

WPC National Consultation
on
Addressing Gender Inequalities: How effective are Laws

28th -29th March 2011

DAY-1

28th March, 2011

Gulmohar hall, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi

A two day long national consultation on “Addressing Inequality: How Effective are Laws?” was organised by WPC on March 28-29,2011. The conference was divided into inaugural session and three sessions of panel discussions on the first day and planning future course of action on the second.

Inaugural Session:

The inaugural session was chaired by Dr. Ranjana Kumari, President, WPC, with Ms Kerry Pelzman, Director, USAID, India’s Health Office South Asia Office and Ms Anne F Stenhammer, Regional Program Director, UN Women South Asia Office as distinguished guests. Ms Krishna Tirath, Honorable Minister of State(IC), Women & Child Development who had to give the inaugural address could not come for unforeseeable circumstances and sent her apologies.

The conference was inaugurated by the distinguished guests by lighting the lamp.

Ms Ranjana Kumari then addressed the conference to present her welcome and presidential address. She noted that after 30 years of hard work women’s organizations realized that change is not possible unless women enter governance. This is what has been focused upon under the Garima project. How is it that 33% Reservation bill going to come about, how do gender budgeting becomes part of Government’s agenda- these are important issues in which the political class has important role to play. She also pointed out that corporate sector needs to

come forward to own up Corporate Social Responsibility. As of now, she noted, the promise of utilizing 2% funds towards it is merely a charade. She pointed out that WPC has either been consulted or involved in all women's issues. Garima project has taken up three very crucial issues and worked upon them- i) implementation of PWDVA, ii) implementation of PCMA and iii) implantation of PCPNDT Act. However, she noted that we need to formulate long term visions and looking at issues merely in terms of projects can be problematic. Observing that the movement needs to groom the younger generation to take on the baton she thanked all the participants for their presence and welcomed them officially.

After Ms Ranjana Kumari's welcome, Ms Pelzman was invited to put forth her observations before the conference. Ms Pelzman observed that there are many "Indias" that need to be tackled. While on the one hand the nation has an impressive growth on the other hand there are gender challenges that need to be addressed. While there are laws which are present, it is their implementation which has emerged as a challenge. Implementation requires more resources especially human resources and gender based budgeting at the same time. She expressed her pride in the fact that her organization initiated many innovative programs. She was happy to note that WPC partners have an impressive national presence. She noted that following WPC advocacy work on the new law on "Honour Killing" has started. In the end she underlined President of America's focus on the development of women and girls in all fields.

Thereafter, Anne F Stenhammer released the WPC's Annual Report.

After the release of the report, Ms Stenhammer made her address. She began by responding to the Presidential address and noting that she agreed with Ms Kumari's views on corporate responsibility. She urged the delegates to look at the ways in which laws can transform the

society and to develop strategies to put women's agenda on the top at the national as well as the international level. She said that we need to recognize the gaps in the implementations of the laws and work towards changing the social cultures and attitudes. It was noted how implementation is linked with resources and monitoring. Besides this court and judiciary too have an important role to play and this too needs to be factored in. Instead of having year to year projects, long term perspective is required. In the end she informed the delegates about the new website of UN Women which everyone can use for information.

Ms Hasina Kharbhi then presented vote of thanks. She thanked the dignitaries on the dais, all the board members, all the delegates, IFES, Counterpart, Terry Rogers, Ms Vinita Sharma, the 20 state focal points and the team of WPC for making the conference possible and their participation in it.

Before braking for the lunch Ms Tara Sharma addressed the conference briefly to stress that WPC does not belong to the funders but to all the people present there.

Session 1

Declining Sex Ratio: Addressing the Imperatives

Dr. Vibhuti Patel, Professor, SNDT University chaired this session. The panel comprised of Mr A R Nanda, Retired IAS, Ms Varsha Deshpande, Director, Dalit Mahila Vikas Mandal, Maharashtra and Ms Gauri Chaudhari, director, Action India. The focus of this session was to discuss the declining sex ratio and addressing the imperatives regarding implementation of PCPNDT Act.

Mr. Nanda, retired IAS, shared his experiences as the Census Commissioner in 1991 when he highlighted the imbalance in the sex ratio. He believed that the increased movement and advertisements for sex selection in 1970s and 80s were responsible for the decreasing sex ratio. He also noted that doctors, demographers and leaders still believe that sex selection is not bad. He strongly noted that China and its one child policy had shown a very negative path. The coercive two child policy exacerbates the situation by disempowering the marginalized people, women, Dalits, minorities etc. such a policy prescription compels them to go for the sex selection. In the end he shared his experiences to show that the law is not un-implementable as is often observed but need strong will to do it.

