

Connect

Quarterly Newsletter

October, 2010



WomenPowerConnect



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From the President



Dear friends,

Greetings from WomenPowerConnect !

On the completion of another successful quarter of WPC, we are pleased to share with you our experiences in this edition of **Connect**. These months have been eventful and we thank all our partners for making them successful by ensuring participation and fulfilling the tasks promised.

While WPC is pursuing the priority issues, some new issues which required urgent attention were also taken up during this period. The social shame of "honour" killing has been spreading around the country like a forest fire. Though some states are more affected, there are individual cases taking place all over the country. This issue called for immediate intervention as hundreds of youngsters, mainly girls are being targeted and eliminated in the name of family "honour".

WPC organized a focused discussion in this regard and drew out a collective action plan. We believe that a strong legislation to deter and punish the perpetrators of this heinous crime be put in place at the earliest. It is important to protect the victims of this horror.

One of our long standing issues is the ever evasive 33 per cent Women's Reservation Bill. After years of struggle women won just half the battle, when the bill was passed in Rajya Sabha. But once again the government backtracked on its promise of tabling the bill in the Lok Sabha this monsoon session. This indicates that the struggle has to be kept alive with greater vigour and unity, till the Bill becomes law of the land and women get their right to represent and participate in the decision making process of this important institution of democracy. With this in mind we joined the Alliance for 33 %, which was a congregation of more than 1000 organizations. A rally was held in Delhi to demand the passage of bill in Lok Sabha in the beginning of monsoon session. In the run-up to this along with our partners we launched signature campaigns in several states.

In this term we also organized two advocacy training workshops in New Delhi and Kolkata to train our partners in one of the main tools of working on priority issues.

We are planning to undertake studies on some of the priority issues. This would involve greater role of the state partners in collating the information which could be compiled on the national level and advocacy documents prepared.

The projects in hand are progressing well. Many achievements have been made in advocacy and networking while many new highs have to be touched in the coming months.

People associated with WPC are its strength. It is the involvement and contributions from all the members and donors that has made WPC travel this far. The onus is on all of us to keep the spirit of unity and togetherness bright and burning. We need to reach out to one and all who can partner with us in our endeavour.

I once again thank you for the support and faith you have bestowed on us. We need your support and guidance in taking the WPC agenda forward.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ranjana Kumari'.

Dr. Ranjana Kumari
President, WPC

Introduction

It is with great pleasure that we bring to you newsletter of a quarter full of activities. WPC has moved forward with its agenda and received overwhelming support from its partners and friends. We have been consistently working on the tasks we put together in the Annual Convention, last year.

Events Organized in this Quarter

1. 33% Women's Reservation Bill

With an understanding that women should have equal representation in places of policy making, WPC has been relentlessly working towards the successful passage of 33 per cent Women's Reservation Bill.

To celebrate the passage of Women's Reservation Bill in Rajya Sabha on March 9, WPC organized a meeting in Delhi on April 5 with women's groups and MPs who supported the bill in the Parliament. All organizations were of the opinion that consistent efforts need to be made to pursue the bill to the Lok Sabha and getting it passed there.

While separate actions were planned by all women's organizations, these groups decided to project a unified stand on 33%. This Alliance which is an umbrella group cutting across caste, regional, religious and ideological lines, held a public meeting on May 4 at Mavalankar Hall before the end of the Parliament session on May 6.

Political Leaders who spoke were Mr. Shivanand Tiwari of Janta Dal United, Ms. Alka Lamba, National Secretary Mahila Congress, and Dr. Prabha Thakur, Mahila Congress. Ms. Sheila Dixit was expected but couldn't participate. Ms. Girija Vyas Chairperson National Commission for Women also addressed the gathering. Speeches were made by Ms. Gomti Nayar, AIWC, Ms. Ranjana Kumari, WPC and CSR, Ms. Jyotsna Chatterjee, JWP, Ms Annie Raja, NFIW, Ms. Suhasini Ali, AIDWA, Mr. Anand, JNU, Ms. Gouri Choudhary, Action India and Ms. Chitra, Writer.

