SNDT Women's University, Mumbai

From the Selected Works of Professor Vibhuti Patel

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NAWO Violence against Women and girls 25-26 March 2017

Professor Vibhuti Patel

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State level Consultation on Violence against women and girls in Odisha

ORGANISED BY NAWO, ODISHA IN COLLABORATION WITH ODISHA
STATE COMMISSION FOR WOMEN

25TH AND 26TH MARCH 2017
HOTEL SURYANSH, BHUBANESWAR,
Structure of the Report

This report seeks to capture the essence of the two day consultation on Violence against women and Girls in Odisha. It begins with brief background information on crime against women situation in Odisha. The report then records the discussions and presentations held in the consultation on Domestic Violence, Witch hunting and Child marriage, problems in implementation of law and the ideas and suggestions to meet the challenges.

Background:

As per report the National Crime Record Bureau (2016), Odisha has recorded the maximum number of crimes against women in 2015 i.e. 17,144 cases, after Delhi, Assam and Telengana, while the number of such cases registered in the state in the previous year stood way below at 14,606. The number of cases of rape, considered one of the worst violent forms of crime, increased to 2,251 in the state in 2015 from 1,978 in 2014. Odisha in 2015 also registered 6,499 cases of assault on women with intent of outraging modesty, 356 dowry death cases, 886 sexual harassment cases, 2,587 cases of kidnapping and abduction of women and 225 cases of stalking, said the NCRB report. Ironically, “while six rape cases are reported every day, there are amazingly only six convictions in a year. It means the rate of conviction is abysmally lower than the rate of crime. Crimes like dowry, torture have become so common that it has almost become acceptable .The conviction rate of any crime against women is abysmally low.

On the outset of these increasing rates of crime against women a two day state level consultation on Violence against women and girls was organized by NAWO, Odisha chapter in collaboration with Odisha State Commission for Women on 25th and 26th March 2017 at Hotel Suryansh, Bhubaneswar. The consultation intended to serve as a common platform to discuss, share ideas among the various stakeholders to raise the issue across the state and work in solidarity to curb violence against women and girls.

The consultation focussed on panel discussions on the following topics:

1. Witch hunting
2. Domestic Violence
3. Child Early and Forced Marriage

Day I

SESSION I

The program started with the introduction and context setting by Ms. Lalita Missal, State Coordinator, NAWO. She welcomed all the participants and shared briefly the journey of
NAWO in Odisha since its inception. Speaking on the objectives and activities of NAWO, Odisha, she said that NAWO together with all its networks has worked hard to build a broad platform from which meaningful interventions can be made to effect policy changes for women’s development. One such evident example is the contribution of NAWO and its partners in drafting the National Policy for Women. Speaking on the success of the Resource Centre at Bhubaneswar which was established on 2003, she said that with the aid of the Centre, now many women are able to get access to their rights and entitlements meant for them.

She further added that NAWO Odisha chapter works closely with women from vulnerable groups and communities and has touched upon all aspects of their lives, primarily food security, livelihood, violence and other aspects. But in spite of all the efforts by different CSOs and movements, the situation of women has not changed much. She said that only five percent of women are able to avail the entitlements and opportunities while there are thousands and thousands of women who are not even getting basic facilities specifically those belonging to Dalit and Adivashi communities.

While sharing the objective of the consultation, she said that there has been a marked increase in the incidents of the atrocities against women over the past few years. Violence has changed its colour because of the huge division and fragmentation in the society. Therefore to find out how far we are successful in addressing the complex issues and what needs to be done further, this consultation will be very constructive and fruitful, she said.

Having said this she welcomed on the stage the Guests of Honour, Professor Vibhuti Patel, Head of the Department, Economics, SNDT Women’s University, Smt. Sashiprava Bindhani, Commissioner, State Information Commission, Bhubaneswar, Ms. Rajni Menon, Regional Coordinator, Gender, Oxfam, India and Shri Akshay Biswal, Regional Manager, Oxfam, India. She then invited the guests to inaugurate the program by lightening the lamp.

On the occasion Professor ,Vibhuti Patel, Smt. Sashiprava Bindhani, Ms. Rajni Menon, and Shri Akshay Biswal, and Ms. Lalita Missal lighted the lamp to inaugurate the event.
Then Ms. Lalita Missal welcomed the Guests of Honour Mr. Akshay Biswal and Ms. Rajni Menon, Oxfam to address the house.

**Address by Guests of Honour Mr. Akshay Biswal and Ms. Rajni Menon, Oxfam**

**Mr. Akshay Biswal**, Regional Manager, Oxfam observed that regardless of many efforts from everyone one of us to stop violence against women not much change is seen in the status of women. Today also we see widespread violence against women and girls. He pointed out that there may be various reasons behind the rising violence and suggested self introspection to bring in change in oneself first before changing others. He urged the house to think of new ideas to do something new to attract the attention of others to influence change. He said in today’s world it is very unfortunate that intolerance, division and fragmentation of society in each and every field. This has hampered building of new ideas and strategies, introspection and motivation to bring change in the world to a large extent. He also noted that one of the biggest challenges society is facing is the communication gap between the communities/CSOs and the implementing organisations.

He asked everyone to try to become a role model to impact change and to re-think upon the techniques and strategies which they are using since years which need to be changed to influence the society. He also emphasised that NAWO’S main role should be not only influence policy changes but also to influence work strategy, techniques and performance. Though he agreed that many changes in the situation of women have taken place since last twenty years like the participation of women at Panchayat level, success rate in girl child education but at other spheres like employment and policy implementation there is no visible change. He recommended on the need to work together with all the stake holders.

“One needs to identify and work together with those forces who strive to bring change in the situation of women. Those who are not working for impacting change or those who do not support the cause should also be roped in and brought into the system. Engaging with different types of stake holders will only pave way to substantial change” he added.

Speaking on the occasion, **Ms. Rajini Menon**, Oxfam India spoke about the campaign of Oxfam on ending violence against women involving 30 countries. She spoke that wider discussions on the opportunities and strengths and the way forward took place on this global concern under the campaign. She further added that Violence against Women is a major concern across the globe and maximum of opportunities and schemes do not reach women. Arguing on this context she said that problems related to Domestic Violence and Child Marriage are very common in South Asia. She added that the instances of Domestic Violence are very similar all over South Asia and only a voice raised together by each and every stakeholder can bring about change in the situation of women. She further explained that the budget allocation to fight the various forms of violence against women is inadequate. For Domestic violence specifically, it has reduced from sixty crores to zero over the years. She raised a concern over the growing division and fragmentation in the society owing to various reasons which affects the situation of women. She claimed that solidarity and unity regardless of any hurdles is vital to bring change in the situation.
Key Note address on Violence Against Women and Girls in India, present situation, response of the state and Budget implications- By Professor Vibhuti Patel, SNDT Women’s University, Mumbai

(Dr. Vibhuti Patel is professor and head of the University Department of Economics and Director, Department of Post Graduate Studies and Research of SNDT Women’s University, Mumbai. She is a member of Expert Committee on School of Gandhian Thoughts, Board member of School of Extension & Development Studies. She has made rich contributions in Women’s Studies and Gender Economics. Her articles and research papers have appeared in several Indian and foreign languages in the national & international scholarly journals.)