The chair noted that the pro-choice lobbies of liberal feminists who believe that if a woman does not want a girl she should be allowed to not have it need to keep in mind that women are also influenced by patriarchy and are not outside it.

After this Dr. Savita Bhakry , Senior Research Officer, NHRC presented a detailed report of a survey conducted by her organization sponsored by UNFPA which focused on the impediments in the implementation of PCPNDT Act. The report included detailed findings of 18 states and their performance on a number of markers. The report also put forth a number of recommendations. Major findings of the report were that out of 18 states there were no information of setting up SSBs in 7 states and gaps found in the compositions of 11 SSBs. Gaps were found in the composition and functioning of SAAs with respect to record maintenance, monitoring and inspection of clinics and handling of PCPNDT Cell. Even where set up the provisions of the act not complied with. There was a lack of in depth and practical knowledge was found at all levels and PCPNDT Act was found to be an additional burden to most authorities. The report recommended that training of implementing authorities especially training

of DAAs, judiciary and Pps should be conducted without delay. Protection of whistle blowers, witnesses should be ensured as well as rewards for officials on good performance should be given. Separate cells and structures should be made to tackle these cases. The detailed report concluded that the act is not being implemented efficiently and this is something that needs to be tackled urgently.

At this point, the chair brought to the notice how even lay people are also handling sonographic machines. At the same time political patronage and doctors' lobby are big hurdles that need to be reckoned. She also noted that only positive response that is noticed is from corporate bodies like FICCI , ASSOCHAM etc.

Ms Varsha Deshpande, director, Dalit Mahila Vikas Mandal, Maharashtra, was the next speaker. She asserted the need to struggle for the formation of State Supervisory Board in Maharashtra. At the same it was noted that even central Supervisory Board has not been formed in last three years. She stressed that in PCPNDT Section 23 is very important. The law is not about abortion but regarding the sex selection. Non-maintenance of record, not taking consent of the woman etc can also be the basis of legal action. Public prosecutors who form weak cases should be held responsible and cases should be lodged against them. Her organization conducted a judicial colloquium in Maharashtra with the help of UNFPA which proved very fruitful. She asserted that PCPNDT should be made part of the legal curriculum across the country. The issue of medical conspiracy needs to be tackled separately.

The chair added at this point that media awareness especially in regional languages is a key area that needs immediate attention and appealed that WPC should take up this responsibility.

Ms Gauri Chaudhary, Director, Action India made the next presentation. She began by saying that her presentation deals with looking at the “demand” side of the demand-supply equation of the sex selective abortions. She talked about the need to address the social aspect of the situation. When the community reported that there are not enough girls for the Gauri puja, she realized the extent of the damage done. Her organization celebrated the birth of the girl in a Beti Utsav in the community. She reported how most AAs are not maintaining the records and there is confusion about registering the clinics or the machines. She underlined the link between sex selective abortions with the menace of dowry and how people are ready to do away with the daughters but cannot think of doing away with the dowry. She commented that the Garima project is doing an immense task. She stressed that we need to mobilize men at the same time. She presented a question to the conference to deliberate upon- how to tackle the doctors’ lobby?

The chair at this point noted that skewed sex ratio is a global problem with more than 80 countries under its influence. In that case a dialogue with the global pro-choice lobby is the order of the day. We pointed out the need to think globally as well as locally.

Issues raised and answered:

The following questions were asked of the panelists by participants after the session-

- I) Dowry and property rights are also intrinsically linked to the reality of sex selective abortions. How do you see this connection?

Ms Gauri responded to this query by asserting that sex selection became worse when the question of women's property rights is raised or considered. The reason is quite simple, she said, they do not want to share their property and hence do not let the girl live.

- ii) Ms Alice Garg commented that Sex selective abortion is a meticulously planned murder where parents and doctors both are involved. Why then should it not be considered as a murder case and booked under section 307? She further reported that her organisation has been in touch with senior retired judges who also think that this can be seen as murder cases.
- iii) Mr Jasphool Singh of Haryana Navayuvak Kalasangam shared his experiences of working at the ground level. He reported that on 26th of January 2003 he conducted a decoy operation through his organisation but the PCPNDT committee made a weak case against the doctor involved as a result of which he went scot free. But since he was part of the committee, in his meetings with the Chief Minister he kept on building the pressure for this case. This constant taking up of this issue ensured in the end that the doctor was given voluntary retirement without any benefits. This he asserted was the positive and satisfactory end to a struggle.
- v) Ms Kamala Chaturvedi from ECAT, Rajsthan commented that MTP and PCPNDT act will have to be separated and 'kanyadan' as a word needs to be objected to.
- vi) Ms Asha Ramesh from Karnataka said that we need to be very cautious about the pro life attitude and it should not lead us to leave the right to abortion. She further added that we need to reach out to people who are not willing to listen and also think of ways to tackle the doctors' lobby.
- vii) Ms Bimala from Tamilnadu brought to light a very important issue. She stressed upon the need to question the schemes and promises made by the political parties. She feels demoralised after looking at the manifestos and it is as if the two decades of hard work of

women's movement has come to nought. She gave the example how in her state in the name of marriage assistance gold and Mangalyam are given to women. Similarly the Sumangali scheme which gives girls a lump sum amount of Rs30,000 to the 18 year old girls after 3 years of work strengthens the dowry system in the way it is structured. Hence, screening of election manifestos of the political parties is very important and at the same time attitudinal changes on the question of gender are required.