Dr Ranjana Kumari said that this Bill will benefit a large spectrum of women of the country. She also said that the next step would be a mass rally in the monsoon session of the Parliament.

Alliance for 33% rally at Jantar Mantar on July 29

WPC again joined the **Alliance for 33%** which was a congregation of hundreds of organizations supporting Women's Reservation Bill. Many civil society organizations supported the alliance and a rally was held at Jantar Mantar on July 29, on the opening day of the monsoon session of parliament. Many popular public figures including Sharmila Tagore, Shabana Azmi, Javed Akhtar and Members of Parliament expressed solidarity by addressing the rally which saw the participation of huge number of young girls. WPC President Ranjana Kumari also spoke at the rally and reiterated the organization's commitment towards getting the bill passed. She said the bill needs to be brought to the Lok Sabha in the same form and that no slabs or provisions should be added to it.

A ten member delegation also met the President of India Pratibha Patil on the sidelines of the event and presented a memorandum asking her to use her good offices for facilitating the passage of the bill. WPC Executive Director Dr. N.Hamsa was part of the delegation. The President assured the delegation that she supported the bill and women's groups should keep their fight for equal representation going.

However, the hopes of millions of Indian women were given a blow when the government did not bring the bill to the Lok Sabha, even after putting the bill in business list in the monsoon session of Parliament. This shows the reluctance on the part of the government to ensure equal participation of women in the decision making bodies. In the coming days, the fight for the passage of the bill needs to be intensified. The WPC would take all necessary steps along with other partner organizations to ensure that the bill is passed.

2. National Level Consultation on Trafficking, HIV and AIDS

Known to be an overriding factor of social concern from the annals of recorded history, to the stark reality of the present day, trafficking has been and continues to be an issue to contend with the world over. Of particular vulnerability are societies where economic inequality, social and gender disparities, migrant issues and cultural variations are still being dealt with.

India has been one of the most vulnerable regions for trafficking because of its less economically-enabled population, rapid pro-urban migration, and recent insecurities in the face of global economic downturns. Under these circumstances it is easy to target, lead or drive a human being into an exploitative situation with the aim to make profits. Trafficking in India has variety of destinations, primarily sexual exploitation, child and bonded labor and to a lesser degree- illegal medical practices. The country is reeling under the twin pressures of cross-border as well as internal trafficking.

The situation with India's experience of the HIV and AIDS prevalence is much the same with it being one of India's major health challenges since 1986 when the first cases were discovered in Chennai. Since then, we have dealt with the problems of inadequate data, a resistant society and extreme stigmatization

