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HOSTED BY

Sanlaap

Asha For Education

Tomorrow's Foundation

2 - Sanctuary, 2006



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While changes in the legal system will help nab the perpetrators, the real work remains with survivors of child abuse. We need to educate our fellow-adults that pedophiles can be amongst us and we must stop them. We have a responsibility to our children to educate them about their personal space and rights, so that they grow up with a healthy appreciation of themselves, their experiences and their choices in life. They might never be able to be completely rid of their childhood abuse, but as they morph into adults they can learn from that experience that intimacy and sexual activity is not child's play.

Best wishes for a successful conference!

Netika Raval
President, Asha for Education

Welcome to the 2nd Sanctuary conference, here in Kolkata!

This conference is about children at risk of abuse. It is about the issues, the situations and the different faces of abuse. We will discuss the many factors that create the conditions by which the abuse continues to happen. We hope to identify specific actions we can take to bring change in the lives of these children. The participants at this conference work with children from variety of backgrounds including being those children born to prostitutes, runaway children, victims of cultural practices, street children and children with drug problems. Their efforts include awareness campaigns, trauma care, half-way homes, education programs, vocational training programs, rescue and rehabilitation and so on.

The first Sanctuary conference was held in December 2003, hosted by Odanadi Seva Samasthe in Mysore. The emphasis was mainly on individual efforts, best practices and we also touched base upon some cross-cutting issues. The second conference seeks to explore deeper issues such as gender, and link seemingly disparate issues.

In two and half days, we hope to forge discussions around the role of gender in the various manifestations of sexual abuse and exploitation and explore constructive partnership with men in improving gender equity and reducing the risk faced by children. This will be woven into various discussions including recent development on the legal front. Various experts, including the well-known Ms. Kiran Bedi, will help frame issues and identify ways to move forward. The desire is to create a coalition of groups that can identify, prevent and mitigate child sexual abuse. The hope is to have a meeting where we all learn something.

One new initiative at this conference is the involvement of young adults from various participating organizations. They will visit other locations offering different vocational training, participate in hands-on activities and interact with their peers training with the host organizations.

We have also invited participating organizations to share their products and publications with us. We hope to learn the different kinds of vocational training, product lines and marketing methods that have been developed, and also what the constraints or usefulness in this area are based upon day-to-day field experiences.

We hope that the sessions will be mutually beneficial and open up avenues for cooperation and greater innovation in the ongoing efforts.

On behalf of the organizers, we would like to thank Asha Seattle for their support of this conference. We would like to thank all the contributors to the souvenir especially the children of TF who prepared the cover art, and our editors Paramita Chakrabarty and Srinivasan Mahadhanapuram for pulling this together.

Hope you have a good time in Kolkata!

*Asha Sanctuary Team,
Sanlaap, Kolkata
Tomorrows Foundation, Kolkata*

6 - Sanctuary, 2006



AGENDA

Day 1

8:30 - 9:30 Registration and Breakfast
9:30 - 10:00 Welcome & Objective of the Conf
10:00 - 11:15 Zonal updates
11:15 - 11:30 Tea/coffee break
11:30-12:30 The children at Risk: trafficking/labour/others
12:00 -12:30 Child rights/labor: focus on domestic labor
12:30 - 1:30 Lunch
1:30 - 2:30 Incest and the child
2:30 - 3:30 Laws, gender equity and children at risk
3:30 - 3:45 Tea/coffee break
3:45 - 4:30 Filling the gaps:What laws need to be framed
4:30 -5:00 Where to start, who to coalesce with

Children at Risk

Day 2

8:30 - 9:10 Breakfast
9:10 - 9:20 Introducing the discussions
9:20 - 10:00 Runaways and repatriation
10:00 -10:45 Reintegration and mental health issues
10:45- 11:00 Tea/coffee break
11:00 - 12:30 Working with law and order
12:30 - 1:30 Lunch
1:30 - 2:30 Interactive session with above speakers
2:30 - 3:30 Creating a campaign: issue, objective, audience
3:30- 3:45 Tea/coffee break
3:45 - 4:45 Creating a campaign:message, means, media
4:45 - 5:00 Thanksgiving to speakers and guests
5:30 - 8:00 Entertainment

Rescue, Restoration, Repatriation

Day 3

8:30 - 9:10 Breakfast and introduction
9:10 - 9:20 Introducing the discussions
9:20 - 10:30 Young adults share their experiences
10:30 - 11:00 Product displays: sharing info
11:00 - 11:30 From average to entrepreneur
11:30 - 12:00 Moving ahead: Sanctuary
12:00 - 12:30 List follow-ups and identifying point persons
12.30- Vote of thanks

Moving Ahead

8 - Sanctuary, 2006



A Note On Our Chief Guest



"We endeavor to move from retributive justice to reconstructive justice, from punishment to correction-from darkness to enlightenment in an effort to save the next victim"- Kiran Bedi

Kiran Bedi has been a path breaker in prison reforms, community policing, crime prevention strategies, drug abuse treatment, spirituality in police training and schooling of street children. The first female Indian IPS officer, she has held a number of important positions like Joint Commissioner of Police (Traffic), Inspector General of Police (Chandigarh), Joint Commissioner of Police (Training) and Special Commissioner of Police (Intelligence). She has recently returned from United Nations as Civilian Police Adviser in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

Besides her professional contributions in the field of crime prevention and policing, two voluntary organizations founded and supervised by her — Navjyoti, set up in 1988 and India Vision Foundation in 1994, reach out to thousands of poor children daily for primary education; providing adult literacy to women; vocational training and counseling services in the slums, rural areas and inside the prison apart from treatment for drug addiction. Children of prisoners are educated under the 'Crime Home Children' project and children in slums who are otherwise beggars, rag pickers, gamblers and drug peddlers have schools at their doorsteps in the 'Gali School' project, (gali = street in Hindi). The motive has been to **Save the Next Victim**, while rehabilitating the present one. Her contribution to the society has been recognized by various internationally acclaimed awards and fellowships, the Ramon Magsaysay Award for government service, also called the Asian Nobel Prize, the Joseph Beuys Award by a German foundation and the Asia Region Award for Drug Prevention & Control by the International Organization of Good Templars (IOGT) a Norwegian organization.

Her personal achievements include an Asian Tennis Championship; she also holds a law degree and has a Doctorate in the field of drug abuse and domestic violence. She has authored various books, viz., "What went Wrong" (published by UBS) and "It's Always Possible" (published by Sterling Publishers, 1994). The former is a collection of her thought-provoking fortnightly columns that initially appeared in a national newspaper while the latter book deals with her experience in transforming Tihar Jail using her 3 C model ((corrective, collective and community). She also contributes regularly to national media like The Tribune, The Times of India and Punjab Kesri.

Her humane and fearless approach has contributed greatly to innumerable innovative policing and prison reforms as well as social reforms. She remains one of the most admired public figures in India and abroad.

Recommendations To Some Public Institutions

Excerpt from the article "Trafficking and Children at Risk" by Indrani Sinha, Sanlaap.

[Ed. In this article Indrani Sinha summarizes some key findings in various aspects of trafficking including the various manifestations of exploitation, the push and pull factors, stages of rescue and rehabilitation. The article concludes with an extensive list of recommendations to public institutions that are integral to the prevention and mitigation of the problem. We include those recommendations here. The complete article can be found at Sanctuary Website <http://www.ashanet.org/focusgroups/sanctuary>]

GOVERNMENT

- 1) The Central and State Government needs to lay more stress on employment and income generation schemes for vulnerable families, along with vocational training and education in the source areas of trafficking (which have already been identified by the NGOs).
- 2) All States should have a specific monitoring mechanism – a task force / core committee to look into the issue of trafficking and NGOs should necessarily be a part of this Committee.
- 3) All the concerned Govt. personnel need to be trained to implement and monitor the National Plan of Action.
- 4) SAARC Convention should be translated in action.
- 5) The Indian Govt. needs to have bilateral agreements with other countries in order to facilitate safer repatriation processes.
- 6) The Govt. should carry out time bound collaborations with the High Commissions and Embassies as and when needed.
- 7) Processes and systems need to be put in place for the regularisation and registration of inter state migration.
- 8) A databank has to be created at the national and the state levels giving details about missing persons and trafficked persons.
- 9) Juvenile Boards and Committees need to be formed across all districts in each of the states in the country.
- 10) More research needs to be carried out to understand the magnitude and the different facets of this malice in the whole of the country.
- 11) Religious and cultural practices leading to prostitution have been banned but the monitoring of the proper implementation of law has to be done by the Govt.
- 12) It should be made mandatory for the Panchayats to maintain a record of the people migrating from their respective villages for different reasons – marriage, higher education, employment etc. In case of any untoward happening, the Panchayat should be held accountable on the basis of lack of proper investigation before the migration took place. By involving different personnel from the administration and governance structures as well as from the NGOs and by creating awareness amongst the community, a networking system should be put in place to monitor the movement in women and children.
- 13) Investigation of missing children needs to be done in the source areas by the Panchayat, which is the nearest formal body, which can identify trafficking.
- 14) ICDS (Anganwadi workers) with members of panchayat should take initiative to identify and lodge complaints on missing girls with the police.
- 15) More working women's hostels and shelter homes should be established in districts all over the country with the vulnerable districts getting the top priority.
- 16) All Govt. Homes should have proper shelter, medical and psychological support, skill training support for the rehabilitation of victims of trafficking.
- 17) More counselling and vocational training centres should be set up for proper reintegration of the victims of trafficking.
- 18) Pre test and Post test counselling (under WHO and NACO guidelines) of suspected HIV positive victims should be made mandatory in all Government and NGO Homes.
- 19) Programmes like Support to Training and Employment Programme (STEP) needs to be started with immediate effect in the vulnerable areas of the country, especially the rural pockets.
- 20) Marriage registration should be made compulsory and specific responsibility of proper follow up should be given to a particular department.
- 21) Women should not lose work on account of being married (Article 11 2 a).
- 22) All customary marriage laws have to be amended to ensure uniform age of marriage.
- 23) Alternative opportunities for aged prostitutes should be introduced. It has been experienced, often that those who can no longer attract customers by themselves, in order to ensure their incomes, turn into traffickers or brothel madams. Thus those who had been the victims of violence become the perpetrators of exploitation. This vicious circle

needs to be broken.

- 24) NGOs running reintegration projects should be empowered to work with the Government in carrying out rescue and rehabilitation operations of the victims of trafficking.
- 25) The right to family benefits to be assured to the women (Article 13 a).
- 26) Ensure economic survival mechanisms of women in the rural areas (Article 14).
- 27) In answer to the CEDAW committee's questionnaire – Government of India has reported that there is a need to set up a Nodal Agency on the lines of 'Narcotics Bureau'. But this task is still pending and there is a need to do the needful at an earliest.