viii) Ms Shalini Mathur from Lucknow too shared her experiences of working in Uttar Pradesh. She reported that in the year 2006 the state government had given a 2% relaxation to women registering property. After this 98% of land has been transferred to women but in all the cases the power of attorney remains with the men. Therefore, in terms of property rights no change in the situation has occurred. She furthermore pointed to the case of incentivizing girls education in her state as a result of which 65% of girls took admission in intermediate level as opposed to only about 35% of boys. Implications of this dis-balance will take time to appear she noted. She felt that even in inter-caste love marriages marriage is celebrated as an even merely to show off and this should be discouraged. The last observation that she made was that women were considered security risks and this too was a factor in prevalence of child marriages.

Viii) Dr Manasi Misra from Centre for Social Resources shared with the participants her experiences of working in Ambala and Kurukshetra in Haryana. She strongly felt that it was not just dowry but maintenance of chastity of girl child which arose as the central question in her field work. She said that if there is no speedy implementation of PCPNDT act then demoralisation is quick to set in amongst the women at the ground level.

ix) Another delegate from Action India, Uttar Pradesh shared her experiences in detail with the delegates. She reported how in her visits on the behalf of Advisory Committee she often finds that the ultrasound machine is not registered and other such malpractices in the clinics. But due to political and administrative pressures no action is taken. She narrated in detail how recently on a similar visit the CDMO called the nodal officer and ordered him not to take any action. She also brought to attention how a sympathetic and active SDM was transferred due to the pressure exerted by the IMA president. She requested that ways be suggested how she can deal with this problem and also that all the contact details of the State Advisory Committee members be furnished so that she can take their help in her future visits.

Ms Vibhuti Patel responded to this by commenting that all of the delegates have undergone similar experiences and this is a universal problem. Ways to tackle this can indeed be taken up the next day.

Session 2

Violence Against Women: How Safe Are Homes

This session was chaired by Ms Gauri Chaudhary, Director, Action India. The panelists included Ms Meenakshi Lekhi, Senior Lawyer, Supreme Court of India, Ms Sushma Kapur, Deputy Regional Director, UN Women, Ms Suneeta Dhar, Director, Jagori and Ms Hasina Kharbinh, President, Impulse NGO Network. The discussion was focused around violence against women and rethinking the notions of safety within the bounds of women linking it with PWDV Act.

Ms Meenakshi Lekhi, Senior Lawyer, Supreme Court of India was the one to begin the discussion. Ms Lekhi noted that none of the rights given in the DV act are new. Right to residence, maintenance, injunction all were there already separately. What has been done is that all of them have been put in a single act. This was necessary to provide protection to the women within the ambit of marriage. With this act we have gained in terms of accessibility. There is one court, the form is much simpler and appointment of protection officer is also done. But she noted that there are a lot of shortcomings in terms of implementation as well that need to be factored in. This is supposed to be an interim order, the moment it becomes a permanent relief problems creep in. It becomes cumbersome leading in turn to shooting up of the expenses. There are no histories before the court and no case laws to depend upon. Furthermore, she noted that it was meant only against men if other members of the family are brought in then the law is diluted. Many states still do not have counseling centers attached to the court even now. She demanded that the forum send recommendations to Mrs Sheila Dixit for more counseling centers with all the courts along with more family courts in Delhi.

After this floor was open for questions and answers since Ms Lekhi had to leave.

Issues raised and answered:

Some of the issues discussed and queries made on the subject were as follows:

- i) Chair commented that it was for the first time that the Govt of India recognized that violence at home exists. All this act effectively does is issue a stop-violence injunction. It is not for maintenance. It is a failure not of law but of the state. Changing the law in any way will not be acceptable.

ii) There was a question from Karnataka state asking for clarification regarding the cases when it is the women of the family who indulge in domestic violence and not the men directly.

To this Ms Lekhi replied how there is still confusion over this. There is section 498(A) to deal with such cases.

iii) Is live-in relationship in nature of marriage?