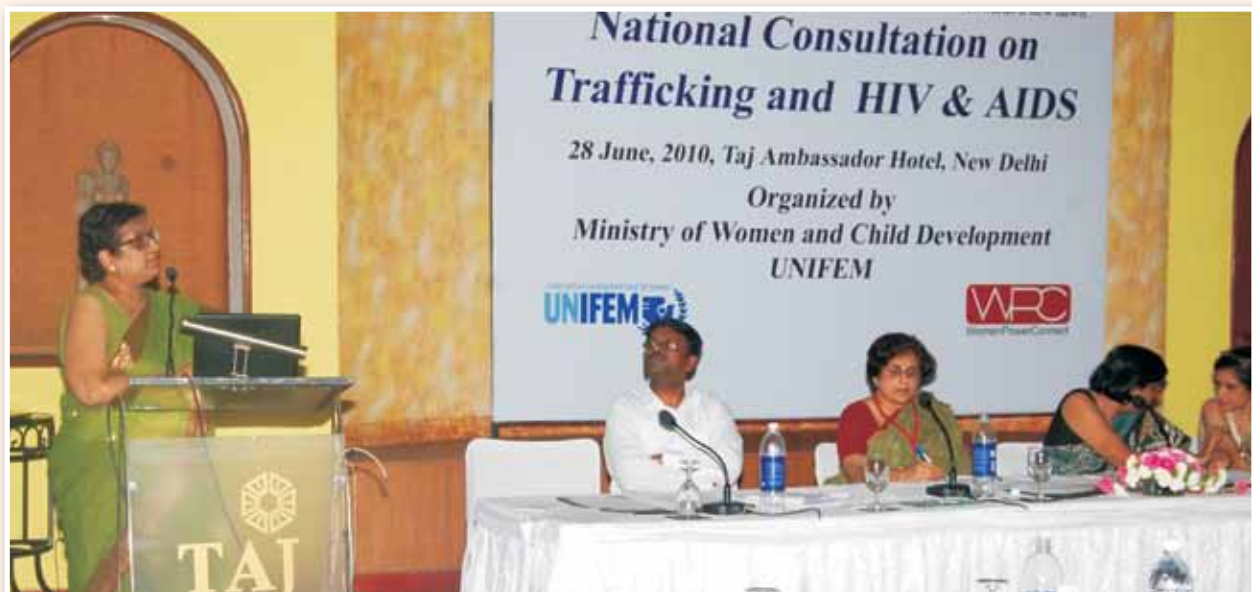
and ostracism, while striving to control the spread of the epidemic. Currently the concentration is among the high risk groups but the country is on the brink of an explosion within the larger public through ungoverned interactions or undetected occurrence of HIV. Of the current estimated 2.3 million people in India living with HIV, an estimated 39% are female and 3.5% are children.

These numbers are growing steadily. In order to address these issues and to arrive at a methodology to bring about convergence and move forward, a National Level Consultation on Trafficking and HIV and AIDS was held on June 28 in New Delhi. It was organized by MWCD and UNIFEM, with NACO participating in it. WPC was the NGO partner, which facilitated the programme.

Major recommendations emerging from the discussions were:

Women Empowerment/Capacity building

- (i) Ensure involvement of women in governance and leadership programs to empower and educate them regarding programs and other initiatives
- (ii) Ensure involvement of youth in communication, awareness generation and capacity building operations for enhanced results





- (iii) Engage in the creation of a combined program of information, education, capacity building and vocational training for victims to gain independence
- (iv) Generate employment opportunities and rehabilitation procedures with dignity for victims of both trafficking and HIV, in agreement with their personal preferences.

Dissemination/Gathering of Information

- (v) Information campaigns to be designed for migrant population at source to put things in perspective in order to reduce vulnerability of women and children
- (vi) Ensure dissemination of information regarding programs and follow up with learning and experiences through agencies such as WPC who work across states at the grass root levels
- (vii) Create a single point of information at the grass root level-possibly a MWCD outreach worker to avoid confusion and lack of clarity in the message
- (viii) Ensure transparency and lucidity of communication

- (ix) Address and sensitize organized labor agencies regarding all aspects of the issues under discussion

Linkages, convergences and partnerships

- (x) Linkages to be sought with the Ministry of Minority Affairs' course on leadership and inclusion of orientation courses on trafficking and prevention of HIV and AIDS
- (xi) Ensure engagement in tangible discourse over trafficking and NACO interventions on HIV prevention and control and explore areas of dissent to reach convergence
- (xii) Use Targeted Interventions of NACO to create linkages for victims of trafficking in the HIV programs
- (xiii) Integration of the NACO in campaign and MWCD service delivery system in order to provide rehabilitation programs of better quality
- (xiv) Engage in the formation of committees at various levels among stakeholders in order to facilitate collaboration of efforts in interventions

(xv) Ensure involvement of positive peoples' networks in the dialogue and process to take advantage of their reach and knowledge.

Policy and governance

(xvi) Ensure that institutionalization of sex workers' unions is reflected in policy

(xvii) Mobilization of the SACs to be affected through NACO interventions to make them more proactive

(xviii) Role definition of CSOs to be clarified in initiatives towards engaging organizations in the effort of convergence

(xix) Mindset changes to be affected from the top-in program planning, implementing, administrating and monitoring

(xx) A single window of delivery to be created at state level for programmatic dissemination and access

(xxi) Extended use of the Ujjwala homes for women with HIV/AIDS to be made possible.