JUDICIARY

- 1) Some laws related to trafficking ought to be amended or new laws should be introduced so that people who commit trafficking can be convicted. Also labour laws need to be amended to protect the rights of women and children as labourers.
- 2) The task of amending the IPTA was given to the National Law School and the Institution has already done the needful. There is a need to prioritise on it and implement the same.
- 3) Buying and selling of minors, fake marriages and forced prostitution (372, 373, 366A) should be heavily punished. Sometimes parents or nearest kin are involved in the crime and they should be punished too.
- 4) There should be speedy recovery of cases: trafficking and all others. Fast track court has been established but we need separate court to deal with cases of trafficking.
- 5) Push back system should be abolished and new laws for repatriation need to be implemented so that the Bangladesh and Nepal Nationals (women and children) may go back to their country safely.
- 6) Children should not be charged under 14 Foreigners Act. Instead, they could be produced before the Child Welfare Committee (CWC).
- 7) The Juvenile Justice Act 2000, which has not yet been implemented, should be done immediately.
- 8) Members of the Judiciary should be sensitised on laws and various landmark judgments passed by the Supreme Court on the issue of trafficking. Positive interaction should be there while working with these cases with the NGOs.
- 9) Public Prosecutors in every court dealing with cases of trafficking should be sensitised to object the bail pleas of traffickers, madams and pimps.
- 10) A special cell to deal with trafficking cases should be formed immediately.

POLICE

- 1) ITPA (the special National Act to combat trafficking) is rarely used by the police and needs to be put to practice much more.
- 2) Provision of punishment of police should be there if they fail to give charge sheet within 90 days.
- 3) A rescue committee comprising of the police, NGOs, social activists, members of the Judiciary should be formed in cities where brothels exist, to probe into the matter further.
- 4) In all the states, special police officers have to be recruited and notified under ITPA. Also, it has to be ensured that these police officers are sensitised and equipped with all the relevant information.
- 5) Members of the police should be sensitised on laws and various landmark judgments passed by the Supreme Court on the issue of trafficking. They should also be more sensitive in handling cases of women and young girl children in trafficking.
- 6) Police should be aware of using trafficking related laws while filing the case making relevant investigation necessary and easier for the prosecution of the trafficker.

BSF

- 1) BSF should be more active regarding the porous border and should be accordingly sensitised regarding cross border migration and trafficking.

Millions of children navigate life without protection from deliberate harm. These children become invisible when they suffer abuse and exploitation in hidden situations and go uncounted in statistics. Even children we see every day can become 'invisible' to us when they are neglected or ignored. –State of the World's Children, 2006 (UNICEF).

Child Rights And Our Duties

Ashis Kumar Roy

[Ed. Ashish K. Roy is associated with Tomorrow's Foundation based in Kolkata, one of the sponsors of Sanctuary 2006 conference.]

I have started my journey of working with the children more than a decade ago as a common youth (non formal teacher). But at the primary stage of this phase my mind was searching the answer the question— 'What is the necessity of Child Rights where there are laws regarding Human Rights? Why should we look distinctly towards the children apart from common human being? Why not take the Human Rights as the Child Rights, instead of looking to frame them separately?'

But today with the wisdom gained from the diverse experience of work with the deprived urban children of Kolkata, India, I find I have a changed mental state. As a consequence, I strongly recognize the need of Child Rights and its sustainability.

Nowadays we recognize that 'Children are a nation's most important asset (National Policy On Children 1974)'. Most of the countries of this world have recognized the importance of child rights. As a result of this, different laws to protect child rights are blossoming and despite stories of deprivation of minimum needs shadowing the world of many children, in many cases children are benefiting from these laws, too.

Though the concept of giving special importance to women as well as to the children is contained in our great epics it was not legally granted and recognized. So, we notice that characters showing a little bit of respect or sympathy towards the women and children were being painted as 'highly educated' or 'great'. But the concept of minimum rights of the women or children as the human being was far away from their consideration, and their sympathy towards them was often merely a charitable act on their part.

We know that the legal system is an important part of social system of a particular group or country by which the social, political, economical, humanitarian and cultural scenario of it is reflected. The children belong to such a class which demands social and political will, economical, humanitarian, cultural as well as legal policy support from the adult which will help them to become productive and responsible citizens of the future. The man of nineteenth century gradually understood the need of giving special importance to the children; consequently, the widely used and long existing term 'welfare' was replaced by the new word 'rights'. Primarily the word 'rights' is used as a means of removing the social difference. I think in this regard we should take a glance towards some Indian laws laying down some milestones in the area of Child Rights discussion.

The age for identifying the children was mentioned in Indian Penal Code 1860.

The Indian Majority Act 1875: In this law the children were given importance as minor.

The Guardian and Wards Act 1890: In this law greater recognition of children's rights was achieved.

Other notables are:

The Child Marriage Restraint Act 1927

Human Adoption And Maintenance Act -1956.

The Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act- 1956.

The laws where some special remedies were mentioned considering the age of the children were

Army Head Quarters Regulations,

Indian Penal Code 1960

Child Marriage Restraint Act 1926

Factories Act- 1948, Mines (Amendment) Act- 1952, and also

The Constitution of India- 1950, Juvenile Justice Act (Care And Protection Of Children) 2000.

Apart from these, there are handful of others like:

The Young Persons Harmful Publication Act-1956,

The Probation of Offenders Act- 1958,

The Orphanages and Other Charitable Homes (Supervision And Control) Act 1960,

The Apprentice Act 1965,

The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act 1971,
The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act 1986,
The Children (Pledging Of Labour) Act 1933,
The Infant Milk Substitutes, Feeding Bottles and Infant Foods (Regulation and Production, Supply and Distribution) Act-1992
The Pre-Natal Diagnostic Technique (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act – 1994,
The Cable Television Network (Regulation) Act –1995,
The Prevention of Illicit Traffic In Narcotic Drugs And Psychotropic Substances Act- 1988,
Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act 1936.

In all these laws, the issue of the children was considered and they were given social and legal grant instead of merely seeing them with kindness and sympathy.

Coming back to the present, I wouldn't hesitate to say that many of us working directly or indirectly with the children (root level worker to leadership) are not up-to-date with the laws regarding children. Truly speaking, we have hardly any clear understanding about these laws. Consequently, there are many problems still regarding their wholesome implementation. It is the responsibility of every class of people in our society directly or indirectly working with the children to familiarize themselves with the pertinent laws.

Before starting a search for the solution of a particular problem, - in this case the issue is child rights- one should have sound knowledge about the matter and by successful transformation of this knowledge into skill one can achieve his goal. Secondly, the question—'Has the time come in India to work with a "Rights Based Approach"?' is uppermost on my mind. The question may sound strange, but can we deny the fact that the people like us who are in charge of providing various services to the children in various Government and NGO sectors are failing to provide good quality services to the children in time. Now what should be our role? –To get the children to be aware about their rights or to take step in ensuring their rights and safeguarding them?

We are fortunate to work directly with the children. So that we can properly utilize this opportunity and truly ensure that not a single child remains deprived in our county, every organization should make 'Child Protection Polices' in their own way and should ensure that. One can start this from his or her home or from even any of the NFE center.

Communication plays an important role here. There exists a distinct language in the field of social development. Though this language is meaningful and has an applied side to people like us who are associated with the field, it is difficult for the average citizen to understand it in all its nuances. So, it is important we work to develop the right communication. We should develop a language that would be meaningful to both the field worker as well as the common people. In this case, particularly, we also have to make media understand our language.

We should ensure the participation of the children in every sphere of planning, which wouldn't be only for show but in reality we have to think about their opinion with great importance. I have often noticed that childrens' opinions are very significant and yield good results if implemented. The importance of this point cannot be stressed enough.

Besides making every class of people of our society aware about the fact we have to ensure their participation and create appropriate forum for them. In extension, we can create a firm networking so that there can be a smooth passage of help between organizations, citizens, the media, law enforcement and so on.

Another important thing is, we have to identify the agents of change properly and have clarity of their role, and clear recognition of their contribution when called for.

Lastly, I would like to say that to ensure child rights we have to change our mind set which is often a barrier between the children and us. We should prepare ourselves so we are capable of understanding the children and listening to their views with great importance. This is an area where we, the adults, are still far behind.

When we blindly adopt a religion, a political system, a literary dogma, we become automatons. We cease to grow.. -Anais Nin.

In The Name Of Servitude

Kalpana Sharma

[Ed. According to HRLN (Human Rights Law Network), there are over a million domestic workers in India, most of them living under pitiful and abusive conditions. The fact that they constitute a non-recognized and unorganized workforce means that they do not have the basic minimum rights guaranteed, e.g., workers' compensations including medical benefits, weekly holidays, personal safety or even minimum wages. Even the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986, does not include domestic workers leading to widespread physical and monetary exploitation of children. Repeated attempts at legislation in the form of a Domestic Workers Bill have been stymied. Several organizations like HRLN, NDWM (National Domestic Workers Movement) and NCW (National Commission for Women) are now actively trying to highlight the plight of domestic workers, including women and children through public litigations, demonstrations and hearings. "Our basic aim is to give domestic workers the same status as regular workers and consolidate existing laws in their favour," says Aatreyee Sen, the Assistant Director of HRLN's Child Rights Initiative.

Kalpana Sharma is Deputy Chief of the Mumbai Bureau and Deputy Editor with The Hindu. This article, which appeared in India Together in September 2003, delineates her views about the prevailing working and social conditions for domestic labor workforce. This article has been edited for content. Please visit <http://www.indiatogether.org/2003/sep/ksb-domestic.htm> for the original article. Comments to kalpusharma@yahoo.com

September 2003 - In Mumbai, millions of women begin their working day at the crack of dawn. They have little time to dawdle over a cup of tea or a newspaper. Before the rest of the family wakes up, they have to prepare lunch, cook breakfast, get clothes out for their children and husband, try and do some cleaning and washing, and bathe and get ready themselves. After that they must run to catch a particular train or bus to go to work in an office or a factory, or just walk to a building where their "job" is to perform similar tasks in several households.