Speaking on violence against women and girls, Professor Vibhuti Patel, in her key note address said that Gender based violence is the manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of the full advancement of women. She added that it is an obstacle to the achievement of equality, development and peace.

Professor. Patel expressed her concern on Gender based violence which results in immediate costs for household and communities. At the household level, it often results in out of pocket expenditure to access health services, the police, courts, informal resolution bodies and transport cost. Incidents of violence also drain household incomes as women and men often miss paid work and household work is neglected. This drain on the resources of poor households has a direct impact on malnutrition and morbidity. These costs are mirrored at the community and national levels, she added.
She pointed out that Violence leads to lower productivity, absenteeism and often lower earnings by survivors of violence and in turn to a further decline in The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) through multiplier effects and the immediate consequences of violence can constitute a major economic leakage.

She added that though Indian Government has expressed its commitment to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (2000-2015) and Sustainable Development goals (2015 -2030) but Gender based Violence is one of the major hurdles to attain the MDGs and SDGs. Gender based violence and its consequences if not addressed specifically in the National plans or Poverty Reduction Strategy Plans, can undermine the achievements of the MDGs, she said.

Expressing her concern she spoke that Goal 1 – Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger is related to gender based violence. The GBV can increase levels of hunger and child malnutrition two important indicators for the first MDG GOAL. With regard to Goal 2 –(Achieving universal access to education ) she argued that progress in education, particularly girls’ enrolment and retention in schools, is clearly constricted by the high prevalence of GBV within schools. Undoubtedly addressing Gender Based Violence is central to realising Goal 3 i.e. Empowerment of Women, She said.

1. No Poverty
2. Zero Hunger
3. Good Health and Well-being
4. Quality Education
5. Gender Equality
6. Clean Water and Sanitation
7. Affordable and Clean Energy
8. Decent work and Economic Growth
9. Industry and Infrastructure
10. Reduced Inequalities

While striving to achieve above SDGs women have

**NFHS-III interviewed 1.25 lakh women in 28 states and the national capital, during 2005-06, found that just over a third of women who had been married at any point in their lives said they had been pushed, slapped, shaken or otherwise attacked by their husbands at least once.**

**According to the figures, 62% experienced physical or sexual violence within the first two years of marriage, while 32% experienced violence in the first Five years.**

She added that Gender Based Violence (GBV) has adverse impact on child mortality and maternal health and intimate partner violence during pregnancy result in increased infant and
foetal deaths. GVB also leads to increased morbidity as abuse is linked to a range of gynaecological problems, chronic pain and psychological distress. GVB is widely accepted as a key risk factor for HIV and AIDS which undermines Goal 6 (Combat HIV and AIDS) of the MDG.

Women’s lack of participation due to violence can limit the success of natural resource management and environmental sustainability programmers which is again a barrier in ensuring environment sustainability (Goal 7). She added that due to increased violence the participation of women in development efforts is very low which will have adverse impact on Goal 8.( Developing a Global Partnership for development) The loss of valuable input from women negates the very possibility of realising the rights based development. She suggested that it is very necessary to pay importance to the gender norms and the dynamics of decision making with households and communities.

Speaking on SDGs and the undermining impact of GBV, Professor Patel said that though goal 5 is the stand alone goal for gender equality, but all these goals can only be achieved if women are completely integrated in each and every goal. She suggested that providing women and girls with equal access to education, health care, decent work, and representation in political and economic decision-making processes will fuel sustainable economies and benefit societies and humanity at large.

She then spoke at large on the Global scenario of Gender based Violence and Gender Budgeting. She informed the participants that at the national level many governments, including the Government of India, have enacted legislation criminalizing GBV. But along with the government local interventions are also crucial for delivering real change. She stressed on the need of efforts across communities to include not only the provision of institutional support but also financial allocations. She also emphasized on giving importance to integrating strategies to respond to the issue of GBV within development interventions and women’s group advocating for and/or implementing GBV responses, which is rarely paid any attention.

She then explained the discourse on Gender Budgeting with regard to GBV which revolved around -

- Declining child Sex Ratio
- Forced and child Marriages
- Witch hunting
- Single Women, Women-headed Households:
- Women Survivors of Violence
- Differently Abled Women
- Self Help Groups
- Witch Hunting, Honour Crimes Acts
- Implementation of legislations
- Women from Minority Communities

She stressed that the government must provide the details of outcome budget/actual expenditures under different heads- counseling, food, shelter, medical checkup, medicine, clothes, education/vocational training. “It is a common trend that if there is gross underutilization of allocated funds in the current year, in the next year the fund-allocation gets reduced which is very unfortunate”, she added.
Financial Allocation for women and children in the Union Budget 2017-18

- Mahila Shakti Kendra in villages 500 crores
- Maternity Benefits @ Rs. 6000 to women undergoing institutional deliveries
- PM Gram Awas Yojana-title in the name of woman
- MG NAREGA-Rs. 48000 crores, Women- 55%
- MWCD-27 % increase, Rs. 22095 crores
- Rural sanitation 42 % increase on 2014 & 60 % increase in 2017-18
- Adhar based smart cards for senior citizens
- PM Mudra Yojana 2.44 lakh crores
- Stand up India for women entrepreneurs
- SWAYAM platform for digital learning-students, girls
- Model shops & Establishment Act
- PM Kaushalya Kendra in 600 districts
- Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao- Rs. 200 crores

- Creche (Rs. 200 crores),
- Child Protection (Rs. 248 Crores),
- Child Labour (Rs. 2 crores),
- Anganwadi (Rs. 15245.19 crores),
- National Nutrition Mission (Rs. 1500 crores),
- Maternity Benefits (Rs. 2700 crores)
- Adolescent Girls (Rs. 460 crores)
- National Mission for Empowerment of Women Rs. 70 crores
- One Stop Crisis Centre Rs. 90 crores
- STEP for skill training Rs. 40 crores
- Swadhar Rs. 100 crores
- Working Women’s Hostel Rs. 50 crores

Speaking on the financial allocation for women and children she pointed out that there should be an increase in expenditure on child related schemes and children may be treated as a separate category. She further claimed that under category of 100% allocation for women, institutional support for women survivors of violence need major attention, but so far not much has been done regarding Scheme for Relief and Rehabilitation of Victims of Sexual Assault promised by the Five Year Plans. She also expressed the anguish of women’s groups who complain that there is no separate allocation for Implementation of Domestic Violence Act, 2005.
She also raised the concern that only 8-10 states are taking advantage of financial allocation for women/girls and no state has provided women’s component in the funds earmarked for the local self-government bodies at village, block and district levels.

Speaking on the **Operationalisation of Nirbhaya Fund**, which was introduced in the Union Budget 2013-14, for the safety and security of women, she said amounts utilised under the Nirbhaya Fund lacks clarity.

There is marked under utilisation of the Fund which indicates the lack of priority towards the issue of women’s safety and security. She also demanded that the government must make information on the allocations and utilisation of interventions under the Fund available in the public domain.

Professor Patel also laid emphasis on studies to highlight the gap between plan outlay and outcome, local and global implications of pro-poor and pro-women budgeting, alternative macro scenarios emerging out of alternative budgets and inter-linkages between gender-sensitive budgeting and women’s empowerment and also spoke on the urgent need to sensitise economists about visibility of women in statistics and indicators by holding training workshop

Ms. Lalita Missal, NAWO supported the concerns raised by Professor Patel and said that Crimes against women and girls have increased significantly over the decades, sadly with very low conviction rates. She added that no doubt we have numerous laws in place but if the budget allocation is not specified for each category of violence funds are of no use. Expressing her concern she said that for more than 70-80% types of violence against women there is no allocation of funds from the centre as well as state.