3. Growing menace of “Dishonour” Killing

WPC organized a successful discussion on the rampant increase in cases of “honour” killing across the country on July 13. With the understanding that collective intervention needed to be made to stop this outrageous violation of rights of both young girls and boys, representatives from various organizations were invited to the discussion.

WPC's role as a women's organization becomes even more important on this issue because primarily “honour” crime is being inflicted on girls to save the so called “honour” of the family or community.

The discussion had representation from all sections including community workers, government officials and representatives from commissions. While there were more than 70 participants including media, the



addresses were delivered by WPC executive director Dr.N.Hamsa, President WPC Dr Ranjana Kumari, President Shakti Vahini Ravi Kant, Director Mission Convergence Rashmi Singh, Member Secretary NCW Zohra Chatterji, Member NCW Yasmeen Abrar, Secretary General NHRC K.S.Money and Retired IPS Dr.Kiran Bedi.

It was agreed upon that the term “honour killing” should be avoided as there was no honour in such murders. The participants agreed that an immediate

public action is required to build pressure on the government for formulation of a special law to deal effectively with “honour” crime. At the same time it was observed that most cases of “honour” killing could be addressed under the present set of laws. However, the participants felt that there was severe lack of willingness especially at the level of the political class to take strict actions against the culprits of such crimes. In fact, many felt that most political leaders provided patronage to the caste panchayats, which were used for political gains.

It was felt that the cabinet ministers and political leaders should clarify their stand on the issue and pressure should be built on them to do so. A coordinated effort was required from different ministries to take measures against the proliferation of such murders.

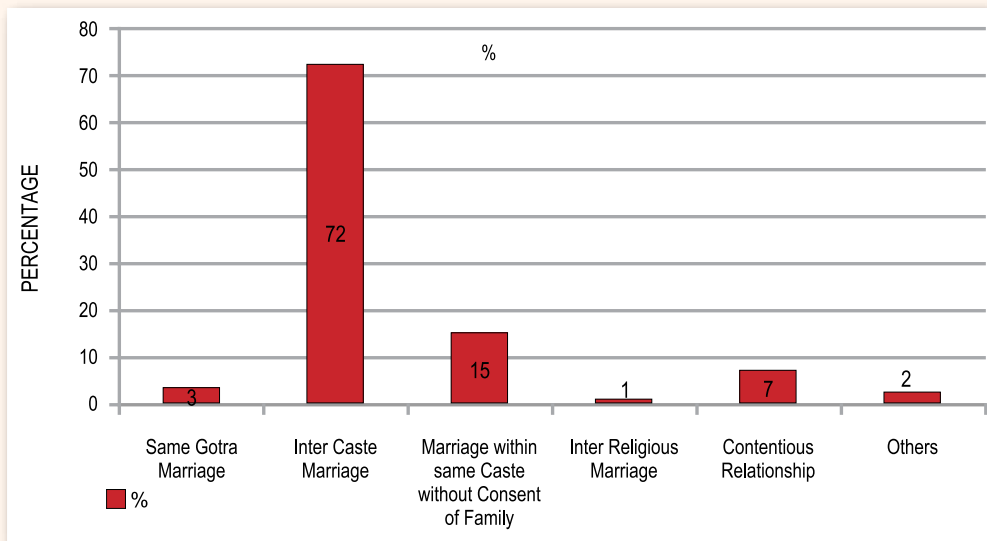
It was also suggested that commissions should conduct studies regarding cases of "honour" killing so the government realized the magnitude of the problem.

Some of the recommendations which came out of the discussion and follow-up consultations are:

- The Central government should enlist the Bureau of Police Research and Development, which is part of Ministry of Home Affairs to conduct an analysis of the situation.
- A special legislature to deal with "honour" crime should be formulated at the earliest so that victims could have easy access to justice. There is no definition for "honour" crime in Indian law. Hence there are no provisions of making people involved in "honour" killings liable.
- Meanwhile, an Ordinance should be passed so that culprits of "honour" crime which are unconstitutional caste panchayats in some cases could be booked.
- Home Ministry should issue an advisory on "honour" killings.
- Centre and States need to come up with a paper on how they have followed the Supreme Court's order.