In her detailed answer Ms Lekhi explained if two people choose not to get married and live together and both are single that will be recognised as in nature of marriage. But this is not the case where the man is married because then the right of the wife is being intruded upon which no law permits. She added that these days boys and girls are entering into some sort of live-in arrangements which are meant to test waters that whether they can continue in long term relationship or not they will decide subsequently. In this case both are free to walk in or out of this arrangement. If one person then moves out and starts living in with someone else then should or will the women have the right to seek maintenance? That is where things become clear. It will not be a relationship in nature of marriage.

iv) Ms Kamala Devi had a query. One law considers keeping two wives illegal but another gives the child from the second marriage all the rights. Is this not contradictory?

Ms Lekhi replied that the law of maintenance is under Hindu Maintenance and Adoption Act. Under Hindu Law a relationship can be illicit and illegal but not the child produced from it. A child has all the rights of education and maintenance under law.

Thereafter Ms Sushma Kapur, Deputy Regional Director, UN Women extended the discussion by taking up the question of the safety of home. She talked about the need to admit the hesitancy

in accepting home as the primary site of violence. Violence is always used in the garb of “protecting” women. “Honour Crimes” are case in the point. In this scenario a redefinition of the term “protector” is called for. She questioned the role of the home as the protector of human rights or norms. She said that it is ironical that households provide a safe environment for violence with its emphasis on secrecy. She stressed that we need to devise ways in which we all can stigmatize violence. In this attempt, she suggested, we must bring along religious leaders and young people to our side. She informed that their new website (www.endwarnow.org) can be used for information by the delegates in their work.

Ms Suneeta Dhar, Director, JAGORI spoke next. Ms Dhar said that lack of essential services should also be recognized as a form of violence. Inclusion and right to the city are essential rights of the women. She observed that it is the perceived threat of violence that intimidates the women of the city. Her organization has been conducting a survey around these concerns in Delhi. The salient findings of the survey show that the violence is normalized in the city. 15-19 years is the most vulnerable age group and of all the places public transport is the most vulnerable site for violence. What the survey also throws up is the new understanding of the home. The home in the question is a 12 by 12 plot of land where toilet and water facilities are far away. The dichotomy of what is public and what is private, what is home and what is outside are lost. She concluded that we must find out what are the socio economic cost of violence and health.

After Ms Dhar it was Ms Hasina Kharbhih, President, Impulse NGO Network who contributed to the panel discussion. She focused her presentation on the violence against women in North East of India. She began her presentation with saying that it is a popular myth that a matrilineal society does not have violence against women. One major problem in dealing with domestic

violence is that women often do not come out to register cases. Absence of service providers, counseling centers, shelters, legal help lead to non registration. Absence of budget ensures that there is no implementation. Furthermore, Women's Commission does not register cases and tries to negotiate with the family and end the matter. She pointed out some other angles which are specific to the North East of India. One is that living-in marriages are recognized socially but not legally. This creates a lot of problem because proving that the women are married becomes difficult. Besides alcoholism and drug abuse are also major issues that are also major issues that are linked to increased domestic violence.

Issues raised and answered:

Some of the issues discussed and queries made on the subject were as follows:

i) Ms Neena from Kerala said that in Kerala there were 20000 cases of domestic violence pending and suggested that there should be separate days set to deal with such cases. She also narrated an incident about how a judge in Trivendrum told the accused to beat his wife mildly if he must because if there was evidence then they will have to register a case.

ii) Ms Khadija said that she had disturbing things to express. According to her one disturbing thing about the law was the provision to appeal especially in the interim order. In practice she has found that provision of appeal leads to stay on the interim order which is meant to protect human rights of women at home. She also noted that lawyers are misusing these laws and that state has failed miserably on implementation. She expressed that PWDVA is a beautiful law but the issue is that the state has failed miserably at its implementation. All the PWDVA cases are at the end in any court because it is a part of a scheme under the Ministry of Women and Child and is not part of the quota of duties of the judges.

iii)Ms Kamla Chaturvedi from Rajasthan wanted to know what is the ratio of population on which there should be one help center. She also mentioned that the application forms are very technical and difficult. The apathy of the judges compounds the matter.

iv)Ms Vibhuti Patel suggested that community based half-way homes should be instituted for women in dire need of help. Old women and abused children should be able to avail counseling services at these halfway homes.

v)Ms Lakshmi from Maharashtra pointed out that right to protection does not equal to right to property. Often there is no follow up of cases and repeated violence occurs.

vi)Ms Shalini Mathur pointed out that the training of the counselors and judiciary should be done by the Ministry of Law and not Department of Women ad Child Welfare because mostly it happens that the judicial apparatus does not listen to Department of Women's Welfare.

Session 3

Child Marriage: Nipping the Bud

This session was chaired by Ms Zohra Chatterjee, Member Secretary, National Commission for Women and the panel comprised of Ms Madhubala Nath, regional Policy Advisor, UN Women, Dr Jyotsana Chatterji, Director, Joint women's Program, Ms Indrani Sinha, Director, Sanlaap and Ms Alice Garg, Founder Secretary, Bal Rashmi Society, Rajasthan.