It is almost impossible to calculate how many people in India are employed to work as household help. According to a study published by Social Alert in March 2000, "Invisible Servitude: An in-depth study of domestic workers in the world", there are an estimated 20 million women, children and men in domestic work in India. Of these, 92 per cent are women, girls and children, 20 per cent are under 14 years of age and 25 per cent are between the ages of 15 to 20. In Mumbai alone, this study estimated that there were six lakh domestic workers of whom 80,000 are full-time. This is likely to be an underestimate but it does give some idea of the extent to which this "industry" provides employment, particularly to rural migrants coming into the city.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has a clear definition of a domestic worker: "someone who carries out household work in private households in return for wages". The ILO also estimates that worldwide, domestic work is the largest employment category for girls under the age of 16. Yet despite the extent of this form of labour, there are no international standards to regulate the conditions of work or the wages of domestic workers. An ILO study estimates that the millions of child domestic workers worldwide remain economically and socially invisible and marginalized. Child domestics, nearly all girls, work long hours for little or no pay. Many have no opportunity to go to school, or are forced to drop out because of the demands of their job. While domestic work is conventionally regarded as a 'safe' form of employment, in reality, this is frequently accompanied by a wide range of abuses, including physical, verbal and sexual violence. A study by Anti-Slavery International showed that many children in India entered the domestic workforce to repay loans. In addition, child domestic work is linked to the broader phenomenon of child trafficking. To help stem this social evil, a crucial step is the need for governments to ratify and implement ILO Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour No. 182 as a matter of urgency. Under the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, some forms of child labor are flatly prohibited, such as slavery or practices similar to slavery. Other types of work are prohibited if they constitute "work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children." By ratifying Convention 182, countries affirm their commitment to tackle all the worst forms of child labour, including child domestic work, and show their abhorrence of practices such as child slavery. Sadly, two of the key countries that have not yet ratified Convention 182 are Australia and India.

Maharashtra has recently initiated steps to do this in response to campaigns by non-governmental organisations over several years. One of its significant achievements has been the passing of a Maharashtra Government Resolution in 2000. This resolution laid down the following measures as a basic package to ensure the social security and welfare of domestic workers.

- One month's salary as Diwali bonus for workers who have been employed for a minimum of one year.
- Medical expenses of the workers to be shared by the employers.

- Mandatory annual increment.
- A fortnight's paid leave for those women employed full-time so that they can visit their home towns, and travel expenses to be shared by employers.

Additionally, last month (August, 2003), the cabinet met and decided that domestic workers should be regulated. It suggested that a labour board, with an assistant labour official and representatives of domestic workers, employers, NGOs and the government be established to look into the rights of domestic workers.

Predictably, both employers and domestic workers are dismissing this tentative step as impractical. The latter fear that in a labour surplus market, any regulation will drive out those demanding their rights as others willing to work at any wage step in. And most employers do not want any regulation as the absence of it allows them to pay what they wish. They also expect that regulation will open up another avenue for corruption without changing anything for domestic workers. In any case, the fact that few think of the women and men working in their homes as "domestic workers" but instead still refer to them as "servants" tells its own story.

Yet, the Maharashtra Government's announcement did create some ripples. The media, for instance, woke up to the world of the domestics. And momentarily, those who employ these domestics, stopped and looked at them as if they were real people, with some rights and needs and aspirations. But the moment has already passed. And the invisible army of maids, cleaners, cooks, drivers, gardeners and watchmen continue to do their work, at salaries that bear little relation to the nature of their work, under conditions where the word "exploitation" would be considered grossly inadequate to describe what goes on.

But apart from the physical aspects of domestic work - the long hours, the absence of off-days, the low pay - what about the other messages that are passed down to future generations?

Rural migrants often arrive in big metropolises and find jobs as domestic workers; similarly, in the West migrant women from poor countries work as domestic workers in upper class, usually white households perpetuating a racially divisive "servant culture". Millions of Indian children in homes where such a "servant culture" prevails, grow up never picking up their clothes, never washing their clothes, never clearing the dining table, never washing up, never cooking, never sweeping or cleaning, never doing anything in the home except eating, perhaps reading and definitely watching television. What kind of culture are we promoting just because we have the luxury to be able to hire someone, most often at pitiful wages, to do all the "dirty" work? How many of us pause to consider this even as we justify the need to have "servants"?

This is a complex issue, tied up with questions of employment and surplus labour. But it is also a simple issue - one of attitudes, of how we value another human life. It is a question of recognising all human beings, regardless of the nature of their work, as precisely that. It is a question of ensuring that we don't bring up our children with values that perpetuate slavery and servitude.

*I find my own
Small person
A standing self
Against the world
An equality of wills
I finally understand. – Alice Walker.*

Gender Equity: From Legislation To Attitude

Pavithra Narayanan

[Ed. Pavithra Narayanan is an Assistant Professor of English, Film Theory & Production, and Women's Studies at Washington State University, Vancouver, WA. Her research is on gender, globalization and political economy, with a focus on India. She also makes social documentary films.]

It doesn't matter where you start;
What matters is which way you're headed.
No matter where you're headed,
You have to start from where you are.
Having to start from where you are means
Having to recognize where you are
- Jan Knippers Black

Every one of us occupies a space dictated by gender, race, caste, class, religion, and sexuality and this space governs our lives. But the politics of entering this predetermined arena and understanding and challenging these structures largely depends on which global space one occupies – the global north or the global south. The North is considered a space which affords greater protection of human rights while the South is riddled with images of suppression and oppression. That the two spheres co-exist and have interdependent economies, beliefs and lives is often times overlooked, so, social issues are examined independently with the assumption that problems are local. The view that the South is a space where there is a higher degree of violations of human rights is also largely due to a particular focus – a focus which is always on fatalities. So, with gender violence, India is seen as violator of human rights, whereas domestic violence in the United States is considered a serious act committed by individuals and is not viewed as part of structural pattern. Uma Narayan in *Dislocating Cultures* points out that no connection is made between the violence by men on women across countries and cultures because in discussions of domestic violence in the North, for example, the United States, the focus is only on injuries and not on fatal cases, whereas, when examining social issues in developing countries, the focus is only on deadly cases. It is this same focus on the number of fatal cases that draws the world's attention to female foeticide or infanticide. My intention here is to draw attention not to the dead but to the living and to shift the focus from "foeticide" and "infanticide" to "female." To understand what it means to be female is key to finding a way to stop gender violence.

Female foeticide or infanticide, which is the killing of female children, is largely, if not entirely, seen as a problem of India and China. This is not to say that these deaths do not occur in these two countries or should be ignored, but death itself is only the very last act of injustice, and sadly, the focus is only when this final act is committed. So, the headlines in newspapers read: "Doing away with daughters," "The War Room - Female Infanticide in India," "Born to Die," "Female infanticide: a rampant and socially accepted practice in India." These stories answer the question: "Why female children?" with the explanation that in India it is largely because of dowry and poverty and in China it is because of the one child policy and the preference that that one child be male. In India, debates and discussions on dowry, poverty and the freedom to have children are endless, in the hope that solving these problems would solve the problem of the killing of female children. More recently, the focus has shifted to legislating technology that is used for sex selection. In 1975, amniocentesis was introduced to India to detect abnormalities in the fetus. But within a decade, this technology was rampantly misused to abort female fetuses. This led to a government order restricting the use of amniocenteses to suspected cases of genetic diseases. However, this directive was enforced only in government institutions and private clinics capitalized on the technology. Sex determination tests were available in the most remote areas and advertisements which blatantly encouraged people to abort their female fetuses to save dowry costs read: "Pay Rs. 5000 now or Rs. 50,000 later." The Janwadi Mahila Samiti (JMS) or Democratic Women's Association began actively campaigning against medically assisted and selective abortions of female fetuses and the government banned the test on January 1, 1996.

In spite of the legislation, the rate of female foeticide increased. In 1981, the census indicated a ratio of 962 girls per 1,000 boys. In 2001, it was 927 girls per 1,000 boys. As Patricia Liedl puts it, 60 million "missing" girls have fallen into a demographic black hole from which there seems to be no return. In December 2002, the government responded to this crisis by approving a bill entitled the Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Amendment. The amendment broadens the existing ban on sex determination to include the use of preconception and pre-implantation of genetic diagnosis for sex selection. Other new provisions include maintenance by doctors of written records of procedures carried out (not previously required), and the vesting in state, district and sub-district level authorities of powers equivalent to civil courts to ensure compliance with the law and to follow-up reports on of violation and misconduct (Malik). In 2004

the Government further prohibited all genetic-counseling facilities, clinics, and labs from divulging the sex of the fetus, but this directive is stalled. While some groups are opposing this legislation, others are calling for a complete ban on ultrasound tests. What is problematic with this battle is that the technology associated with sex-selection has become the central focus. This focus also does not take into account that it is only amongst particular groups that can afford and do seek medical technology is amniocentesis an issue. Amongst lower economic groups and certain communities we witness female infanticide or the killing of female children soon after their birth.

With studies in 2005 continuing to point out the alarming imbalance between male-female ratios, what is evident is that the conscious annihilation of females which knows no caste, religious or socio-economic barriers has shifted out of focus. All the reports focus on the aborted fetuses, the dead children and the decline in the number of females. The fear now is that there will be a shortage of brides! This has become the central issue in many journalistic reports and is also the theme of a recent film "Maturubhoomi – A Nation Without Women." Unfortunately, however well-intentioned these reports are, it is precisely this focus that is part of the problem. And the problem is our social construction of gender – the way in which we view men's and women's roles. We do grave injustice to the girls who have survived by once again not addressing what it means to be female. What we really need to do is to refocus on gender. We have to first acknowledge that gender and our definition of gender is a systemic part in the way in which we construct family, culture, social conditions, relationships, and lives. And it is this construction that has enabled gender violence.

Legislation is only one of the many responses to addressing gender violence. Government and non-government organizations have also tried to address it through structural programs. For example, the White Cradle program initiated by the Tamil Nadu government has been particularly successful. A cradle is left at strategic remote locations for women to give up the babies instead of killing them on a no questions asked basis. The government then opens a bank account in the name of the child and takes on the responsibility of looking after or finding a home for the child. Another fairly successful project is the Better Life Options Program for Boys implemented by the Centre for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA). This program directly involves male adolescents in conversations about gender, gender violence, and gender awareness, and has proven to be an effective method to make boys more gender sensitive.

While laws and institutional programs do effect change what is also required is societal change. The plain truth is that we have caused the existence of a structure that has allowed for the killing of female children. What is vital to stop it is a shift – by both men and women – in our attitudes. We should be willing to reconstruct a society that does not view daughters as economic burdens and we should rebuild a world that is open to changing traditional practices and beliefs where sons are no longer seen as the ones who light the funeral pyre, are care-takers and who continue the family lineage. For the children who live, it is time we stopped and let them redefine for themselves what it means for them to be sons and daughters.