- A national level meeting of the State Secretaries should be organized to discuss the issue.
- The Central government should request the state governments to convene a SSP level meeting. Proactive steps are not being taken up by police department in protecting couples, as the police are only taking part in "reactive" initiatives. So, there are no preventive strategies.
- District Magistrates should be made accountable and asked to submit specific reports from the affected villages.

The WPC along with some other organizations had decided to take these recommendations to key ministers and Chief Ministers of some of the affected states. The WPC President Dr Ranjana Kumari and Executive Director Dr.N.Hamsa met the Haryana Chief Minister Bhupinder Hooda and Home Minister P.Chidambaram asking them to take stringent steps to check "honour" crime. Efforts would be made in the coming days as well to ensure the early passage of special legislation on "honour" crime.



CASES OF VIOLENCE / THREAT REPORTED AMONG YOUNG COUPLE AS PER THERE CASE CLASSIFICATION

Credit: Shakti Vahini's study on "Dishonour" Killings showed that only 3 per cent of victims of "Honour" crime were same gotra couples.

Statistic Update

Child Sex Ratio				
States	Rural		Urban	
	1991	2001	1991	2001
Jammu & Kashmir	NA*	952	NA*	872
Himachal Pradesh	966	900	904	858
Punjab	878	795	866	789
Chandigarh	910	852	897	844
Uttarakhand	952	914	936	874
Uttar Pradesh	927	922	928	880
Haryana	877	824	884	809
Delhi	900	853	917	866

* Census was not held in Jammu & Kashmir in 1991

Credit: *Planning Families, Planning Gender: The Adverse Child Sex Ratio in Selected Districts of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, and Punjab*, Authored by, Mary E. John, Ravinder Kaur, Rajni Palriwala, Saraswati Raju, Alpna Sagar, Published by Action Aid and International Development Research Centre, 2008.

The point of departure of this study is the rapid decline in child sex ratios in contemporary India as evidenced by the 1991 and 2001 Censuses. The most recent decennial census in 2001, for which basic demographic data are also available, indicates that there are over 35 million fewer females than males in the country.

During the last decade, overall figures in India for the first time actually indicated a small improvement in the sex ratio, from 927 to 933, for the entire population, due to increasing life spans among older women. However, the 2001 Census also highlighted the dramatic decline in child sex ratios computed separately for the 0–6 age group, and in almost all the states in India. While Census 2001 indicates a rise from 924 to 934 for the population above 6 years of age, the child sex ratio (0–6 age group) has come down from 945 in 1991 to 927 in 2001, registering an overall decline of 18 points in a decade, and dropping below the overall level for the first time.

As is clear from the 2001 Census, the only states where further declines have not occurred are the southern state of Kerala and the north-eastern states of Sikkim, Tripura, and Mizoram, though it should be noted that all of them have relatively lower child sex ratios compared to adult sex ratios.

The 2001 Census demonstrates that the phenomenon has reached new proportions in states that had no prior history of practices such as female infanticide or where pronounced patriarchal ideologies and forms of discrimination against girls were not strongly in evidence. A good example is the case of Himachal Pradesh, where the child sex ratio dropped from 951 in 1991 to 897 in 2001. A similar trend holds true

For several other states: Gujarat (50-point decline), Orissa (17-point decline), and Bihar (15-point decline). Furthermore, the phenomenon no longer appears to be limited to certain communities as claimed before, with many Scheduled Caste communities also showing progressively worse child sex ratios. In districts where urban centres had worse sex ratios, rural areas are beginning to 'catch up'.