Ms Madhubala Nath, Regional Policy advisor, UN Women initiated the discussion by pointing out that the title of the session is perhaps not appropriate because the problem of child marriage is no longer at the bud stage. It is sad that it has a history that spans from Phulmonee(1890) to Bhanwari Devi(1995), from Rukma Bai(1884) to Shakuntala Verma(2005). She posed the

question is early marriage an act of violence against women? She said that there is little data on the costs of early marriages. The larger discourse centers around the agenda of social reform. She said that the familial model that imports child marriages is that of large joint families. Fertility is maximized in extended family running joint enterprises. But the growth of the service sector where individual labor replaces family based production is becoming the harbinger of change. In such a scenario children become a cost rather than assets. Fragmentation and erosion of extended family is the opportunity through which change can be brought about.

Dr. Jyotsana Chatterjee, Director, Joint Women's Programme was the next to present her views on the matter. She presented the history of formation of this law which involved 10 different consultations taking place in 10 different states. All this resulted in demand for abolition of child marriage. But when the findings were presented to the Joint Parliamentary Committee the issues of personal law and customary laws were raised by some of the politicians. Hence the word abolition was replaced with prohibition. She raised the issue of involving the youth in the campaign against child marriage because it is an issue directly related to them and the youth of the country is against this practice. The official government programs with the youth do not look at this aspect at all.

After Dr Chatterjee, Ms Indrani Sinha, Director, Sanlaap took the discussion forward. Ms Sinha presented her organization's experiences in the field of child marriage and violence against women. Her organization works in districts with a very high trafficking rate and there the problem of child marriage is inextricably linked with that of trafficking. Their survey showed that 59% of girls are married before 18 years of age. Young girls are married to totally unknown men with whom they migrate. In most cases they are deserted or sold off. She also pointed to the fact that marriage is put before the girls in a beautiful package. This too needs to be countered.

Often, the Protection Officers and Anti-Dowry Officers find themselves helpless due to lack of training and over burden of responsibilities.

The chair at this point noted that NCW had written to the corporate sector and she hoped that the corporate sector showed the path by running shelters professionally where women are trained and later inducted in the industry.

Then, Ms Alice Garg, founder Secretary, Bal Rashmi Society, Rajasthan shared her views with the conference. Ms Garg said that the only way the change can come is through below when the women are empowered. All the gender related issues especially child marriage should be included in the syllabi. Speedy justice in cases is crucial and for that there should be special courts instituted above Tehsil level. Flying squads must become active especially before festivals like Aakha Teej. Short stay homes should be instituted at Tehsil level and they should be provided with full protection. She insisted that we should devise ways of resistance that are possible for women.

Issues raised and answered:

Some of the issues discussed and queries made on the subject were as follows:

- I) Ms Namrata Chadha from Institute for Social Development, Orissa felt that the movement needs to be cognizant of the undercurrents of anti campaigns against it while keeping focused on the goal. The second point she raised was that demand for incentives in education should be raised for both girls as well as boys otherwise there will be imbalance in society.

II) Ms Anand from Delhi pointed out that along with the laws we need to change minds and hearts of people and in that respect media is very important and women's movement should work in tandem on this respect.

I) Another delegate felt that we need to work beyond our comfort zones as well. Mostly we address the already converted. She vouched for the need to break barriers between all the sectors involved. She then pointed out how it can be fruitful to take the pandits and maulvis along since they effect 90% of public opinion. In her experience of working this strategy had proved most efficient.

II) Ms Vibhuti Patel stressed that we need to have more government schools and conduct more bridge courses for adolescent girls. More programs are needed for adolescent girls. Most of the paritakyatas in Mumbai are between the age group 14- 25 years.

Ms Chatterjee at this point responded to Dr Patel's suggestion by adding that bridge courses and more government programs are needed for both girls and boys. It is imperative she stressed that the youth is involved.

III) Ms Kamala Chaturvedi then added several points to the discussion. She felt that education to the girls is very crucial in the attempt to eradicate this malpractice. If the girl is not involved in anything and keeps at the home then there is more chances of her getting married off early. She also felt that the change can come through social practices themselves and not through messages and advertisements. Child marriages in group are often said to be financially easier for the family. In that case group marriages at later stage should also be promoted. Lastly she said that child marriages are directly linked t

dowry. Unless we eradicate that there is no way she felt that we can eradicate child marriage.

IV) Ms Chatterjee made a point that the urban space is largely also made of slums. The dynamics of space in slums needs to be further studied. She wondered whether the violence occurring in such spaces should be called social or domestic violence.