When I was asked to write a paper for the Sanctuary conference souvenir, I decided to focus on the question of gender because of Sanctuary's association with Asha for Education. Education is crucial to understand the construction of gender and Asha for Education can make a difference by insisting that gender programs are part of the schools they fund. It is imperative that both boys and girls start conversations about gender at an early age if they are to later have any kind of meaningful dialogue on gender equity.

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On State Approaches To Prostitution And Recommendations

Excerpted from the report *The Demand for Victims of Sex Trafficking*
Prof. Donna M. Hughes, Women's Studies Program, University of Rhode Island.

[Ed. This report focuses on the exploiters and the role of the state in abetting exploitation. The economic viability of trafficking, which is the source of resilience and creativity, is explored in depth. A previous report by Prof. Hughes focused on men's role in creating a demand for victims. Here we include two self-contained excerpts from the report. The first characterizes the basic state approaches to prostitution and the second provides recommendations to combat the demand for prostitution. The entire report can be downloaded from the Sanctuary Website (<http://www.asbanet.org/focusgroups/sanctuary>).

"Everybody, both men and women, has a responsibility for the society we live in, and for what kind of society we want our daughters and sons to grow up in. We want the future daughters to have all possibilities in society, so that they won't have to sell their bodies. And we do not want a society where boys are taught that women can be bought. Sale of the female body is contradictory to an equal society." – Marit Kvamme, Kvinnefronten, Sweden, 2004]

State Approaches to Prostitution

Prostitution is universally considered a phenomenon that the society has to address. How societies and governments decide to deal with prostitution varies widely. There are four general approaches to prostitution: prohibition, regulation, abolition, and decriminalization.

Prohibitionist Approach to Prostitution

With the prohibition approach, prostitution is defined as criminal activity, and all activities relating to prostitution are criminalized: soliciting, procuring, pimping, and brothel keeping. All persons engaged in these activities are considered criminals. No distinction is made between those who sell sex, those who buy sex, those who facilitate the buying and selling or who manage establishments where prostitution takes place. In the U. S., with the exception of a few counties in Nevada, there is a prohibition approach to prostitution.

Regulationist Approach to Prostitution

Under the regulationist approach, prostitution is legalized and redefined as a form of service work, i.e. sexual services. Regulations are set up that control when, where, and under what circumstances prostitution can be engaged in. Under the legalization approach, prostitutes become sex workers; men become clients; pimps become managers; brothel owners are business people; and traffickers are employment agents who assist migrant sex workers to travel to destination countries and find jobs. Selling sex is illegal only if the regulations are violated. The state expects to collect tax revenue from the industry and income earners. This is the state approach in the Netherlands, Germany, and some states of Australia.

Abolitionist Approach to Prostitution

Under an abolitionist approach, prostitution is viewed as a harmful activity and all laws and policies aim to eradicate it. A distinction is made between victims and perpetrators and they are treated accordingly. Women and children used in prostitution are considered victims and offered services; johns – the men who buy sex acts, pimps, brothel keepers and traffickers are all criminalized. The approach is similar to how to treat domestic violence – distinguishing between victims and perpetrators and treating them accordingly.

Two states that take an abolitionist approaches are Sweden and the U. S. at the federal level. In Sweden, prostitution is seen as a form of violence against women. Its law decriminalizes all of those who sell sex acts, and criminalizes male buyers, pimps, brothel keepers, and traffickers. In the U. S., at the federal level, prostitution resulting from force, fraud, or coercion is considered a form of slavery. The U. S. federal law, "Trafficking Victims Protection Act", criminalizes all people who recruit, transport, harbor victims using force, fraud or coercion. Victims, even if they are in the country illegally or have engaged in activities that are criminal according to local law, are exempt from prosecution and entitled to emergency services. (The extent of the services made available is determined by whether the victim is willing to assist the police in prosecuting the case). It is a federal crime to transport a person across state lines for purposes of prostitution, even if the victim consents.

Decriminalization Approach to Prostitution

Decriminalization means removing criminal penalties for any prostitution-related activity. Advocates of this approach usually exempt activity that involves underage children. Decriminalization is best understood as a means rather than an end. In New Zealand, prostitution was decriminalized at the national level, meaning they removed all law criminalizing

prostitution, brothel keeping, etc. The national parliament then required local authorities to come up with rules by which to regulate prostitution. Municipalities cannot refuse to set up conditions for the operation of brothels in their cities and towns. In New Zealand, decriminalization was the first step towards regulation which, of course, means legalization. In Sweden, those who sell sex are decriminalized, but the buyers, pimps, and traffickers are criminalized. In this case, decriminalization was part of an abolitionist approach. So decriminalization is best understood as a transition phase or part of the process towards either legalization or abolition, but it is not an end point in itself.

Enforcement of Laws on Prostitution

Enforcement of laws where there is a prohibitionist approach is often carried out through “sweeps” of areas known for prostitution. When the level of prostitution reaches a certain threshold or there are enough complaints from the community, periodic crackdowns on street prostitution temporarily suppress prostitution in particular areas.

The prohibitionist approach often results in discrimination against victims of prostitution and trafficking when laws are more vigorously enforced against women instead of men who purchase sex acts and exploiters who market sex acts.

Recommendations to Combat the Demand for Victims

- 1) Set zero tolerance policies for sex trafficking and prostitution.
- 2) Set an abolitionist approach to sex trafficking and prostitution based on distinction between victims and perpetrators.
- 3) Law enforcement efforts should aim to eradicate the markets which create a need for victims. Efforts should be made to put exploiters out of business, which includes permanently shutting down establishments where sex trafficking occurs. Investigate and prosecute financial aspects of trafficking and prostitution, such as tax evasion, tax fraud, and money laundering.
- 4) Redefine prevention. If the demand for victims is one of the reasons that trafficking occurs, then shutting down the markets and putting prostitution establishments out of business is part of prevention. Demand reduction is part of prevention of sex trafficking.
- 5) End tolerance for the illegal sex trade, including open advertising of criminal activity, such as escort services, massage parlors, spas, etc, which are well known fronts for prostitution.
- 6) Police departments should have a special unit to combat human trafficking, including sex trafficking. Redefine and rename vice units. Retrain officers to investigate trafficking and prostitution as crimes in which people are victimized. Increase resources so that sustained effort can be made to combat sex trafficking and prostitution.
- 7) End discrimination against victims in arrest and prosecution of trafficking and prostitution-related offenses.
- 8) Increase criminal investigation of exploiters. Increase investigation of corruption linked to trafficking and prostitution. Increase criminal penalties for officials involved in corruption in sex trafficking and prostitution cases.
- 9) Train law enforcement to recognize exploiter behavior and signs of victimization.
- 10) Eliminate “sweeps” as a law enforcement method to combat prostitution. Design comprehensive programs with sustained effort to eliminate sex trafficking and prostitution by arresting and prosecuting purchasers of sex acts and exploiters, and providing services to victims. Design law enforcement strategies to eliminate the markets for victims.
- 11) Devise strategies to combat different markets for victims.
- 12) Analyze immigration and asylum policies to eliminate the use of legal means for exploiters to bring victims into destination countries.
- 13) Review state approaches to prostitution for effectiveness in reducing the demand for victims and for eliminating the markets for victims.

"No development strategy is better than one that involves women as central players. It has immediate benefits for nutrition, health, savings and reinvestment at the family, community and ultimately, country level. In other words, educating girls is a social development policy that works. It is a long-term investment that yields an exceptionally high return." - Kofi Annan.

The Normalizing Of Pornography

Robert Jensen

[Ed. Robert Jensen is a journalism professor at the University of Texas at Austin and co-author of Pornography: The Production and Consumption of Inequality. He also is the author of The Heart of Whiteness: Confronting Race, Racism and White Privilege and Citizens of the Empire: The Struggle to Claim Our Humanity. He can be reached at rjensen@uts.cc.utexas.edu.]

There have been three distinct phases in the discussion of pornography in the United States in the past half-century -- moral, political, and economic -- each with a different framework and accompanying dominant language. The path that discussion has taken should concern us, as contemporary culture has turned away from an opportunity to examine the uglier aspects of capitalism, patriarchy, and white supremacy in contemporary mass-marketed sexually explicit material.

After World War II -- as political movements challenged many traditional social norms, and at the same time U.S. society was being reshaped into a mass-consumer consumer culture -- courts began to look in new ways at the question of the control of sexually explicit media. From the 1957 Roth v. U.S. case to Miller v. California in 1973, the U.S. Supreme Court wrestled with the basics of obscenity law -- the rules under which the state brought criminal prosecutions against the producers and distributors of what were commonly referred to as "dirty" books, pictures, and films.

That label of "dirty" indicates that while the discussion often went forward under the rubric of law, it was really a moral debate about the appropriateness of sex outside of traditional mores rooted in heterosexual marriage. In that debate, religious conservatives argued for criminal sanctions, while liberal/libertarians made the case that the state should stay out of these issues. One side argued that human sexuality needed to be kept in check; the other that it needed to be liberated from conventional restraints.

The binary framework of conservative v. liberal/repression v. liberation broke down with the development of a feminist critique of pornography and of the larger sexual exploitation industry (including prostitution, stripping, and sex tourism). Emerging in the late 1970s out of the feminist movement to end men's violence against women, this radical feminist critique of pornography shifted the discussion from morality to politics and power. The problem of pornography, these women argued, was not that it offended sexual mores but that it was implicated in concrete harms to women and children. The solution should not be sought in obscenity law -- which gave men control over decisions about what could and couldn't be seen -- but in a civil-rights approach that understood pornography as a practice of sex discrimination and placed the power to hold pornographers accountable in the hands of those hurt by them.

This critique wasn't accepted by all feminists, but the move away from thinking about pornography as merely "dirty" and toward an understanding of the genre's role in gender politics was truly radical, and hence threatening to not only the pornography industry but to male power more generally. Feminists' attempts to write the civil-rights approach into law through local ordinances were resisted -- with slurs and slander, not to mention expensive attorneys and lobbyists -- by the pornographers as well as many in the mainstream publishing industry, and by men in general. Feminists who supported the critique were labeled "sex-negative," "prudish," and "in bed with the right-wing."

This campaign to marginalize the feminist critique was largely successful, and throughout the 1990s and into the new century, pornography became increasingly normalized and accepted in mainstream U.S. culture. The dominant framework for public discussion shifted to the economic -- pornography increasingly has been treated like any other industry, though right-wing forces continue to support the use of obscenity law and the accompanying moral language continues to find its way into the public debate. Direct discussion of the feminist critique is rare in the public conversation, though the language of power and harm from that critique has been co-opted by some conservatives, and some of the issues feminists raised remain part of the debate.

