working furtively because she seeks retaliation against her cricketer boyfriend, who always discounts her career, her goals and her commitment to the game. She wants to take home the title of number one striker, so that she can show her arrogant and chauvinistic boyfriend that she is a successful player, one that the country can be proud of.

Through the film, Komal and Preeti are shown to be equal in the number of goals the two have scored. Before the final match, however, Komal learns the real reason why Preeti is desperate to score the highest number of goals and she gives up her chance to score a goal and gives Preeti the opportunity that will make her the highest striker. Preeti returns Komal's gesture by offering Komal the chance of the critical penalty shootout, thus demonstrating the solidarity among the 'sisterhood'.

Preeti's response to her boyfriend's marriage proposal reflects the current struggle for gender equality in India. She declines his elaborate and public proposal on national television and when he asks, "What about us?", she replies, "There never was an 'us', there was only you, but now I am also there." This statement reflects the new voice of the Indian girl, who is determined to find and establish her identity, irrespective of all the obligations placed on her by a patriarchal society. The importance of the sisterhood concept is emphasized, as is its centrality in efforts for gender justice. Patriarchy divides women amongst themselves, while allowing men to unite in a common brotherhood that supports the secondary status of women.

The supporting characters of Bindiya Naik and Vidya Sharma are also important. Both are senior hockey players with some amount of experience but they have very different attitudes to the game. Bindiya, tries to hatch a plot against the coach to get him to quit, because he won't let her have her way. She tries her best to negate all his efforts at uniting the team but fails, thus reflecting in her character a closed and self-centred attitude towards the game, which can only end in her disgrace. In the film's final minutes, the coach gives her a chance to show her skill and maturity and she returns to being a teamplayer, helping her team to win a critical and difficult match. This shows that both team work and individual experience are needed in order to gain victory, which is a veiled reference to the women's struggle for gender equality in India.

Vidya Sharma's character is very encouraging and spirited. She is an experienced hockey player, who is married and comes to the national hockey camp against the wishes of her in-laws. She portrays an unconditional dedication to the career she has chosen, for despite repeated discouragement from all sides, she is determined to participate in the World Cup, even at the cost of risking her marriage. She embodies the self-confidence that women need in order to continue the fight.

Other actors' dialogues also lend new perspectives on issues and situations that have hitherto seemed almost 'natural' and therefore unquestionable. The spaces where these thoughts are vocalized are ones that have been traditionally occupied by men; giving these spaces to women establishes the fact that women's thoughts and opinions are as important as those of men.

The film pitches in with a dose of regional stereotypes, but breaks them towards the end, thus celebrating diversity. It re-establishes that women all over India are looked at through the same lens, one that sees them as being incapable of dealing with the world outside the home. While the sports theme symbolizes the celebration of togetherness and achievement, it can be translated into real life by showing that women can use the strength of the collective, thus enabling them to explore within for new possibilities.

With the movie's male lead (Shah Rukh Khan) making statements such as, "This match of yours is not just against men, it's against every idiot who has forgotten that if a woman can give him birth, she can do anything", the film has initiated Indian entertainment industry's first step in bringing about change in gender perceptions in India.

The movie's soundtrack reflects these messages. Every song in the movie has been crafted to sing of the self-assured, determined and successful Indian girl. The introductory song, 'Ek hockey doongi mein rakh ke', is where the coach introduces the team members to the audience.



The Women's Hockey Team in Chak De! India

While there are different characteristics with which the coach preludes the name of each member, there is an aggressive and sure chorus line that is repeated regularly. 'Chalako' is another song that celebrates the new generation that knows what they want and how to get it, even in a traditional society like India's. The song juxtaposes the traditional expectations of a woman (of being a wife, a mother, a daughter and a passive beloved), with the reality of a woman's 'never say die' attitude (which has also been associated, until now, with men). Another song, 'Kuchh kariye, kuchh kariye, nas nas meri khole, haiy kuch kariye', is sung by a man and speaks of wanting to achieve something – a desire in every individual. It is the film's title song, which may also be the reason it has been given a popular male voice; however, it still manages to establish the essential link between the girls in the film and the audience watching it.

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