What has been particularly disorienting for researchers and all those who have been arguing about the increasing feminisation of poverty and the lower survival chances of poor girls and women is that the states showing the largest declines in the child sex ratio between 1991 and 2001 are also among the more economically prosperous ones. These are the very states that have recorded fairly high literacy rates in recent years and also declining fertility trends with a growing prevalence of small families. Counterintuitive as it might appear, Punjab and Haryana are not just the states where literacy levels have improved substantially, but also the states where the gaps between male and female literacy levels have narrowed. Yet these states show some of the worst declines in child sex ratios, followed closely by other prosperous states such as Gujarat and Maharashtra. Rich and modern cities like Delhi, Chandigarh, and Ahmadabad show some of the worst child sex ratios.

Ongoing Projects

Garima

WPC took up an IFES/ Counterpart International/ USAID project called Garima this year. As part of this project, WPC is working in 20 states in the country. The Project would provide WPC to upscale its activities and projects. The main objective of the project was to advocate for improved implementation of three major Acts—PWDVA, PCPNDT and Prohibition of Child Marriage Act. The project aims at enabling parliamentarians and policy makers to recognize gender based violence as a health issue. Under this project WPC would strive to increase its nationwide membership to broaden its advocacy campaigns.

As part of the project WPC organized following activity:

With the support of **USAID, IFES and Counterpart**, two training programs were conducted on 'Strategizing Advocacy for Effective Implementation of Women Friendly Laws' from August 5 to 7 and August 12 to 14, 2010 in New Delhi and Kolkata respectively. The objectives of these programs were to develop effective advocacy, with focus on 'The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005', 'Prohibition of Child Marriage Act 2006' and 'Pre conception and Pre Natal Diagnostic Techniques

(Prohibition of Sex selection) Act'(PCPNDT) and to share the experiences and further enhance the skills for accomplishing our goals through a focused approach.

The three day capacity building program covered Advanced Advocacy Techniques, Advocacy in Indian context, Presentation on the three acts, RTI as a tool for Advocacy. The participants were the senior representatives from the partner organizations who have been working on these issues in various states individually or in collaboration with WPC. The speakers, expertise with vast experience were invited to speak on the issues.

The Delhi program though planned to cover Haryana, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Delhi, Rajasthan, Gujarat, MP, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Kerala, had representation from 9 states barring UP and Uttarakhand.

In Kolkata there were representatives from Assam, Meghalaya, West Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and Tamil Nadu. The other state representatives who were invited but were not present for the training were from Jharkhand, Arunachal Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh.



WPC-UNFPA Project on Decline Child in Sex Ratio

WPC has been working to counter decline in child sex ratio through this three year project 'Support to community mobilization and people driven response for preventing sex selection and arresting sex ratio decline'. The project is being implemented in partnership with 32 NGOs from 11 states. The implementation period for the partner agencies is two years from May 2009 to April 2011. The major components of this programme are advocacy, community mobilization, alliance building, and grant making.

The work plan highlighted WPCs role in advocacy along with documentation, monitoring, evaluation and assigning timeline for activities. The advocacy efforts were undertaken with the state governments mainly to influence the functioning of the government machinery for effective enforcement of the PCPNDT Act.

WPC during the monitoring visit to most of IPs met the DC/CDMOs from the targeted districts and has been successful in getting assurance from the authorities concerned for involvement of 7 IPs in the DAC.

The main focus of the IPs programme is community mobilization. In the last term, the activities were mostly related to sensitization and awareness generation, capacity building workshops/trainings and IEC (rallies, street play and wall writing). The stakeholders targeted SHG women, frontline health workers, PRIs, Anganwadi workers (AWW), school teachers and youth. Further, for a concerted effort, village level resource groups were formed by many IPs with key people from the village who showed

interest in becoming change agents and taking forward the message. The members range from ASHA, Sarpanch, PRI members, AWW, to village leaders. In addition, community meetings were also conducted with the help of the change agents. In the last term, the IPs have been able to create a rapport with the community and spread the message amongst the concerned government and health officials about the issue and the programme being undertaken by the partners.