Typical of this shift to a normalized economic framework is a November 2005 story in the Washington Post business section about increasing availability of pornography on video iPods and cell phones. The entire story treats the subject as just another trend in the consumer electronics market. After quoting one source about the possibility of parental objections to this new way of delivering sexual material, the reporter writes, "A more fundamental issue might be whether people even want to see adult entertainment on tiny, two-inch video screens?"

So, feminist concerns about the harm in the making and use of pornography are no longer relevant enough to mention, and parents' concerns (for whatever reason) are trivial compared with the important questions about the minimum screen

size necessary for effective pornography viewing.

There is a paradox in this development. While U.S. society continues to accept -- either grudgingly or in celebratory fashion -- pornography in more places, the feminist critique of the woman-hating and white-supremacy of pornography is more on target than ever. One might assume that as pornography becomes more mainstreamed, the overt misogyny and racism would be tempered to gain wider acceptance. In fact, the opposite has happened.

As the number of pornography producers has increased and competition sharpened, they look for an "edge." One of the easiest ways to try to make material stand out from the competition is to inject ever-more overt harshness and to trade on racist stereotypes. Hence the explosion of what the industry calls "gonzo" pornography and "interracial." The former makes no pretense of plot or characters and is simply sex on film, often with rougher sexual practices including double penetration (two men penetrating a woman anally and vaginally at the same time) and gag-inducing oral sex. More clearly than ever before, these films tie men's sexual pleasure not only to dominance of women but to an increasingly sadistic cruelty. The interracial section of any pornography store offers most every variation you can imagine: sexually aggressive black men, animalistic black women, oversexed Latinas, and demure Asian women. While such overtly racist characters and plots are no longer acceptable in mainstream media, they flourish in pornography.

This apparent paradox -- the mainstreaming of pornography at a time when its content is more misogynistic and racist than ever -- is resolved when one recognizes that for all the advances in women's rights and civil rights that have come in the past half-century, the United States is still a male- and white-supremacist society. There is no paradox in the existence of such an industry or in the dominant society's acceptance of it; instead, pornography is an uncomfortable mirror for the contemporary United States. The dominant culture has always accepted the use of women by men for sexual pleasure; the only question is how openly it can be done. In that sense, pornography has always been mainstream -- that is, used by a wide range of "normal" men, even if used more discreetly in the past.

The feminist antipornography movement was important not only for its critique of this particular mediated form of men's sexual use and abuse of women, but because it forced us to face the brutality -- and hypocrisy -- of the dominant culture's sexual norms. The focus on sexually explicit media went forward as feminists also were demonstrating that rape, child sexual assault, and domestic violence were not the rogue actions of a few pathological men, but expressions of a sexual system rooted in the eroticizing of male domination and female subordination.

The feminist anti-violence movement has had limited success at focusing attention on this and winning some resources (though not adequate to the task) to help those injured in this system, though those resources from the mainstream institutions (both governmental and private) often have come at the price of downplaying any radical analysis of gender and power. But the antipornography movement, which highlighted this gendered domination/subordination dynamic even more directly, wasn't able to change the culture's framework. This is no doubt due in part to the fact that the critique of pornography for many people touches directly on their own sexual practices. It asks us to engage in critical self-reflection about how we have come to understand sex, define ourselves as men and women, and experience sexual pleasure. Such a process isn't easy.

But the fear it sparks is exactly the reason the feminist antipornography critique is so valuable: It not only helps us understand the pornography industry and gives us the analytical tools necessary to combat the harms, but also offers insights into sexuality and contemporary culture. Why do we live in a society in which human bodies can be bought and sold, in which intimacy is increasingly just one more commodity? Why can racism be so easily turned into a sexual turn-on? And why do so many of us, both men and women, accept a sexual system that makes sexual pleasure contingent upon hierarchy?

And what role do these ideas about sex that we find in pornography -- and throughout contemporary culture -- have to do with the epidemic levels of sexual violence in the culture?

The work of the feminist antipornography movement today is not to mourn the failed organizing campaigns of the 1980s and '90s, but to preserve the insights of that movement and sharpen the critique to take into account changes in the industry and society. As more people in their day-to-day lives struggle to resist the pornographizing of society, they will look for a compelling analysis that can help them make sense of sexually explicit media and the larger sexual crisis. The ideology of conservatives and liberals has never been adequate, and the failure of their analysis to answer people's concerns will only become more evident in time.

In time, a feminist critique and political movement -- one that does not look away from the brutality of patriarchy and does not give up hope for radical change -- will be more important than ever.

Fighting For Justice And Dignity: The Good Doctor

Sunil Laxman

[Ed. MICDA, Mother India Community Development Association, the brainchild of Dr. R. Subbaramaiah has been instrumental in empowering the scheduled castes (SCs), Scheduled tribes (STs) and women in particular through organisation, social action, education and asset creation in the drought-prone Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh. Dr. Subbaramiah has successfully fought a legal battle to restore land to the landless poor in the villages around Vidyutsadasivapuram village. MICDA has also led the Madiga community's fight against the age-old heinous Mathamma practice. Mathammas are girl children from the "untouchable" Madiga community who have been dedicated to Goddess Mathamma (a form of Devi or Shaketi). Steeped in ignorance, superstitious beliefs and appalling lack of health care, Mathamma practice in effect created a whole lot of girls/ women who were sexually abused and exploited. MICDA has been working relentlessly so that this highly neglected and backward community is ensured the basic necessities of clean and hygienic living conditions, health awareness issues through community-based health clinics, social and economic rights, and basic as well as vocational education programs.

The following article originally appeared as a blog entry by Asha for Education (Seattle chapter) volunteer Sunil Laxman (<http://balancinglife.blogspot.com/2005/07/learning-to-aid-i-problems-and.html>). Sunil has also been closely associated with the Asha Sanctuary efforts]

I first met Dr. Subbaramaiah (Dr. S.) about two years ago, when we, in Asha, received an ambitious proposal from this remarkable group in the Chittoor District of Andhra Pradesh, who were working with scheduled castes as well as landless peasants. Since then, I've come to know him better, and have found him to be a person of remarkable strength and indomitable will. This is his story, a story I've tried to put together piece by piece.

He was born to landless peasants in a small village, and knew only poverty and hardship in childhood. Yet, his parents wanted a better life for him, and so he was sent to a village school. And he studied, with a ferocious desire to succeed. His efforts resulted in him securing the first rank in the entire district in his 12th class exams, and an admission into the Tirupati Medical College. This was cause for much joy, but the family did not have the money for the college admission and tuition fee (just a few hundred rupees, this was a government college). A powerful village landlord promised the family this money as a loan. But he was a petty and vindictive man. Never in the history of the village had a child of backward and petty peasants gone to college, leave alone Medical College. How dare this boy dream then? At the very last minute, he reneged on his word, hurled abuse at them and did not give them a penny. S's future seemed destined to be tied to the endless cycle of poverty and oppression. But his mother's desire was stronger. She gave him her only pair of earrings, and told him to sell it and go to college. He did, and ran to college, only to find that the admissions had closed that very morning. In extreme depression, he met the principal and told him his tale. The principal was a kindly man, and after all, S was a district topper. The principal summoned a peon, and told him to process S's application immediately. S was now on the way to becoming a doctor.

His early life of hardship had ensured that he would have little tolerance for injustice. Even as a medical student he began to immerse himself in issues of social justice. It started with him exposing the mess warden (who was providing substandard food to the inmates and stealing the remaining funds, and was well connected with the local Mafia). Later, as a junior resident, he locked horns with a head nurse, who in conjunction with a local rowdy, was pilfering medical supplies, and worse, was involved in a racket exploiting the junior nurses. Every one was terrified of the rowdy, and warned Dr. S not to interfere, but he would not listen. One evening, when he was on duty, the rowdy showed up armed and drunk, and threatened Dr. S with his life. Dr. S. pushed him out of the gate, and locked it, and also locked the head nurse in, called the cops and had the thug arrested. By this time Dr. S's father had also passed away, and he was a sole breadwinner for his family. It was about now that he got involved with the struggle for the rights of landless laborers.

Not far from Puttur town, there were about 750 acres of fertile but fallow land. The government had declared that this was to be distributed to landless peasant families living in the region. But powerful and wealthy land grabbers decided to occupy this valuable land. Dr. S. could not let this injustice pass by without a fight, and so he took up the cause of the peasant families. He formed his organization, MICDA, and started working for the interests of these peasants. He took the land grabbers to court, and fought them. And he fought, and fought and fought....

About twenty years have gone by since then. The land grabbers, powerful landlords and corrupt local officials have still not given up, and still want that valuable land. Dr. S has been charged with over twenty-five false cases, which he has fought. The local courts as well as the state high court have dismissed every single one of them as baseless, false or malicious. But still, new false charges are constantly levied against him. Some years ago, the landlords sent vicious thugs to threaten Dr. S, who just barely escaped with his life (his brow still bears a nasty scar where he was hit). Still, he will not

back off, though the threats continue. His medical career has been sacrificed for this cause. While juniors move up the ranks, Dr. S is away on medical or unpaid leave, fighting for this and other causes. The constant stress has taken its toll, and he now has stress-induced diabetes, and other medical ailments.

Meanwhile, he and his group have worked tirelessly to improve the lives of some 350-400 landless peasant families. They developed, surveyed and leveled the 750 odd acres of land. Every peasant was allotted land (about 1.6 acres, neatly demarcated), in a completely transparent way (by drawing lots). A basic and simple but efficient village was constructed within the land. Roads were built; check dams constructed, and bore wells sunk. Timber poachers who cut sandalwood from the hills around the land were caught and chased out by the peasants. Corrupt forest officials in cahoots with the poachers tried to harass these peasants, but that has been negotiated as well. A fine school has been built (with Asha's support), and hundreds of children come here every day, first generation learners all. The respect with which these peasants greet or talk to him is moving in itself.

The sun sets behind the hills around the land. We sit in the school porch and watch it go down. I see the look of exhaustion on Dr. S's face, and yet his eyes gleam with the determination to fight on and take up other struggles for the rights of the deprived and oppressed.

TRY: A Journey In Progress

[Ed. This article has been contributed by Vijayapriya, a TRY associate. For more information about TRY activities or other related information please contact Mr. Chandravel, Mobile : 9840937779, trychandru@hotmail.com]

TRY – To Reach You, is a multi purpose social work organization reaching out to the socially, educationally and economically backward sections irrespective of caste, creed and religion. This organization works on a community based method where mother/parents and children are involved. It provides home or shelter care and education to children who are abandoned, neglected or those belonging to broken family, especially children of commercial sex workers. It is expected that by providing home-shelter care & education to the child, a permanent solution cannot be achieved by itself. But through comprehensive community based program, it is possible to have a direct and positive effect on the well-being of the young children.