V) Ms Alice Garg stressed the need to have joint struggles especially where Media is concerned.

VI) Ms Shalini Mathur had a lot to contribute to this discussion. She shared her experiences in Uttar Pradesh in depth. She reported that her organisation organised a rally of young adolescent girls and coined a new slogan “Papa meri shaadi kyun, main sirf chaudah saal ki hoon”. But some of the parents of these girls came to the schools and threatened to leave that school. Another thing that she noticed was that children are becoming sexually mature earlier and due to the fear of sexual activity at young age parents are marrying them off early. She then shared how in the AIDS ward where she counsels 97 out of 100 patients are those who have visited Mumbai and infected their young wives back home. These people are from eastern UP and Bihar. This she felt is a huge problem.

After the question answer session Dr Hamsa ended the conference for the day after thanking all the delegates.

29th March, 2011

WWF headquarters, Lodhi Estate

The discussions of the day began with the a panel addressing the partners and setting the agenda for the discussion. The panel included Dr. Hamsa (Executive Director, WPC), Ms Indrani Sinha (Director, Sanlaap), Ms Tara Sharma, Ms. Benita and Ms Alice Garg (Director, Bal Rashmi Society).

Dr. Hamsa welcomed everyone and took the delegates through the entire journey covered by WPC. She said that the objective of the discussions to be followed is to see what has been the situations in the states. She mentioned that WPC has 20 partners in 20 states. She further cleared that everyone must share there views on how far we have come vis-a-vis original plan of action and also to discuss future plan of action. We need to have both a long term vision as well as a short term plan that can be implemented collectively. She said the board and secretariat members would want to know from the states how they can strengthen WPC. She pointed out that WPC is a network which has completed its phase of connectivity. It has made its issue based alliances and in the next phase the center is going to be thin. Now is the phase of decentralization.

After Dr Hamsa, Ms Indrani Sinha, Director, Sanlaap, spoke. She commented that WPC after 5 years has naturally come to the stage where the states and focal points can take up more responsibility. The design for decentralization need not be the same. In the discussion that will follow those present must talk about the practical points like where would the office be and how each organization can take this forward. She added that her organization always has some funding for the networks and she could include WPC work in that.

After this Dr Hamsa invited Ms Tara Sharma to share her her experiences and thoughts on the Garima project.

Ms Tara commented on the fact that Garima looked at WPC as a platform to take grass root women's concerns to the parliament. The period till March 2011 was envisaged as a consolidation period. But WPC is not a project but a part of the larger women's movement. She presented two questions for discussion. 1) How can belongingness to WPC be spread to state and district level and 2) where do the focal points see WPC going ahead from that day. She hoped that through the discussion that will ensue, the organization could find its bearings for the journey ahead.

After that Ms Benita presented her views on the matter. She observed that the model that we started with was the European women's lobby. The lobby which represents the issues of women of 23 countries has only three secretariat members. They gather the information from academics and activists from all across and then do the lobbying. The issues that WPC needs to take up are the local issues and the role of the secretariat is to push the agenda of the states at national level. The issues need to come up from the focal points and the discussion must keep this in view.

The next person to speak was Ms Alice. She said that first of all the issue that we need to decide is that of the office and she thought that the office should be in Delhi itself to provide support to the states. Secondly, she insisted that all organizations must think of ways in which they can contribute and take responsibility. She felt that WPC committed a blunder for five years when it did not think of its future course of action. She further added that there should be at least five people in the secretariat and not three.

After this discussions from the states followed the salient points of which are presented below:

UTTAR PRADESH:

- 1) A new list of service providers has just been released in the state. Suraksha's name is on the top in it. But they have encountered many problems. There is no money and there are no councilors. This increases the scope of bribery. Probation officers are working as protection officers as well.
- 2) According to the data 56% of marriages are child marriages in Uttar Pradesh. But since there is no reporting of these the police gives a NIL report.
- 3) But she noted that a recent positive trend is that the age of Gauna is increasing and this is thanks to increase in education. More girls are studying than boys. Chief Ministers Mayawati's scheme of giving money and cycles to the girl students is responsible for this.
- 4) It was suggested that the projects that WPC gets, similar identical projects should be planned at the state and district level.
- 5) More workshops and meetings should be held at the district level to promote leadership qualities as well as smooth functioning.
- 6) Central activities, circulars etc should be circulated amongst states as well as to the government as well.
- 7) We should tap NSS groups from the universities for WPC.

HARYANA :

- 1) WPC headquarters should continue in Delhi itself.
- 2) State headquarters' infrastructure can be provided by the local organisation.