Ms. Missal then invited Smt. Shashiprava Bindhani, Commissioner, State Information Commission to address the house. She also appreciated the role of Smt. Shashi Bindhani and Advocate Sujata Jena for their role in moving the High Court of Odisha towards bringing out the law to address Witch Hunting in Odisha which is named **Odisha Prevention of Witch-hunting Act 2013**.

**Address by Chief Guest – Smt. Shashiprava Bindhani, Commissioner, State Information Commission**

Addressing the participants Smt. Shashiprava Bindhani said that Odisha continues to remain second after Jharkhand, in terms of registering murders arising from witchcraft in the country for the past few years. This is despite the promulgation of Odisha Prevention of Witch Hunting Act in 2013. The common perception is that witch-hunting is only prevalent in the tribal-dominated districts of Mayurbhanj, Koraput, Ganjam, Sundargarh, Malkanagiri and Keonjhar but in reality it has nothing to do with its geographic location, she added. Witch-hunts have also been reported from the coastal districts of Orissa, she said. She
lamented the fact that despite the existence of such provisions, this form of violence still exists in the society and is supported by educated masses as well. Cases from coastal areas have also been increasing. She also clarified that women of any category can be a victim of such form of violence. She pointed out most often it has been seen that these are community sanctioned violence specifically targeted at women esp. single and/or lower caste women, and often not having any family and social support. She cited example of a girl from a well to do family who was targeted by her in-laws just because she resisted against control and autonomy.

She provided the house with few more evidences in terms of case studies to substantiate her stand. Speaking on the Odisha Prevention Of Witch-Hunting Act, 2013 she said that it is a stringent law to prevent the crime and it is after the law is passed that around 168 cases have been reported with the police. Referring to various cases of superstition in Odisha, particularly the recent Jharsunguda case where a girl was hacked to death because of superstition, she said that case analysis is very important to understand the varied reasons and root causes and each case may differ from the other. She pointed out that though it is generally believed to be based on superstition, an in-depth understanding on the subject suggests that there is something beyond blind belief that leads to this act of violence.

Speaking about her association with NAWO, she said that NAWO and all other organisations had commendable contributions in bringing in the law against witch-hunting in Odisha. She then briefly elaborated the history of the entire course of action in bringing the law in 2013. Odisha became the fourth state after Bihar, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand to have this special legislation against the practice of witch hunting.

She also explained the house the impacts of violence against women. She said that violence not only affects the women but also the entire family and community, socially and economically. She argued that the existing legislations on women and Child development have many serious limitations and one need to question those limitations. She also emphasised on a systematic intervention of cases. She added that we live in a society without supportive environment and most of the times the victims hesitate to register cases due to insecurity and absence of support and cooperation. She stressed on building a supportive environment so that maximum of cases can be taken forward and justice delivered.
Ms. Bindhani said that self realisation is the key to change. “We need to change the mindset of the people starting from ourselves to address the issue more seriously” she added. A national level agitation is the need of the hour to protest all forms of violence against women. She finally thanked NAWO and Oxfam for organising such consultation to discuss the vital issues of violence.

The presentation was followed by beautiful songs in Marathi and Odia language, sung by Professor Patel and Smt. Pramila Swain, Convener, NAWO on Freedom of Women.

Ms. Lalita Missal gave a brief summary of all the presentations to the house and again stressed on the need to understand the magnitude of the issues and strategising the way forward with as many as new and old stake holders. She then thanked the panellists on the stage.

SESSION II

The second session was chaired by Ms. Bishakha Bhanja, Regional Manager Water Aid and Core Committee member, NAWO and the panelists were Ms. Sujata Jena, Advocate Odisha High Court, Miss Shalini, Lokswar, Jharkhand and Miss Shipra Devi from Nivedita Foundation, Chhattisgarh. The topic of presentation was- Witch Hunting: Magnitude, State response and Legal frame work.

Chairing the session Ms. Bishakha Bhanja, said gender based violence is the manifestation of power and patriarchy. She wondered if woman is considered to have so much power then ideally men should be scared of her but they torture and kill her. She added that more than 100 cases have been registered as per media reports in Odisha between 2014-16 and there may be much more underreported cases. Speaking on the occasion she said violence against women is always justified in the form of punishment which is very disturbing.

She then welcomed the Panellists on the dais to present their views and concerns on the issue of Witch hunting.

a) Shalini from Lokswar, Jharkhand spoke on the distressing situation of women. She said that right from history of Indian civilization to the present stage, the condition of women is very upsetting. She pointed out that women and children are the soft targets of power and each and every time their rights are violated as a manifestation of power and patriarchy. Women face violence directly or indirectly at every stage of their lives. A woman/girl faces violation of their rights from the family to other corners of society. They are always suppressed in establishing their rights in the name of tradition, culture and superstition. Speaking about the violence against women, Ms. Shalini also said that the widespread prevalence of gender discrimination; old and new forms of cultural control and the complexity of other underlying socio economic factors combine to impact adversely on women exercising her rights.
She further added that Jharkhand is horribly affected with issues trafficking, displacement, prostitution, murder and unemployment and mostly the innocent Adivashis girls are the victims of such crimes. Though there are some good laws for the adivashis like the Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act 1996 and the Forests Rights Act 2005, which uplifts decentralisation of power and dignity, in reality the situation is not improved in any sphere. There are hundreds of unreported incidents where "witches" are harassed, ostracized, banished from their villages, tonsured, physically tortured and even forced to eat animal and human excreta. The assailants are usually relatives or neighbours of the victim.

There have been cases where the entire village or the panchayat ganged up against a suspected witch. Witch branding is often committed by men on women, and single women are most vulnerable to this. In most of the cases the cases are not limited to superstition. Sometimes it is the fear in the communities that collective ownership of land may deprive men from ownership of land. She also said, Witchcraft is mainly used as a conspiracy for various self interests, including land grab and sexual rejection, personal vendetta, settle a land or property dispute especially from lower caste. Denial of Education and the men gaining more political and economic power also is an important factor escalating violence.

She also provided the house with some surprising statistics on witch hunting. She said that under the Jharkhand Police 3300 cases were registered in the last five years and as per media sources more than 500 women were murdered in 2014. As per the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) records a total of 1263 women were murdered in the name of witch-hunting in Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh alone from 2001-2008. She further informed the house that during the past 15 years 2500 women were murdered in Bihar as a result of which the legislation against witch-hunting was passed in the year 1999.

She also came out with some of the suggestions to battle the evil practice like- Equal opportunities in education, employment, sexual freedom, collective ownership and distribution of natural resources, equal political and economic power, representation and reservations in political ownership, change in mindsets and traditional practices

Bishakha Bhanja added that media also plays a crucial role in propagating witchcraft, which needs quick addressal. Pointing at the television soaps shown on prime time television and the movies made by some of the celebrated Directors on witch hunting and superstition, she
said that these shows are working as catalyst in strengthening the age old belief that ‘witches’, who are often women, exist.

b) Ms. Shipra Devi from Nivedita Foundation, Chhattisgarh pointed out that Witch hunting is an acute violation of women rights and manifestation of patriarchy and power in the society and mostly single women and widows are the targets of witch-hunting. She said that some of the commonly found treatments include: identified woman is stripped naked, paraded around the villages, hair burnt off or heads tonsured, faces blackened, noses cut off, teeth pulled out (in order to ‘defang’ them), eyes gouged out, whipped / branded, gang-raped, forced to eat human faeces or cow dung, killed by hanging, hacking, lynching or burying alive.