This organization was started as a tribute to a dream. When Anandkumar, a student of the Madras school of social work, died without realizing his ambition to start a welfare organization for the under privileged, his classmates took up the cause.

TRY's primary focus is to provide education for the underprivileged children in the society; priority is given to the children of commercial sex workers for whom education is a distant dream.

TRY believes in family and community based rehabilitation. TRY does not wish to be a dumping ground for the socially neglected. It is an organization where people come to solve problems and are rehabilitated to join the social mainstream and contribute as useful citizens. Deserted women and the sex workers are given counseling so that they can stop their profession. It also helps them to get a suitable job in various organizations.

Since TRY was stabilized,

- ⇒ Forty two families had been given counseling / vocational training and rehabilitated. TRY had helped the women who were indulged as sex-workers to find an alternate profession helping them integrate into the mainstream society.
- ⇒ More than 85 children from underprivileged community between age group 3 – 10 years have benefited from basic education, shelter and care. More importantly, by rehabilitating their mother / parents / family they had been successfully put back into the mainstream of social life as useful citizens.
- ⇒ Because of the good social work background, TRY had also helped several street children, mentally retarded children, physically disabled children by coordinating and working with other organizations & agencies.

TRY, being a multipurpose organization, remains with an open heart to accept children who are in need of shelter, health, care and education, without any discrimination whatsoever. With limited resources in every aspect TRY has found meaningful expression and productive outcome in its endeavours.

Himmat In Gujarat

Monica Wahi

[Ed. Contributed by Monica Wahi with inputs from Sanat Mobanty. Monica Wahi is the founder of the Himmat movement in Gujarat. The article has been edited due to space constraints.]

This is the story of women who were widowed and lost their near and dear ones in the Naroda-Patiya (Ahmedabad) carnage in 2002. Helped by Monica Wahi and Zaidahmed, some of these women got together to form a collective effort that would revitalize their livelihoods and rejuvenate their lives.

Beginnings

In the late summer of 2003, the women rented a residential space in Tahira Park, next to Faizal Park; utility services as well as some equipment for infrastructure and teaching & training was set up with partial help from UTTHAN, Ahmedabad. "Himmat" was thus set up. The sewing machines, donated by SEWA & SAHRWARU, used in the centre belonged to the women themselves. Based on advice from Sanghamitra Gadekar from Vividha, the women started classes on basic sewing techniques and also embroidery. Naina Behn, a renowned educationist and a Gandhian from Ahmedabad started coming to the centre to impart basic numeracy skills to the women – which would help them grasp the nuances of measurements as well as help them understand and operate their newly opened bank accounts. A literacy program was started by Pratham at this center to help these women, numbering about 12, with reading and writing skills.

In December 2003, "Himmat" graduated to a production unit. Himmat was provided organically dyed block printed Khadi and also fabric by Vividha. Designer Chandra Razdan Bhattacharya from New Delhi came down to Ahmedabad to conduct a 10-day 'finishing workshop' for the women at the beginning of the production. We made over 800 pieces (tops, skirts, kurtas, bags) for the World Social Forum exhibiton (January, Bombay). This was a wildly successful venture; at the end of the exhibition, we were left with only a dozen clothes. The clothes and the workmanship were widely appreciated which gave immense confidence and pride to the women. The lessons learnt here enabled them to take upon responsibilities, of managing stalls, of selling & marketing, of book keeping. Since then the women have exhibited in various cities of Gujarat as well as metropolitan cities like Bangalore and Delhi.

In one sense, WSF gave them a glimpse of possibilities which they had not imagined for themselves earlier – possibilities of good earnings & appreciation for their hard work; possibilities of creating a niche of running the production unit on their own and being independent. In the words of one Himmat member Naseem, "We will show to the whole world how the Naroda Patiya widows will rise back with dignity".

Growth

Though initially we had envisaged a modest three-month skill upgradation programme for the women, the centre went on to provide six-month sewing & stitching programme including machine and hand embroidery classes, and literacy programme in Gujarati. Himmat became self-sustaining and has since successfully evolved into a center for quality tailoring work. Some highlights of Himmat are:

- Seven months after the initial training sessions began, Himmat graduated into a production centre in December 2003; with our first patron being Vividha.
- Besides WSF in Bombay, Himmat, in collaboration with Vividha, have since exhibited in New Delhi, Bangalore, Goa and in various cities and towns in Gujarat.
- Fruitful tie-ups (on consignment basis) were done with up-market outlets in Delhi (e.g., People Tree) & Bombay (OMO). These outlets showcase and sell our clothes in lieu of which they take a standard cut from the profit.
- Himmat has also undertaken stitching orders for Oxfam, Gujrat; People Tree, New Delhi; AWAG, Ahmedabad, Khadi Bhandar, Town Hall, Ahmedabad; AURA, Ahmedabad etc.
- Some members of the original group moved on to successfully find work in factories or found home-based work. Those who preferred to work at the centre were joined by other (primarily single) women in Vatwa to lead the group forward.

Himmat has also encouraged these women to take up other activities which they could only dream of earlier.

Art: Since January 2004, artist Vasudha Thozur from Baroda has been involved with the adolescent girls from Himmat in an art project supported by IFA, Bangalore. This project has taught the girls creative skills which enables them to articulate their understanding of their own lives and the world around them. Recently four girls from this group have also been awarded an art fellowship by Drishti Media Collective. The girls will enact street plays and "prabhat pheris" and present

their art work as part of the programme.

Cycle Riding: The women had long since wanted to learn to ride bicycles and two wheelers. In November 2005, Himmat conducted a bicycle riding event where numerous women from Vatwa learnt how to ride a cycle. Needless to say this has provided immense confidence to the women and now they are ready to learn how to ride a two-wheeler!

Volunteering: Since Himmat began with the efforts of a young volunteer and has grown because of the goodwill and sprits of a number of young people – we believe in providing space for the youth to come learn, experiment and contribute to the community. Himmat hosted a group of 20 volunteers from Mahindra United World College, Pune, who conducted various educational and other activities in the Himmat centre and other centers at Navapura, Vatwa and Sarkhej Roza.

Indo-Pak Peace Initiatives: In December, 2004, the women of Himmat hosted our friends from across the border, Pakistan, an event which was organized by Leapfrog, Delhi and Action Aid, Lahore. Zaid Ahmed and Monica Wahi, founding members of Himmat have both visited Pakistan and are constantly organizing many such interactions.

ON THE PATH TO SELF RELIANCE: Himmat goes on.

As opposed to other NGOs, Himmat was carved and nurtured by the affected women themselves and continues to be run on their own terms by them. Monica Wahi moved back to Delhi in March, 2005 and comes to visit Ahmedabad once in 6 to 8 weeks. Zaidahmed co-ordinates the activities of the centre in Ahmedabad. But it is the women themselves who have made the decision to take this forward on the basis of their own confidence, skills and resources. The women have been involved collectively in intervening and resolving domestic disputes in a couple of cases in the area. They have started to see themselves as a progressive, authoritative, collective force which can be involved in bringing about justice to single women such as themselves. For this they want to set up a legal intervention cell – which can cater to the needs of women residing in Vatwa. Himmat had a humble beginning at an outlet in Paldi (Monica Wahi's residence!) which was functioning until March 2005 (till Monica left Ahmedabad). It was extremely successful and pulled in new customers every month. Having witnessed the enthusiastic response to the outlet and their products, these women dream of opening an independent outlet in Ahmedabad someday which will showcase their skill, optimism and determination.

Women In Business

Renuka Vishwanathan

[Ed. Renuka Vishwanathan is an IAS officer specialising in finance. She writes on women's issues and translates stories from Malayalam and Tamil. This article originally appeared in Manushi, and is republished in India Together with permission.]

Women as entrepreneurs face gender and societal construct-based obstacles. Importantly, their efforts go underestimated and under-appreciated, even by their own families. In many cases, enterprises defined as being run by women (that is, enterprises in which women hold the controlling share) are in fact run in their names by men who control operations and decision making. Keeping this in mind, it is easy to see why programs for encouraging women entrepreneurship are doomed to fail, even when implemented with the best of intentions.

Programs meant for women entrepreneurs can succeed only if they take note of this paradox generated as a result of familial and social conditioning that reduces the confidence, independence and mobility of women. Entrepreneurship, by definition, implies being in control of one's life and activities which has been denied to women all along. Thus, promoting entrepreneurship for women will require a reversal of traditional attitudes than the mere creation of jobs for women. These programs should go beyond subsidies and credit allocation to encourage attitudinal changes, training and other support services to deserving women.

Training in entrepreneurial attitudes should ideally start at the high school level through well-designed quality courses which boost self-confidence and illustrate the practical application of the academic knowledge. For example, such curricula should include simple project work designed to give hands-on experience of assessing the marketability of a commodity or a service as being currently done in Gujarat by EDI Ahmedabad.

As a practical approach to make women come out of the society-imposed immobility issues and the fact that they need to be chaperoned, high school girls should be compulsorily taught to cycle. There is proof that increased mobility contributes

immensely to raising confidence levels. An additional measure that may increase mobility as well as their confidence is to compulsorily train girls in the techniques of self defense.

Training in Skills

At present, women's polytechnics and industrial training institutes have commendable skill development programs under various sponsored schemes. These institutions should provide quality hostel facilities with adequate security arrangements, as this is a major cause for poor attendance and parental disapproval for such institutes. Under no pretext should institutes set up exclusively for women be converted to men's institutes. The course design should keep in mind the special needs of women, such as their preference to work from home, which would enable them to also fulfill their household responsibilities. Several rewarding and skilled jobs with substantial value addition and good profitability should be undertaken and the courses should be imaginatively and innovatively designed, accommodating the special needs in such cases.

The common practice of presupposing that women are only supplementary income providers and, therefore, do not require a full day's wage for a full day's work should be revised in totality. A professionally involved committee must constantly review the courses and the curriculum on the basis of evaluation studies and market development to ensure that these institutes provide practical management inputs on top of skill development classes. In addition, parents and daughters together need to be convinced that the skills learned in the polytechnics could provide them with profitable occupations.

There are funds available from several sources nowadays; finding effective trainers is the greater problem. NGOs like RUDSET in Karnataka, unlike Government-sponsored schemes, have achieved considerable success in implementing these programs. Continuous monitoring and improvement of training programs should eventually spread the cult of entrepreneurship among young women.