A lot of interventions have taken place at field level bringing about some change in the behavioral patterns of the people which has been recorded in the form of case studies or process documentation. Partner agencies have been asked to submit two case studies each, from which 10-15 would be selected for final documentation. The project team has attempted to prepare a document for each of the state, giving overview of the implementing partners, brief of the schemes launched by the state Government, initiatives taken by each IP under the area of community mobilization, advocacy and alliance building. This also includes initiatives taken by WPC to build capacities of the IP.

The implementing partners have undertaken training and capacity building exercises at the state level apart from awareness generation and sensitization programmes with the community. They are working on bringing about an attitudinal shift in the favor of girl child. They also conducted Alliance Partner Coordination meetings with other NGOs and Advocacy meetings with Nodal Officer, DMU (SW), SDMs and doctors of their area.

Feature on Member

Established on November 14, 1984 as a platform for discussion and action on developmental issues concerning the poor, Gramin Evam Nagar Vikas Parishad (GENVP) was founded by a group of like minded associates to involve the rural and urban poor in various developmental activities.

GENVP is presently working in Patna, Nalanda, Lakhisarai, Muzaferpur and Nawada districts of Bihar.

GENVP reached out the entire state of Bihar through a network of other voluntary organizations sharing similar vision.

1. Health
2. Reproductive and sexual health rights
3. Adolescent SRH
4. Safe abortion
5. Declining sex ratio

6. Early marriage and early pregnancy
7. Disability
8. HIV/AIDS
9. Local Self Governance
10. Dalit Empowerment
11. Women Empowerment
12. Women and Child Trafficking
13. Child Rights/Education
14. Safe drinking Water and Sanitation
15. Right to information
16. Income Generation
17. Networking of organizations
18. Natural Resource Management/Environment

The greatest achievement of the institutions is that it has been able to organize thousands of dalits in to community based organizations and capacitate them for claiming their rights following non-violent and democratic methods. The efforts of the organization in the fields of women empowerment, provisions of basic services to the deprived communities, gender mainstreaming and ending the discriminations practiced gender wise and caste wise across the state. The organization in this process has also established a strong networking relationship with the government departments as well as with a large number of civil society organizations.



Dharna at Block Development Office for Proper utilization of Dalit Funds

GENVP has been successful in addressing the challenging issue of early marriage and early pregnancy. The organization has been successful

in working on the issue among the community as well as the government officials. For addressing the problems of youth, NRHM provides Youth Friendly Health Services to promote SRH of young people. But there was no such implementation in Bihar. GENVP made state level advocacy with ministry and government officials of health department on the issue. After advocacy with the cooperation of the civil surgeon of Nalanda district, orientation was given to all the MOICs and paramedical officers of Nalanda District on YFHS. As a result of which YFHS were initiated in the PHCs, which was yet a big challenge. GENVP has undertaken another such challenge by initiating the SRH based life skills in the conservative community of Nalanda District. A training module has been developed for Life skills on adolescent SRH in collaboration with MAMTA health Institute for Mother and Child. The headmasters and teachers of government secondary schools of Nalanda District were given SRH based life skills orientation. It was an achievement for GENVP that the District Education Officer accepted the Life Skill Module and government schools incorporated the session in their daily routine of the classes.

GENVP has also shown significant achievement in working on declining sex ratio in Bihar. Prior to the efforts made by the organization, there was no initiative for PCPNDT act, but after the intervention of GENVP, remarkable changes have taken place. With the cooperation of GENVP, government has developed a format for PCPNDT, which is being followed by health Dept. for all the districts of Bihar. GENVP has provided orientation to the MOIC and health functionaries and have also sensitized them for birth registration in 2 blocks of Patna District. After the orientation, the Phulwari Sharif and Daniyawan Block has emerged out as a model PHC, setting an example to other PHCs. The organization has also involved the community based resource groups for spreading the message to promote the birth of girl child in the community.





Delegation representing Alliance for 33% submitted memorandum to the President of India Smt. Pratibha Patil on July 29. Executive Director WPC Dr.N.Hamsa was part of the delegation.



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