She went on to point out that in some states laws have been framed to confront the challenges relating to Witch Hunting but evidences show that these laws have not been effective in addressing this issue. Bringing out the instance of Jharkhand, she said that the state is known to have the maximum number of deaths related to Witch Hunt. She also expressed her frustration saying it is near impossible to legally address an issue which gets sanction from the family and society at large since finding a witness as evidence in the court for the crime becomes difficult.

Speaking on the status of witchcraft in Chattisgarh she said that from 2001 to 2014 a total 1268 cases were registered under the prevention of Witchcraft Act, out of which 210 cases were that of murder, 15 cases of suicide due to extreme torture and harassment, and 222 cases of physical and mental torture. She also suggested some of the strong action that needs to be carried out to fight the battle. She stressed on the strengthening the Chhattisgarh Witchcraft Atrocities (Prevention) Act 2005, sensitisation and awareness programmes on the Act, mostly among youths, training and orientation of the duty bearers, promoting rational and scientific education in educational institutions. She also spoke in details on the Chhattisgarh Witchcraft Atrocities (Prevention) Act 2005 and the various categories of punishment under the Act.

c) Ms. Sujata Jena, Advocate and human rights activist, who had fought and won the Public Interest Litigation filed by the petitioner Ms. Shashiprava Bindhani in the Odisha High Court, presented the
background and response of the court on the PIL. She briefed the participants about the present status of the legal provisions available to confront this violence against women such as in Indian Penal Code, Criminal Procedure Code, The Odisha Prevention Of Witch-Hunting Act, 2013. She also spelt out the provisions and punishments available in the IPC and State Laws in great details for the benefit of the house. She also provided the house with few evidences in terms of case studies to substantiate her stand.

Bishaka Bhanja concluding the panel discussion pointed out that our mainstream thought process is ruled by patriarchal ideology. The attitude of the educated mass including the lawyers, media persons and other relevant duty bearers is a mere reflection of the existing belief system. The patriarchal attitude is the main obstacle that restricts us to come forward with the issue.

She also emphasised on seeing things in a holistic manner and work against the manifestations of power and patriarchy. She argued that everyone at each district should challenge these power structures. One should also question the state on the percentage of funds allocation for implementing the laws. She noted two take away from the session- i) regular discussion at the district level on how to challenge the structure and ii) lodging complaints against media (print and electronic) promoting violence against women, witchcraft and superstition.

After the presentations the house was open to share their experiences on Witch Hunting and they came out with several instances where Witch Hunting is being practiced in different forms. The participants also came out with certain suggestions which are added in the way forward section of the report.

LUNCH BREAK
SESSION III

Presentations by Ms. Namita Palo Gender consultant, SRCW, ISD Bhubaneswar, ISWO Dhenkanal, Farr, Kalahandi, Ms. Rajni Menon, Oxfam, Delhi

The house resumed after lunch. The session intended to look at the various legal frameworks to this issue of Domestic Violence, States’ response to tackle the crime and the experience of Support Centres. The post lunch session was chaired by Miss Snehanjali Mohanty, Member Odisha State Commission for Women. She welcomed all the panellists on the dais and requested them to put their views and presentations on Domestic Violence.

First she invited Ms. Namita Palo Gender consultant, State Resource Centre for Women (Women and Child Development Department, Government of Odisha) to provide the house with the state perspective on Domestic Violence, Incidence and response and implementation of the PWDV Act 2005.


a) Ms. Namita Palo speaking on the topic Implementation of Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005 in the state of Odisha said that the State Resource Centre for Women (Women and Child Development Department, SRCW) started its implementation work with the budgetary allocation from the financial year 2010-12 and both state and district level programmes are funded by this. Programme Officers of ICDS work as Protection Officers and Swadhar & Ujjawala Homes & Family Counseling Centres are declared as Service Providers as per the provisions in the The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005. She further added that year-wise data compilations on Domestic Incident Reports (DIRs) by the Pos are regularly done by the Resource centre. Later she also showed the house the data sheet of the Domestic Incident Reports filed with the POs for the year 2016 and pointed out 2016 marked heavy case registration.

With regard to training programmes she spoke at length about the various training programmes that the government of Odisha provides to the stake holders like judges, police, counselors protection officers and others. Then she threw light on the various shelter homes which are declared as service providers.

Main features of Shelter Homes in ODISHA

- All Swadhar, Ujjawala Home and FCCs are declared as Service Providers
- Under Swadhar Greh scheme, Govt will come up with notification of Shelter Home depending on the size of the District-In Process.
- Licensing under ITPA Act (Section -21) has been given to 71 Organisations till now
- Ranking of the Shelter Homes are under process basing on the performance
Adding to this she informed the house that the SRCWs work together with other government organizations and non-governmental organizations for larger outreach of their programmes. “We are working together with Doordarshan and All India Radio and recently they have launched the Bell Bajao Campaign which has received wide appreciation. The Video spots, jingles are disseminated in different TV and radio channels and in different exhibitions at state and district level” she informed.

Then she provided a detail account of the number of Mahila Surakshya Kantha containing relevant laws/provisions protecting girls and women from violence and promoting their rights in all the 30 districts of Odisha.

Sample of Mahila Surakshita Kantha developed by W &CD Deptt. Government of Odisha

Ms. Palo also informed the house on the different Information Education and Communication (IEC) materials like Handbook, FAQs, and Leaflets & Resource Books, Status report, prepared by the Resource Centre. Finally she also informed the house about some of the new initiatives by the GRCW to get more active in addressing the issues of women by Tagging the Protection Officers to One Stop Centres (presently it is active in Capital Hospital, Bhubaneswar) as well as with the Women Helpline (181)
Ms. Snehanjali Mohanty, member OSCW questioned the SRCW members to know about the number of calls received through the helpline and at the One Stop Centre. A member of the SRCW responded that on a daily basis they receive 200 calls on an average and till now more than 7000 calls from women in distressed have been received. She also said that about 3000 calls were left unanswered because of inadequate centre infrastructure and other reasons.

b) Miss Bina Mallick, ISD: Women Support Centres at Kandhamal, Cuttack and Bhubaneswar- Experience sharing.

Sharing her experience on the Women support centres, Ms. Bina Mallick from ISD spoke on the history and establishment of the centres at Kandhamal, Bhubaneswar and Cuttack. She also highlighted the main services provided by the Support centres to the women facing any kind of violence. The participants also came to know about the structure and the kind of help the support centres are receiving from the police and the local administration through her presentation. The police stations have also provided them with space to run their office at the police stations and the local administration recognises the centres. Each staff of the centres is also given Identity cards.

Given below is the information on the number of cases registered in the three support centres run by ISD:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Centre</th>
<th>No. of Cases Registered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kandhamal</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhubaneswar</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuttack</td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

She argued that 77% of cases registered in Bhubaneswar and Cuttack Support Centres are that of Domestic Violence while the rest 23% of cases were that of sexual harassment at workplace, stalking, cases of intimate relationship, false promise of marriage and cyber crimes.