As with any other programs, it must be ensured that only truly deserving beneficiaries have access to these programs. Exploiting these programs for personal interests should be checked; women beneficiaries must themselves be induced to claim greater decision-making authority in family businesses, whether run in their names or not. All this can be achieved in a conducive environment, especially one in which the woman can recognize and express her own psychological needs and aspirations. Exposure to women who are successfully managing enterprises independently might encourage others to involve themselves to a greater extent in the enterprises actively.

The availability of finance and other facilities like industrial sheds and land for women entrepreneurs is often constrained by unforeseen restrictions. Both the Integrated Rural Development Program (IRDP) and the Prime Minister's Rozgar Yojana (PMRY) are good schemes, but the biggest constraint is that availability of funds through these is very low since they operate solely through banks which are extremely reluctant to extend trade-related finance to small customers because of the risks and operational costs. For example, even though the education sector employs predominantly women, yet there is a lack of funding for setting up such institutions run by women. Keeping this in mind, enabling access to open-ended financing and offering working capital assistance to small scale women entrepreneurs or start-ups should be encouraged.

Priority to Women

In addition to providing necessary infrastructure to set up industries, certain amenities like easy mobility and closeness to homes and child care facilities should be ensured. Regular bus services, crèches run by NGOs and allotment of subsidized apartments in the vicinity of work areas should be done for genuine beneficiaries. As an added precaution to stem out abuse of such facilities, allottee entrepreneurs could be screened on the basis of training from a quality approved institutions. The same conditions could be applied to judge eligibility for special investment subsidies or margin money facilities being extended for women.

Financing Difficulties

Even though there are many credit schemes available for women entrepreneurs, lack of comprehensive information and a lack in networking among these agencies produce a huge bottleneck. As a result, clients approaching one institution are not made aware of the all the available options. A closely integrated data bank which can provide counseling (as planned by the Karnataka Women's Corporation) into which all concerned agencies are plugged is a real need.

Group formation has proved remarkably successful in empowering women and introducing them to income generating activity through bank loans. Banks operating with NABARD refinancing, under the IRDP and the Mahila Samajas of the

Karnataka Women's Development Corporation promote group formation and extend working capital grants to groups to encourage them to break the exorbitant debt burdens. Such schemes, however, need intensive monitoring and effort at the micro-level. A widely utilised scheme was the Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI)'s Mahila Udyam Nidhi which covers projects up to Rs 10 lakh and provides 15 percent margin money and a service charge of 1 % (the promoters' contribution is only 10 %). This has been supplanted by the liberalised National Equity Fund scheme which covers entrepreneurs, where the margin money component has been fixed at 25 %. For larger loans, no margin money assistance is generally available and women entrepreneurs have to follow norms applicable to others, that is to provide between 17 and 25 % of the cost of fixed assets out of own resources. There is a plan for setting up a fund for this purpose since irrespective of the name in which family assets are held (surprisingly, quite a bit of family property is held in the name of women) women do not enjoy the authority to pledge, dispose of or otherwise encumber these assets, and families are notoriously wary of using them to support enterprises for the women in the family. But selection of beneficiaries should be rigorously done with all the precautions listed above to prevent the scheme from being hijacked by enterprises controlled by men. The same situation applies in the case of collateral. There is a justified widespread demand for a waiver or reduction of collateral for women entrepreneurs because of the above-mentioned difficulties. This has two implications. A generalized system of exemption of collateral for women entrepreneurs will definitely result in a proliferation of "women's" enterprises to take advantage of the facility. And bankers will find the open-ended benefit risky and tend to restrict financing under this scheme. This would be counterproductive for our purpose. One practice, though not very satisfactory, that has been introduced in the Karnataka State Financial Corporation is again a screening approach through a committee of representatives from concerned agencies to ensure that the beneficiary is indeed capable of running the project and is genuinely in need of relaxation of this condition. But larger coverage is possible only with the backing of a special fund created for the purpose, as done by Women's World Banking for example.

In the area of guarantees, several humiliating habits have become ingrained in financial institutions and banks. They tend to depend on male members accompanying women entrepreneurs for finalizing projects proposed by women and almost invariably insist on guarantees from males in the family. Such procedures should be scrapped totally. Gender sensitization programs should be held to train financiers to treat women with dignity and respect as persons in their own right.

Confidence in Marketing

Marketing of a product or service implies having to be mobile and be confident in dealing with the external world, both of which women have been discouraged from developing by social conditioning. Women's development corporations try to hold frequent exhibitions and set up marketing outlets to provide space for the display of products made by women. Some NGOs have marketing vans. The long term strategy should be to inculcate marketing skills in women entrepreneurs themselves to enable them to handle the situation independently. Professional marketing expertise is essential to identify marketing channels for the products made by women entrepreneurs and should be part of the training programs. An experiment that was tried out in the Karnataka State Financial Corporation has received positive feedback. A Women Entrepreneur's Guidance Cell set up to handle the various problems of women entrepreneurs working directly under top management has proved a focal point for monitoring and assisting projects run by women. Similar cells in the District Industries Centers and Single Window Agencies could be extremely useful in assisting women. But they must on no account degenerate into routine departments and should be staffed with the most committed trained personnel and given continuing and total support by the head of the office.

A final area of concern in the case of women entrepreneurs is stagnation in their growth in spite of professional competence and adequate training. This is due to various reasons like the increasing demands of household duties, mobility problems and the need to diversify and expand the business. It is also often due to psychological causes like lack of self-confidence and fear of success (women who succeed often face hostility and resentment within their family circles). Necessary managerial and technical skills may also be lacking, which is a barrier to the growth of women's businesses. In such cases, training and counseling on a large scale of existing successful women entrepreneurs who seem to have plateaued is, thus, a necessity. Surprisingly, very little attention is being paid to this requirement by any agency, governmental or voluntary. Counseling through the aid of committed NGOs, psychologists, managerial experts and technical personnel could result in the development of appropriate strategies and enable growth.

Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen. - Sir Winston Churchill.

Participative Creation Of Realities: The Missing Component

Sanat Mohanty

[Ed. Sanat Mohantis a scientist by profession, currently based in Minneapolis. Besides science and technology, he is interested in questions of equality and sustainability and is constantly engaged in addressing these questions through stories and theater. He is also the editor of the Education Journal, www.edjournal.net]

Cases of Violence related to Dowry
Gender Violence in Public Places – often in urban communities
Domestic Violence
Skewed Sex Ratios
Gender and Health
Fewer Girls Attending School; Dropping Out Early
Honor Killing
Gender Violence in Our Schools
Gender Violence within Religious Frameworks
Child and Sexual Labour, Prostitution

A review of mainstream newspapers or even more progressive magazines brings a reader this set of issues and discussions around them. How can literacy rates be improved among women? How might women, or women in rural communities, or even dalit communities, have access to better health? What laws, what policies and what social reform are necessary for reduction in violence against women in our society? How does one decrease sexual exploitation of women?

These are some of the questions that intellectuals, policy makers, legislators, books writers, NGOs and numerous other groups have studied and attempted to answer. This body of work as well as its implication on the direction of our society is important and must not be trivialized.

So we have theories – and correlations and statistics and experiential surveys – saying that toiletsⁱⁱ play a big role in girls going to school, that political climate, and the presence of feudal societies affect gender ratiosⁱⁱⁱ as well as health of women, that the absence of accountability is a key factor in violence against women^{iv}, etc. These analyses are significant in planning of laws, of policies that will perhaps be more effective.

The key word is perhaps.

For even as we go through this exercise, the victims continue to remain objects of these studies. Other experts – whether they are political committees, planning commissions, feminist intellectuals or women's groups – study these entities, and then plan about them. No different from the planning done for dalits, for tribals, and numerous other marginalized communities. And like numerous programs for these sections have been implemented, various programs continue to be made for women, and continue to be implemented.

One cannot honestly argue that these programs have been completely worthless. But they have failed to empower these communities to address their own needs.

Perhaps the most ridiculous (and certainly most disgusting) example of this was played out in the state legislative assembly of Maharashtra where legislators were putting together laws to protect the self esteem of women and prevent sexual exploitation of bar girls by using oppressive and abusive language^v against these same women these laws were supposed to empower.

More nuanced examples are provided by the diaries of the Chitrakoot Women's Collective edited by Professor Richa Nagar^{vi}. Women in this collective constantly point to the class hierarchies within the movements for women's rights and NGOs working for empowerment of women.

They ask quite honestly why it is the women from the cities who drive to their communities, write notes about them and even though they have never lived or experienced the lives of the rural women, the dalit women – the victimized women – feel perfectly to construct the reality of these victims, as it were, create their theories and present it to various audiences? Why are these women presented as the victims not invited to participate in the formation of knowledge about themselves,

the creation of their own realities?

An international funding agency was very excited about the work of this women's collective and decided to provide funds to take their work ahead; however, the funds for this work were to be allotted to a woman from an outside community – an expert! How much more Kafkaesque can this get?

In the absence of such participation, will there truly be solutions?

A few years ago, during a conversation with Mumbai Crime Branch chief Meera Borwankar, I was curious to find out what she felt might the role of the police be in crime prevention and gender empowerment. She felt that even though there is enough criticism of the program, one of the best programs has been provision of women's cells in Mumbai. There are cells present all over the city that are staffed constantly by policewomen and social workers where women may be able to present their complaints and file their cases in an environment that feels safer. This may not be a radical program but it certainly is significant – it has allowed greater ability for women in Mumbai to present their realities at times when they need help.

True programs for empowerment must create processes where those who are victims of oppression are not objects of programs designed for them but participants in the process – whatever their qualifications and expertise – with help from community resources as necessary. It is at this key criterion that most programs for women's empowerment have stumbled.

But some success stories exist – stories that give hope and teach us. One such story is that of a groups of women in Gujarat who were victims of the religious riots in 2002. A support group helped them form their collective – Himmat – and mentor them, but they decided how they would work, what activities they would pursue, etc. Over a time frame of 2 years, these women have been able to train themselves, build an economic initiative, run their activities and stand on their own. One of the mentors, Monica Wahi, says “In May, 2004 Himmat opened its own outlet in Paldi, Ahmedabad. Though it was an informal outlet & its awareness depended on word of mouth – it has done rather well since its opening.” The two mentors have now been able to move on to other things.

The biggest component of this program was participation; participation not in the form of participation in workshops or participation in a vaccination program but participation in defining their own realities, understanding their problems, and designing their solutions.