- 3) In Haryana state government has done a lot of good to promote women in all fields.
- 4) Due to continuous efforts, Rohtak district is safe now as far as PCPNDT Act is concerned.
- 5) Garima project has helped increase the mobilisation of women.
- 6) They are supporting Swami Agnivesh's Beti Bachao Andolan and its 15 days long havan.
- 7) It was suggested that a monthly magazine should be started by WPC with all the required latest information and success stories.
- 8) It was reported that politicians involve in leg pulling looking at the success of WPC.

To this point Ms Benita responded by saying that organisations should try and help the government bring positive change in policies. Confrontations will not lead to results. Partnership with the government needs to be developed so that a trust bond is formed.

Ms Jacintha from Karnataka commented that WPC has not invested anything in Karnataka and that time and resources need to be deployed for results. She reported that they do not have infrastructure to take WPC forward. Ms Benita responded to this comment by saying that these days all one needs a computer and that all the partners are established NGOs with their own set up. She further added that WPC is not Delhi but all the partners are WPC and that needs to be remembered.

GUJARAT (CHETNA)

- 1) Chetna will be sending information on advocacy, documents process with WPC's name to NGOs, judges and secretaries.

- 2) It will send recommendations from GARIMA Regional Meeting after translations to policy makers
- 3) Membership drive
- 4) Dissemination of information will be ensured and WPC's name and logo will be included
- 5) CHETNA is ready to contribute any information that WPC needs.
- 6) More than 400 NSS members have been roped in. In April there is going to be another meeting with them.
- 7) A new website on valuing the girl child is launched in Gujarati and English. It has WPC's logo as well as information in Gujarati in it. The recommendations will be put up on the site too.
- 8) A state level workshop on PNDT is planned in 0-April.
- 9) It was suggested that WPC consolidate all the recommendations and classify them on different levels figuring out where lobbying efforts are needed, where strengthening of implementation is needed and where sharing of information is needed.

KERALA : Celine Sunny, Rajagiri college

- 1) It was suggested that mobilising students will be a priority.
- 2) Formation of e-groups was put forward as a task.
- 3) WPC's focal point will use information supplied by their members to collaborate with WPC

- 4) Awareness generation/gender sensitization of police was planned.
- 5) Assured that they will put WPC's name on all the banners.
- 6) One staff member will be available part time for WPC's work
- 7) The organization has developed a good rapport with the Police Department and Government of Kerala. Government of Kerala has given the organization 15 studies to complete. These projects also help the members monetarily.
- 8) Training to Police and student community given till now.

RAJASTHAN (ECAT/MEETA SINGH)

- 1) ECAT promised to arrange for WPC office space in Rajasthan
- 2) Annual meeting of WPC members in state planned.
- 3) It was suggested that WPC should be more inclusive with regards to grassroots work/activities.
- 4) They planned to form collective committees of WPC members.

MADHYA PRADESH (SANGINI)

- 1) Interaction with the 150 WPC members in MP and their capacity building happened.
- 2) Follow up of work done on 3 issues(with WPC)
- 3) Implementation, networking, campaigning(including WPC's name)
- 4) After Garima project, state level meeting on DV happened for the first times.

- 5) Find themselves isolated at state level and look towards national level secretariat for strength.
- 6) As far as working along side the government is concerned, stated that it is not always possible to work in tandem with the government.
- 7) On 8th of March launched a new WPC campaign for effective implementation of three acts. As part of this they went around Bhopal in night, gathered women and gave WPC agenda and memorandum to people including MLAs...

ORISSA:

- 1) Include a sign board indicating WPC state office
- 2) Will implement all WPC's activities with strong ISD partners
- 3) Meeting with Orissa NGOs/individuals who are WPC members, a committee will also be formed, convener will also be identified
- 4) Needs to resolve the clashes amongst the NGOs associated with WPC in Orissa before taking up anything else.

UTTARAKHAND :

- 1) Will increase the number of grassroots members and take up their issues.
- 2) Will make sure state level members receive the required information
- 3) Interaction and sharing with members in UK
- 4) Take up issues with "Common Group"

- 5) UJJS will be Uttarakhand State Secretariat
- 6) Forming of working Group planned.
- 7) Put WPC's logo on all letterheads and banners

KARNATAKA:

- 1) Forming multi stake holder committee under WPC consisting of NGOs, bureaucrats and women's groups etc to raise funds
- 2) To provide grassroots training and translations of the material into Kannada
- 3) Needed clarification as to how much money from the membership drive goes to the center and how much to the states.
- 4) Wanted to know how does the central office in Delhi keep its funds and stressed on more transparency

MAHARASHTRA, Mahila Rajsatta Andolan

- 1) Follow up of recommendations given to Govt. officials (will include WPC's name)
- 2) Lobby with state ministers (will include WPC's name)
- 3) Suggested that there be a national charter of demands which should be common to all states.
- 4) Will take responsibility of legal awareness in the state but needed resources for that.
- 5) Formulate recommendations on women's policy at Maharashtra state level.