In Kandhamal around 73 % of cases registered were of Domestic Violence but apart from that 17% cases registered are crimes related to Bigamy, she observed.
She further added that the support centres were also successful in resolving the cases by counselling and mutual reconciliation. Till now 78 in Kandhamal, 165 in Bhubaneswar and 189 cases in Cuttack have been resolved by the centres through reconciliation. Cuttack recorded highest number of case disposal reconciliation as the centre presence inside the Police Station itself. Till now 40 DIRs have been referred to the Protection Officers (POs) from these three regions. Speaking on the challenges the Support centres face in Bhubaneswar she said referring cases to Protection Officers in Bhubaneswar region is difficult as the PO lives in Khurda and regular follow-up with the PO gets affected thus. She also pointed out that in most of the times the POs are not aware of the cases themselves as a result of overburdening of duties and lack of communication. Speaking on case referrals she said most of the cases that come to the Cuttack - Bhubaneswar support centres are referred by Police for counselling as per the strict instruction given by the Cuttack- Bhubaneswar Commissioner. Miss. Mallick also informed the house about the livelihood support given to the victims of violence. Women are trained in courses like beauty, nursing, small shops etc to make them self dependent and companies like VLCC and medical centres like Susrusa Nursing homes etc are supporting them in this regard. The support centres also conduct regular interface with Police for case handling and they have also come out with developing documentaries on violence against women for creating awareness among the civil society.

c) Bhanumati Pani, Indira Social welfare organization (ISWO) : Women Support Centre at Dhenkanal: Experience Sharing

Speaking on the support center in Dhenkanal, Bhanumati Pani from ISWO said that the Support Centre works for distressed women in Dhenkanal with an objective to build a violence free society. Established in 2007 in Dhenkanal it has two full time social workers and a home guard provided by the Dhenkanal Police. It is only after they received training on Counselling in 2009, that they started working in a systematic way.

Ms.Pani then briefed the house with the various kinds of activities taken up by the support centre like counseling, case registration with the police, awareness and sensitization programmes, socio-legal support to the victims, shelter, Dowry recovery, mutual divorce etc. Addressing the house she further added that Linkages and liasoning with the Police
Department, government hospitals, DLSA, CWC, JJB, WCD Department and District Administration is a major role of the Support Center.

She also described the various challenges she and her colleagues faced while handling the cases by giving several examples of child marriage and domestic violence where the police and the hospital authorities do not cooperate or extend much help to the victims. The victims are many times also ill-treated by the concerned Police officers and the doctors. Expressing her anger she also pointed out the distressed situation of the differently abled women and girls who are still devoid of the government entitlements because of the weak and corrupted system. She stressed that the inbuilt and deep rooted traditional mindset and customs prevailing in the society are the main hindrances in combating violence and child marriage and this mind set has also corrupted the attitudes and practices of the duty bearers which is a serious concern. The POs are mostly unaware of their duties and found to be uncooperative. She gave many examples to substantiate her stand.

She said that the support centre is now planning conduct awareness building programmes at the Gram Panchayats level as per the proposal of the Child Welfare Committee. They also organize an Annual Survivor Meet where the survivors of the violence meet and discuss their experiences and the new cases. The survivors are also provided with training on livelihood programmes and many women and girls are now working in Malls, Beauty Parlors, and nursing homes.

**Support Centre in Dhenkanal**

**April 2016 to March 2017**

**Some Figures**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>New Resister Case</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Ongoing case</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>One time interaction</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Home Visits and other collateral visit</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. Individual Meeting | 103
6. Joint meeting | 113
7. Engaging Police Help | 64
8. Participation in workshop/meeting | 23
9. Workshops organized | 19
10. PWDV Act: Ref by us | 11
11. Reconciliation through counseling | 62
12. Providing shelter | 20

e) Aradhana Nanda, FARR

Topic – Status of Implementation of Prohibition of Domestic Violence Act in Odisha

Speaking on the occasion Ms. Aradhana Nanda said that FARR started the ‘Support Centre’ for Women since 2009 to provide an adequate platform for the victims of gender based violence to voice their grievances, sufferings and pain. The Support Centres have played a large role in addressing the mental agony, trauma, fear, stigma and insecurity thereby, building their confidence and giving them a positive direction in their lives. Then she spoke about the major objectives and activities of the Support Centre and the types of cases registered. The major aim is to provide counselling and support to the women victim and to improve access to formal justice system and support services for the women survivors of violence through the ‘Support Center.'
She informed the house that a total of 487 cases are registered and she elaborated the details as given in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No.</th>
<th>Type of Cases registered</th>
<th>No of Cases registered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Dowry demand</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>False promise of marriage</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Extra marital affairs/ second marriage</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Rape</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Child custody</td>
<td>09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Kidnapping</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Trafficking</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Alcoholising</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Doubt</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Property</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Which Hunting</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Others ( Physical, economical and Mental)</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Divorce</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

She also spoke about the study conducted by FARR, in 2009, 2011 and 2015, to see the impact of the act at the grass root level, covering ten major districts of Odisha. Sharing the findings of the study she lamented on the fact that despite the existence of such provisions of Protection Officers and Service Providers, the POs and the Service Providers are not aware of their roles and responsibilities and neglect their duties mentioned in the Act. They even do
not know how to utilise the funds allotted to them for curbing domestic violence. As the DSWO was vested with financial powers, the POs faced problem in getting money for implementation. Apart from that, within 3 years of the implementation a sum of only Rs. 15,000 was allotted once to all districts during 2007-2008. Six districts had spent the entire amount while 9 districts were found to spend nothing for implementation of the Act. She also added that while the budget allocation was increased to 35,000 in 2011 still majority of the districts were not able to spend 50% of the allocation. She raised her concern over the lack of coordination between the PO, the Court and Service Provider which is yet another biggest challenge in this area. It was found that the POs faced considerable difficulty in serving notice to the respondent in far-off place within the stipulated time. The Service Providers were not active either. The POs and the service providers are also not strictly monitored by the state which resulted low motivation and disinterestedness in discharging duties. The 2015 findings were more surprising. She said that the POs are not intimated about the proceedings and status of the DIRs from the court. The POs were not given adequate training though the Act lay for wider publicity and training for the stakeholders.

After that Ms. Aradhana Nanda shared some of the suggestions for active and effective implementation of the DV Act. Appointment of independent POs, development of women task force and formation of Gender Core Group at the state level, increase in budget allocation. Wider publicity and awareness of the Act by the WCD department, gender sensitisation training and capacity building training of judiciary and police, involving active NGOs working on the issue of domestic violence, replication of model support centres in all the districts were some of the suggestions shared at the state level.

Ms. Snehanjali Mohanty, OSCW seconded the concerns raised Ms. Nanda by adding that often there is no information with the POs about the case after the DIR is filed. There is no record maintained by the POs. Many times the POs have to struggle to convince the Judges on the genuineness of the case. She stressed that the POs should be competent enough to give a ray of hope to the victims and therefore independent appointment is a must. She requested the House to write a memorandum to the government of Odisha to increase the allocation of budget to each district for successful implementation of the Act.


Speaking on the charter of demands she said that these set of demands can be used as an important tool for advocacy for all civil society organisations working towards ending violence on women. Speaking on the history of the development of demands she said that in 2012 a National level alliance meeting was held in which approximately 20 organisations participated and discussed on the challenges faced with regard to the implementation of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005.