It is this component that we need to incorporate in more of our processes – processes of defining problems, building policies and running programs.

i Education trends in India: statistics (<http://www.thesouthasian.org/archives/000303.html#000303>)

ii Why Our Girls Do Not Go To School! (<http://www.thesouthasian.org/archives/000305.html#000305>)

iii The Case of The Missing Millions (<http://www.thesouthasian.org/archives/000210.html#000210>)

iv Gender Violence and Education of Girls (<http://www.thesouthasian.org/archives/000441.html#000441>)

v Maharashtra Legislators Abuse Women to Protect Them (<http://www.thesouthasian.org/archives/000418.html#000418>)

vi Limited Empowerment - Feminist Pedagogy In A Modernization Framework, Education Journal, pp57,

vii <http://www.edjournal.net/EdJournal.pdf>

viii Himmat in Gujarat (<http://www.thesouthasian.org/archives/000398.html#000398>)

Learning is not a race for information gathering, it is a journey of discovery.-Anon.

From Grass-Roots Knowledge To Advocacy

Valerie Tripp

[Ed. Ms. Valerie Tripp has been with Saathi since 2002 and coordinates administrative activities of the organization as well as lending support to several projects. She is part of the team working with the film "Devi" Abihyabai as an advocacy device. For more information about the advocacy campaign Saathi is undertaking through the film, "Devi" Abihyabai, please contact Ms. Tripp at 09820194853 or (22) 2300 9117. Email to info@saathi.org. For more information on the campaign itself, visit www.saathi.org]

Advocacy and service provision are necessary partners on the road to social development, being part of a circular spectrum ranging from service, to rights, to advocacy, and prevention. As much as experience in service provision plays a vital role in lending credence and rootedness to advocacy campaigns, so also do service-providers necessarily take on the role of advocates among their client groups if not among other assorted stakeholders.

Even with this recognition, the issue of advocacy can be polarizing. Advocacy is an intensive activity in itself – a whole new project. Once an organization has reached the stage where it truly understands the nuances of the issue it seeks to address, it may be faced with re-evaluating what it believes its role to be and the extent of that role. It also becomes difficult to free up manpower from the service provision in order to do justice to an advocacy campaign. For if we see service provision as an end result – a reactive measure, and advocacy as going to the source – a preventive measure, we see a gap that is bridged mostly with the knowledge both sides share. But the two are very different activities requiring specific skills and human resources.

However, advocacy is necessary even if it sometimes appears to lack the obvious urgency of service provision. Without it, we will continue to face the problems and difficulties that are part of present day society. A slow evolution could come on its own, but it is just that – slow. In the meantime, the suffering of our client groups persists. The issues so many of us in the development sector are addressing are stagnant in their improvement, and in some cases actually becoming more acute. Even as the need to intensify the effectiveness and reach of our service efforts grows, the question “when will this problem be over, just where is the proverbial light at the end of the tunnel?” is inescapable.

Take for instance a project working with adolescent girls who have run away from home or find themselves homeless involuntarily. After several years of working on the service side, contacting the girls upon arrival in Mumbai and providing shelter and activities for them, the story of why they are leaving is becoming clear. Also more evident now are the difficulties they face if they are repatriated or return home. This becomes the knowledge source to build an effective advocacy campaign to take back to the villages and cities from which they left. The circumstances that led to these girls leaving home will not be mitigated until this understanding finds its way back to the source of the problem. So much of what we have learned in our work with the girls is that many of the catalysts for running away (or abandonment) are avoidable. The challenges they face upon returning could be significantly reduced. But the resources required for the task of just working with the girls who are away from home are so demanding that the added complexity of undertaking such a massive awareness campaign can seem altogether overwhelming.

The question is how to transport that knowledge the grass roots workers hold across such vast geographic regions, socio-economic lines, and sub-cultures, and in a way that captures some of the issues and inspires the audience to listen.

One answer could be the media of cinema. Every now and then, a piece of cinema is created that is informative, inspiring, and captures a thought beautifully without requiring a loudspeaker or a flourish of pamphlets. In this case, it is a docu-drama about the historical figure, “Devi” Ahilyabai Holkar, who ruled the Malwa State in the 1700’s. It is the story of a woman who overcame the challenge of child marriage and the threat of sati, to be recognized for her intelligence and critical thinking abilities, the ability to manage state finances to bring the kingdom to usher in a prosperous age, and a skill to keep peace during a tumultuous time. Many issues she faced 250 years ago are still the same issues civil society is working to change. The fact that these issues jump off the screen from a movie created for its artistic value and not with the foundational thought of an advocacy campaign, makes it that much more effective. It carries none of the heaviness associated with advocacy, while still inspiring a view of an alternative tomorrow.

A campaign built on a piece of such popular media could allow for the dissemination of the message to a wide audience, and allow for an array of networks to tap into it. It recognizes the basic humanity inherent in all of us, it raises issues of women’s empowerment, and it whispers the promise of what we could build through cooperation between the sexes and the socio-economic classes. Organizations working with related issues can tap into a networked campaign, giving voice to to multiple causes all with the same underlying melody – empowerment of the person and hence the community. This type of collective effort also solves part of the problem of manpower availability across geographic regions. Rather than

one organization bearing the full brunt of the efforts, many share in the responsibility and many share in the rewards – being part of a campaign that has the potential to effect change.

As more and more of the development sector embarks on the path of information and knowledge sharing (advocacy), we must learn from the great leaders of the past – that it takes many to reach the critical mass of evolution of thought. Through our networks and communication and joining hands around issues, we can together do more than any one of us can.

Right To Information

Vishal Kudchadkar

[Ed. Right to Information (RTI) can be a useful tool in getting to relevant information and through the process holding individuals accountable. RTI might be useful in obtaining critical information such as the follow up done in a specific legal case, how money set aside for a specific purpose, such as rehabilitation of victims, has been spent, the number of traffickers brought to justice, the implementation status of a specific policy and so on. Local RTI organizations and movements would be able to guide your organization through the process. Some of such organizations are listed at the end of the article.. Vishal Kudchadkar is an active member of the Los Angeles chapter of Asha for Education.]

Nannu, a daily wage earner from Welcome Mazdoor Colony, a slum habitation in East Delhi, had lost his ration card and applied for a duplicate one in January 2004. He made several rounds of the local Food & Civil Supplies office for the next three months. But the clerks and officials would not even look at him, leave alone do his job or bother to tell him the status of his application. Ultimately, he filed an RTI asking for the daily progress made on his application, names of the officials who were supposed to act on his application and what action would be taken against these officials. Within a week of filing application under Right to Information Act, he was visited by an inspector from the Food Department, who informed him that the card had been made and he could collect it from the office. When Nannu went to collect his card next day, he was given a very warm treatment by the Food & Supply Officer (FSO), who is the head of a Circle. The FSO offered him tea and requested him to withdraw his application under Right to Information, since his work had already been done. Mr Ashok Gupta with a similar application managed to get a new electricity connection from the Delhi Vidyut Board without paying a bribe. There have been many more success stories of individuals using the RTI to demand daily status of their case and names of officials involved at each stage.

Organized efforts by several NGOs like Parivartan in the use of RTI have yielded rich dividends. Forcing absent sweepers to report to duty and do their job in slum habitations of East Delhi, getting street lights repaired and even shutting down a polluting illegal plastic recycling factory are few of their achievements. They even managed to get a sewer system (laid but not operational for 20 years) in Sundernagari up and running with the use of RTI!

Though 9 states in India have had the RTI Act, it has been effective only in Delhi and Maharashtra (and, to some extent, Rajasthan). While not discounting the diligent and persevering work by the NGOs and RTI users and activists of Delhi and Maharashtra, the success has been largely due to the penalty clause [which levies a fine on the official who did not provide information or provided false information] that compelled the officials to fall in line. The National RTI Act of 2005 has a penalty clause and applies to all the states (except Jammu & Kashmir) and hence the Delhi and Maharashtra success stories can be emulated across the country.

The requisition should be addressed to the Public Information Officer (PIO) of the public authority from which you are demanding information. It is required that the PIO must provide the information requested within 30 days of receiving the application. Appeals can be made to the Appellant Authority and then the Information Commission against PIOs not providing correct and complete information. Each public authority must appoint a PIO by October 12th 2005. Public authority includes any department of the central or state government, organizations and institutions (including NGOs) that are established, constituted, owned, controlled or substantially financed, directly or indirectly by the state or central government.

Some sites that provide important information include:

- * National Campaign for Peoples Right To Information (NCPRI) <http://www.righttoinformation.info>
- * Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) <http://www.humanrightsinitiative.org/programs/ai/rti/rti.htm>
- * Parivartan <http://www.parivartan.com/rti/>
- * Nagrik Chetna Manch <http://www.nagrikchetna.org>
- * Mahadhikar <http://www.mahadhikar.org>
- * Satark Nagrik Sanghatan <http://www.snsindia.org/>
- * Action for Good Governance and Networking in India <http://www.agnimumbai.org/rtiindex.asp>

ADDRESS LIST

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Kuvempu Trust		Kuvempu Trust, Kuvempu Mane, Opp. Chitradurga Gramin Bank, Shivaganga Post, Holalkere Taluk, Chitradurga District, Karnataka - 577 526
NEED		Anil Singh NEED 39 Neel Vihar; Near 14-Sector Power House; Indira Nagar; Lucknow-226 016 (U.P.).
NGO Forum for Combating Sexual Exploitation		NGO Forum for Combating Sexual Exploitation (c/o Orissa State Volunteers and Social Workers Association) 49, Dharma Vihar Bhubaneswar 751030 Orissa
Social Action & Re- search Center - SARC		147, Vindhyavasini Colony, Orderly Bazar, Varanasi, U.P. Phone No: 0542-3959912
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NOTES

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Tum Bhi

By Netika Raval

aaj, hazaroN log utheNge nayi shuruuat karne – kya tum nahiN?

aaj, hazaroN log apne kal ko peechhe chod, naye din ka swagat karenge – kya tum nahiN?

aaj, hazaroN log apni kayi ko apni amaanat samajhkar sajayeNge, apne liye – kya tum nahiN?

aaj, hazaron log apni dimagi seema par kar, aantarik shakti ka swagat karenge – kya tum nahiN?

aaj, hazaroN log samaj ke diyehue khookhli buniyaad ko ukhadkar, apne astitva ki buniyaad khadi karenge – kya tum nahiN?

aaj, hazaroN log swabhiman se jeena ka ek nirmay leNge, kya tum nahiN?

aaj, hazaroN log apni zindagi apne haath mein leNge – kya tum nahiN?

aaj hazaroN log apni zindagi mein hissa lene ek naya kadamb uthaeNge – kya tum nahiN?

HaaN – tum bhi!