WEST BENGAL

- 1) Put WPC on letterheads and banners
- 2) Allocation of one staff member for WPC activities
- 3) They planned to look at the manifestos under WPC's aegis since elections are just round the corner.
- 4) They are planning to put some budget for WPC before May.
- 5) Take up Child Marriage in a big way (priority issue of WPC)
- 6) Share SANLAAP's office space in Delhi

ANDHRA PRADESH

- 1) Lobbying for formation of State Women's Commission and for this need further support from WPC.
- 2) VMM as WPC focal point planned to take up implementation of DV act. For this they do not require any money. Piloting of review of DV Act (Vijayawada police Commissioner level, April 2011) planned. This will be done by VMM, Legal Cell Authority and Women and Child Welfare Department.
- 3) Formalizing advisory committee for review of Act(at State level by scaling a district level) to review DV act. They plan to take it up at the state level with the Principal Secretary.

- 4) Lobbying with Media for wider visibility and greater public participation. No money is required for this activity. After sensitisation they could be asked to take up one act/issue and campaign on that.
- 5) State/Distt/Mandal WPC groups planned to be formed in 6 months.
- 6) Indira Kranti Padam and local Samakhyas will be involved in these WPC activities too.
- 7) They will take WPC to universities and school level.
- 8) Planned to do advocacy with the department of education. Minister of Education will help in this endeavour. They will also campaign to make DV act and act against child marriage as part of the compulsory school syllabus.
- 9) Sensitize police officers in police training colleges (advocate with DG of police and superintendent). Such training has already taken place in Vijayawada.
- 10) A three hour talk given on DV act and child marriage at the commissionerate.
- 11) Have state level meetings of all members per year, have district level meetings bi-annually
- 12) Give WPC's link on the organization's website
- 13) Will take up these issues at other forums that they are part of as well.

BIHAR

- 1) GENVP has become a representation of WPC in Bihar. She felt that decentralisation has already happened where Bihar was concerned.
- 2) WPC's image is not that of project implementation but that of a lobby group. On this account they have developed strong ties with state officials already.
- 3) Media fellowship with European Union resulted in an article on child marriage. Based on this article questions were asked in the Vidhan Sabha.
- 4) Reached out to 32 districts
- 5) Annual meeting of WPC district level members planned.
- 6) Got small projects for WPC members in Bihar.

After the presentations from the states on their contributions and future course of action Ms Anita was called upon to share her experiences and advice the WPC on media management. Ms Anita first of all complimented the members for the good work that they are doing and expressed her happiness with the discussions that she had heard during the two days. She commented that we must realise that this is the period of consolidation and recognise that we need to build capacity, do lobbying as well as policy research. She pointed out that during the discussions she heard several times that the delegates did not want to collaborate with the government. But she stressed that the government is the biggest developing agency and we must work with them and this fact must be accepted. On collaborating with the media she was of the view that media is essential but we must be very careful about the language and attitude we adopt towards this relationship. We must not look at it as if we need to 'use' the media but we need to look at it in terms of partnership. Engagement at all the levels is crucial as is amply clear from the

discussions held on both the days. At the same time issues of structure and process, issues like sharing of information, accounts etc are very crucial and need to be worked upon. Last point she made was regarding the money. She believed that a very ambitious fund raising drive should happen. She believed that our country has so much money and we need to tap it.

After Ms Anita's views Ms Tara responded to the entire process of discussion that had taken place. At the beginning she accepted that there could have been gaps in communications between the center and the state till now but assured that it will not happen in the future. She then thanked the partners because it was due to their continuous efforts WPC no longer had any visibility problem. This was one achievement in last five years. Then she said that the work of the secretariat first of all involves making a list of all of the focal points, organisations as well as individuals and the work these do. She requested everyone to give in writing the work that they want the WPC to do and this can then be shared with everyone for information. She then added her experience has been that there is no recognition without government partnership and we need a hand holding approach with the government. She then shared that she thought that WPC is moving from urban to rural and in future will need a specific plan of action for the rural areas in addition to the urban plans. She then suggested that WPC can start a quarterly e-newsletter but for this everyone will have to send reports to the secretariat which is not happening right now. She in the end mentioned that GARIMA has come to an end but assured everyone that those issues will continue in the agenda.

In the end Ms Gauri addressed everyone. She said that she sees a ray of hope in the end because the way each organisation from each state presented what they were going to do she felt much more encouraged than she has ever after a WPC meeting. She also felt that after the whole exercise they had managed to sift through the membership and only people who want to work

have stayed. Those who came for funding have left. She also strongly believed that funding from grassroots belonged there. This was especially because the most important thing which had emerged from the discussions was that states are taking more responsibility.

After the discussion a film on WPC was screened.