Five CSOs namely UN Women, Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Aman Global Voices for Peace in the Home, Centre for Social Research came together and held wider
discussions around January – June 2012, on the various challenges affecting the implementation starting from need for infrastructure, POs salary, training needs, sensitisation programmes to all other necessary requirements. An estimated budget was also prepared to meet all these requirements by the Group named as PWDA Action and Advocacy Group, and it was found that for one year the total budget required to meet the challenges is approximately One thousand One hundred Fifty eight crores. They drafted a twenty paged report called as centrally Sponsored Scheme for Implementation of PWDV Act

She further said that the draft report then sent to the NCW and other Ministries and policy makers, so that the scheme could be pushed in the Budget session 2013. National level meetings were held with the Ministry of Health, Ministry of social justice, with the planning commission and finance ministry. Factsheets are charts were also sent to many Members of Parliament to give impetus to this targeted move. 6 questions were also raised in the parliament to which the WCD minister responded. Although the move was successful and the allocation of funds increased from 20 crores to 67.5 crores but it lost all momentum gradually due to absence of tracking the implementation and by 2015 we have only 0 allocation towards its implementation. The Centre simply left the entire responsibility to the state.

She added that in 2015 Oxfam conducted a study to find out the national status on the implementation of the PWDV act. It held various regional consultations and meticulously drafted the Charter of demands along will all the participating organisations. She requested everyone in the house to use the document for advocacy and work towards making the mission of strengthening the implementation of the Act a success.

Snehanjali Mohanty in her address to the house shared the role of Odisha State Commission for Women in dealing with the cases of Domestic Violence. She also shared the regular day
to day challenges faced by the commission. She said that the commission has some limited powers and there are instances where inspite of serving notice to the opposing parties to appear before the commission the opposition turn hostile and do not appear before us which results in delay in case disposal. It is only when we seek the help of police the opposition party appears due to fear. She emphasised since the offence mostly is bailable the culprit gets bail easily and gets out of jail.

The house was then open to discussion and participants were given the scope to place their queries, observation, comments, experiences and perspectives on Domestic Violence. 

**Ms. Bishakha Bhanja**, NAWO questioned whether “The Odisha State Commission for Women” can conduct a specific study to know the budget allocation against different type’s crimes on women in Odisha and find out the loopholes in allocation and utilization under each category of crime against women. She further added that with the study inadequacies in resource allocation and the actual fund requirements for each category can be identified and addressed. She also requested the OSCW to conduct research on various laws related to women and identify the percentage of budget allocated under each Act in the state of Odisha. The Women commission then can also come out with recommendations on its appropriate utilisation. Responding to her query Miss. Mohanty from OSCW asked the house to form an advocacy group and put their demands for the study to the government through the OSCW.

**Ms. Bishakha Bhanja** pointed out that though duty bearers speak of giving priorities to Government – CSOs partnership and collaborations yet nothing is practised. Expressing anguish she said it is high time that the state prioritise government- CSOs synchronization for effective implementation of the law.

Another participant contended against the inaccessibility of the Women Commission to the women folks living in remote and rural areas. She demanded for an online complaint registration mechanism within the commission so as to reach maximum victims. Responding her Ms. Mohanty agreed on the physical inaccessibility of the commission and the troubles victims face due its location in Bhubaneswar. She said that though the commission organises camp courts in every district yet it is not satisfactory.

Another participant from an organisation Swati lamented that most of the victims are not able to bear the travel expenses to and fro commission or the Support Centres which results in early closure of cases without justice delivery. Confirming the participant’s concern **Ms.Bhanumati Pani** and Smt.Aradhana **Nanda** who run support centres said that though the support centre bears the travel expenses of some women who are from low economic section but it is unable to bear it for everyone due to shortage of financial resources.

Yet another participant remarked that the OSCW Office to be shifted to ground floor for greater accessibility. Another participant raised concern over the dearth of trained counsellor for victims of violence. She observed that the victims who are referred to counsellors are reluctant to speak to them as they are untrained and insensitive towards such issues. Another
participant wanted to know the legal procedures to address violence on a mother by her son.

Dr. Vibhuti Patel in her remarks pointed out that one major strategy to check violence against woman is to engage and encourage Men Group who are working as ‘change agents.’ One such group is Men against Violence which is very active in India.

Miss. Lalita Mishal, NAWO concluded session by requesting everyone in the house to introspect and ponder over the issues and challenges. She thanked the chairperson and the panellists for brilliant presentations.

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**DAY -II**

The second day of the consultation began with the welcome speech by Miss Lalita Missal, NAWO. Admiring the large scale participation in the consultation, she thanked everyone wholeheartedly in the house. This was followed by a round of introduction. Then participants expressed their views and observations on the first day of the consultation.

A participant from CYSD expressed her concern over the role of media in objectifying women which is very much instrumental in increasing crime against them. The media also is being instrumental in feeding the next generation with superstitions and blind beliefs through telecasting serials and movies on blind beliefs and superstition. These have severe consequences on the status of women in the society. Television soaps and the movies on witch hunting and superstition should be banned immediately as they create negative impact on the minds of young generation that in reality witches and witchcraft exist.

Another participant stressed on the need to include education on repercussions of domestic violence, child marriage and the legal frameworks to enlighten young minds. He also stressed on scientific and rational education at school level to get rid of superstition and change the common mindset. Fourth participant argued that though laws are in place the need of the hour is sensitization and awareness generation.
After this Ms. Lalita Missal invited on the stage the chairperson and the panellists for the first session of day two. This session was chaired by Smt. Subhashree Ray, Pragati, Sundargarh. The panellists were Dr. Madumita Ray, Asst. Professor, KIIT University, Ms. Usha Pattnaik GUC, Nayagarh, Sri Bhabani Saha from ISD, and Ms. Pushpanjali Jena from ISWO and Pragnya Paramita Bastia from NAWO Odisha.

**Dr. Madhumita Ray: Child Early and Forced marriage: Magnitude, Cause and Legal Framework**

Dr. Madhumita Ray presented a clear picture of child marriage status in Odisha. She said that the Census 2001 shows Odisha one of the hotspots of child marriages reporting Jharkhand as the highest, followed by Bihar and Rajasthan. Census 2001 reported 36.3 % child marriage in Odisha. Citing an Indian Express Report she said that 78.5 lakh girls were married while they were not yet 10 years of marriage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child Marriage in Odisha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The proportion of Child marriage in 2015-16 is 21.3 % (NHFS –ROUND IV)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Among young women age between 15-19, 14 % have already began child bearing (NHFS ROUND III)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 25.3 % Of ST Women have begun child bearing in the age of 15-49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Young women in rural areas are more likely to have child bearing than young women in urban areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 53 percent of respondents in Odisha felt schemes like Rajiv Gandhi National Scheme for empowerment of adolescent girls and 27 percent said that Kishori Shakti scheme in Odisha will certainly impact early marriage (study conducted by Planning Commission on Child Marriage)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In some regions it is also common perception is that if a girl reaches puberty, she is ready for marriage. According to a UNICEF’s publication, 2012, report, 47 per cent girls in Odisha marry before they are 18 — the legally sanctioned age. “This has serious repercussions, particularly on the health of young women- she pointed out. She referred to the data from the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-3), according to which 14 per cent women aged between 15-19 years were already mothers or pregnant at the time of the Survey in 2005-06.

She said that, it is lack of education that led to early marriages and motherhood. “Fewer girls than boys attend school — a gap that increases when they grow up. Between the age of 6-10 years, 86 per cent boys and 82 per cent girls attend school. But by the time the children reach the age of 15-17, very less percentage of girls attend school,” she pointed out. Adding to this she said that most parents in rural pockets (more so ST/SC/OBCs) consider school education for girls as wastage of time. They in fact go for training the girl child family skill and contributing to the family labour.

She identified the following causes leading to Child Marriage in Odisha:
She added that surprisingly, child marriages are still rampant in several districts of Odisha with Navrangpur, Koraput, Ganjam, Malkangiri and Nayagarh on the top of the list, state despite laws in place. She said that it’s very common for girls to get married once they hit 12 or 13. Not only is there a general lack of awareness regarding the law but people are also ignorant of the severe health consequences this regressive social practice has on the youngsters. She again argued one of the reasons behind families marrying off their daughters at such a young age is due to the problem of dowry, which tends to increase with age. Among SCs and STs and OBCs it is the loss of traditional occupations that force them to migrate and go for unskilled labor mostly work in Brick kilns, where they need to work as a unit (even children in the family also work). Thus this promotes child marriage which is seen as access to free labour for the family.

Speaking on some more causes of Child marriage she pointed out that ignorance of the law and of the health consequences is a significant factor. Parents do not understand the dangers of child marriage. Apart from that the Social beliefs and traditions are mainly responsible for this crime. In some regions it is also common perception is that if a girl reaches puberty, she is ready for marriage. The girls are viewed as a burden to the family and so many parents want to marry off their daughters at a young age. Some are also seen to be too willing to send their daughters away because it would have meant one lesser mouth to feed. Parents’ authority played a major role in child marriage. Only 24% of girls in Odisha said that their consent was sought in a study done by the Planning Commission. Many families also feel that with the rapidly dwindling caste endogamy rules, the adolescent girls may elope with boys of
other castes, bringing family and village dishonor. Too many girls to marry off also put the family under pressure.

Coming to the **Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006** she said that the Act was passed following an order from the Supreme Court of India. Under this Act, which came into force in 2007, all the states in the country were directed to frame rules as expeditiously as possible. Speaking on the salient features of the Act she said that Child marriages are voidable at the option of contracting party being child The Act prescribes rigorous imprisonment or a penalty, or both, for those guilty of marrying girls aged below 18. It asks for compulsory appointment of Child Marriage Prohibition Officers. These officers were required to create awareness on the issue, prevent the solemnization of child marriages and lodge cases at the local police station should such marriages take place. However she informed the participants there is no mention of the role of a CMPO vis a vis a Child marriage already executed which is again a main limitation of the Act. The law, unfortunately, still remains unimplemented in many tribal districts of the state and one finds huge contradictions and gaps among all major laws within whose ambit child marriage can be covered.

Speaking on the serious limitations of child marriage she alerted that it is too surprising that that law while classifying Child marriage as illegal still allows an option to parties to terminate the marriage or not. This will again have regressive influence on the life of the children involved. She opined that even if the married partners are now adults, the law should treat the marriage as an illegal contract, executed when they were children.

She also emphasized on the training and capacity building of all the authorities identified for prohibition of Child Marriage and recommended that the Child Marriage Prohibition Officers should be an independent Officer in at least districts where the incidence of child marriages are rampant. Mostly it is the Overburdened Child Development Project Officers (CDPOs) who are also the Child Marriage Prohibition Officers (CMPOs). This hampers their functioning and they could not deliver to satisfaction. Dr. Ray also suggested for building capacities of the local police, skill building of women and sensitization of caste panchayats. She also argued for strictly enforcing Birth and Marriage certificates.

**Usha Pattanayak: Gania Unnayan Committee, Navagarh : Status of Child Marriage in Odisha**

Miss Usha Pattanayak from GUC shared with the house the various misconceptions associated with child marriage. Speaking on the social situation influencing early marriage she said people marry off girls at younger age because they think a girl can do household work when they are young and it is easy to control women who are below eighteen years. Late marriages will pave way to late pregnancies which again will not meet the traditional expectations of in-laws to have an early child after marriage.

Then she presented the various factors leading to child marriages. Some of the factors that she put emphasis on were – absence of tracking and monitoring the school dropout rates.
among girls, absence of high schools in the villages which prevents girls to continue further studies, absence of any institutional mechanism to engage with adolescent girls, communities on health repercussions and disadvantages of early marriage, unavailability of any strong mechanism for marriage registration under panchayat and village level.

She further added that it has been also observed that a large number of child marriages are taking place under the nose of the police and the local administration. Either the administration is silent or too scared to interfere in such sensitive matters. Sometimes the activists have a very tough time convincing the parents to put off the illegal marriage. But frequent counseling and follow up with the families will definitely help stop the marriage.

Ending child marriage will continue to remain challenging because even parents who are aware of its negative impacts find it difficult to resist the heavy weight of tradition. “Besides, there are economic and social pressures as well. Clearly, the law alone won’t work. It requires a change in the psyche of the communities here who constitute some of the most backward and illiterate in the country.” She is of the opinion that educating and empowering the women of the region, is the best way to address the issue of child marriages.

She also suggested some of the other strong measures to combat the serious concern of child marriage like tracking child marriages and immediate information to local CDPO, Child line CWC, DCPU and local police, Engaging with the communities, developing Gramsabha resolution for developing child marriage free village, Caste and tribal panchayats resolution on not allowing child marriage in their communities and felicitating boys and girls who have shown courage to stop child marriage.

**Bhabani Shah, Institute for Social Development : Regional Consultation on the issues of Child Marriage in Koraput**

Mr. Bhabani from ISD sharing details about the consultation on Child Marriage said that five districts Koraput ,Kalahandi, Rayagada, Malkangiri and Nawarangpur participated in the regional consultation and the participants were mostly NGO representatives, Health service providers, CDPOs and Supervisors, Chairman and Members of Child welfare committee, Lawyers, Media representatives ( print and electronic ) PRI members, SHG Leaders and Parents. Status and different causes of child marriage was discussed at length. He then highlighted the suggestions that came out in the consultation. Some of the suggestions were to work with traditional leaders on the issue. Some of the suggestions were Sensitization of adolescent girls and parents about impact on girls’ health, prioritizing the issue at panchayat level and regular training and orientation of the Child Marriage Protection officers.

**Pushpanjali Jena , ISWO : Round table workshop with keystakeholders on the issues of Child Marriage**
Pushpanjali Jena from ISWO Informed the house about the round table workshop which was held in Dhenkanal in 22nd February in which five districts- Dhenkanal, Anugul, Deogarh, Keonjhar and Sambalpur actively participated. She briefly described the objective of the workshop in which around 60 participants from NGOs, Dhenkanal Police, DCPU & CDPU, CWC, Media, Legal Aid, JJB, and Youth groups participated. The topic of discussion was child marriage and related health concerns, legal framework, causes and implications. Some of the suggestions fetched during the workshop - powers should be provided to the stakeholders like NGO personnel in order to stop this practice, amendment of laws to make marriages more transparent, Grampanchayats, Asha and Anganwadi workers should be given more responsibilities, organizing awareness and Sensitization programs.

**Prangya Paramita Bastia, NAWO Odisha: One Day Regional Round Table Consultation on Child Early and Forced Marriage**

Prangya from NAWO Odisha briefed the house on the one day regional Round Table Consultation on Child Early and Forced Marriage held in Baleshwar on 28th February 2017. She said that NAWO basically focused on four districts of Odisha namely Baleswar, Mayurbhanj, Bhadrak and Jajpur.

The aim was to understand child marriage situation in these four districts and their impact on girls and boys. It was also observed that particularly in Mayurbhanj district Child Marriage has a great impact on boys as well. District Social Welfare Officer, Baleshwar, Chair Person, Child Welfare Committee, Baleshwar District Child Help Line, Baleshwar, CDPO, ICDS Staff, Baleshwar, ICMPU, Baleshwar, District Legal Service Provider And Organizations from Mayurbhanj, Jajpur, Bhadrak & Baleshwar participated and discussed on Child Marriage status in Odisha, Causes and Consequences about the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act 2006 and the role of CMPOs and other stakeholders. She also informed the house about the various suggestion that came out from the consultation. Massive awareness against Child Marriage, campaigning through print and electronic media, appointment of Independent CMPO in all
districts, Capacity building from a gender perspective of all related stake holders, tracking and monitoring the child marriages by the Women & Child Development Department and Panchayats and felicitation of women and girls who work against child marriages were some of the suggestions given in the consultation.

The chairperson for the session Subhashree Ray thanked the panelists. In her remarks she said that Child marriage is a complex issue and there are many obstacles and challenges associated with resolving the issue. Sometimes the girl is in such situation that she is not left with any other option other than marriage. Looking into the sensitiveness, all dimensions and complexity, one must deal with cases of child marriage intelligently and carefully. The need of the hour is creating awareness and education and to develop such duty bearers who fulfill their assigned their roles and responsibilities with dedication.

### SESSION II

The next session which followed was the session on **way forward and advocacy agenda**, facilitated by **Ms. Aradhana Nanda**. The panelists for the session were **Ms. Lalita Missal, Ms. Snehanjali Mohanty and Ms. Rajini Menon**. Ms. Missal requested the house to think upon the law framework and the present social status of women; to reflect upon the weaknesses in law and implementation strategies and to come out with suggestions and recommendations. The house was open to discussion and participants were given the scope to place their observations, comments and perspectives on way forward.

Some of the major suggestions from the House:

I. Independent women Protection Committee should be established at the Gram Panchayats Level.
II. The school curriculum need to include courses on rationalist ideas and thoughts, misconceptions related to the practice of witchcraft, health hazards of early marriage, legal frameworks, significance of girl child education, gender equality.

III. Orientation and training on the legal frameworks and other s to the members at Block and Gram Panchayat level. Leaders of different communities should be made aware and also sensitized regarding the disadvantages of child marriages. “These leaders can play major role in changing the mindsets of the people in their communities as people listen to them.

IV. A core committee should be established with the Odisha State commission for Women to look after the concerns of women at minute level. The core committee should sit once in two months to discuss and plan out intervention.

V. Recruitment of Independent Child Protection Officers.

VI. Crime/ violence against women should be categorized and separate budget allocation should be done for each category.


VIII. At GP level residential schools should be established for the children who are prone to migration.

IX. The Protection Officers should be also appointed at Gram Panchayat level.

X. Provision of vocational training at schools so that the girls become self dependent.

XI. All the Districts should have support centers to counter cases of Domestic Violence.

XII. Organizing public interface to spread awareness about superstitious beliefs and witch hunting. Personnel in police stations are also be sensitized to the legal provisions of Odisha Prevention of Witch Hunting Act. Tribal Village leaders and heads of caste councils should be particularly taken into confidence to counsel villagers in their respective villages.

XIII. Spreading awareness for prevention of witch hunting in Odisha through primary and secondary schools, Anganwadi centres and Panchayati Raj institutions, ASHA, SHG members, primary school teachers and to act against witch hunting and deter the people to follow such beliefs and practices.

XIV. Youth committees can organize orientation programmes at Anganwadi centres about different schemes of the government related to women and child development.

XV. State should appoint full time independent POs, and budget for them appropriately. They need proper training concerning their role, and proper infrastructure to carry it out. Numbers of POs should also be considered; for example there should be more than one PO per district.

XVI. Budget allocation must be increased with clear instructions on how to spend the money so that every aspect provided for under the Act is covered. Otherwise certain aspects of the Act get overlooked, for example shelter homes for which there is currently no separate budgetary allocation.

XVII. Active and intensive advocacy with the government is needed for the proper implementation of the Act. Wider publicity and awareness of the Act by the concerned department.

XVIII. Accountability of the department and all the stake owners to ensure justice.

XIX. Synergy and proper coordination of the concerned departments (Police, Health, Judiciary, and WCD) is highly necessary for the effective implementation of the Act.

XX. Capacity building training Stakeholders like the judiciary and police need gender sensitisation training and.
XXI. The purview of the service providers should include more active NGOs working on the issue of domestic violence.

XXII. The women task force coordinated by WCD department should monitor and review the implementation of the PWDVA and involve all the stakeholders of the Act in that process.

XXIII. The model of the Support Centre for Women should be replicated in other districts.

XXIV. The government should undertake a statewide study and find out the dimensions of the problem

XXV. Ensuring minimum health care facilities, education and livelihood options should be pre requisite to combat issues like witch hunting and domestic Violence.

Snehanjali Mohanty, OSCW, informed the House about the formation of District Protection Unit for the prevention and protection of women from all forms of violence. She also informed some of the legal frameworks which are for women. She added that Women have the freedom to register their FIRs in any Police station and not necessarily in the P.S under which the crime has occurred. In case the Police do not register the FIR, the woman has every right to ask the reason for denial in written form from him/her. She wrapped up her talk with a few suggestions in this context. She pointed out that the State Government and public should help media to sensitize the common people about the heinous crimes against women. She requested the house to take the help of all the different commissions in the state to the full extent. She also spoke about the different duty bearers and commissions role and functions briefly and made aware the house whom to reach in case of any violence or negligence by public authorities.

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Addressing the house she said this is the right opportunity to endorse a memorandum to the state government - letter to the commission and WCD Department on behalf of the entire house demanding a) the establishment of District Protection Unit in each district b) establishment of a core committee under the State Commission for Women look after and monitor the concerns more closely.

Ms. Rajini Menon Regional Gender Coordinator, Oxfam India expressed her happiness over the huge response from the participants but she alerted them to frame out strategies to
mitigate violence against women /girls in accordance with a set Timeline. She said following timeline is very much important and one must be very clear on things like what we want to achieve, by when and how otherwise one might lose focus on the issue of concern.

Ms. Aradhana Nanda confirmed that the Core committee of NAWO will decide on the ways to move forward taking into consideration all the suggestions from the House. She then invited Smt. Pramila Swain, Convener to give concluding remarks.

Speaking on the distressing situation of women in the present society Pramila Swain said that even after 80 years of struggle the situation of women has not changed much. The laws and mechanisms meant for checking crimes also are not implemented properly. She urged the house to think and ponder over the ways through which implementation of the existing laws can be done successfully. She also appreciated the participation from all sectors of society including students, universities, lawyers, media and individuals and CSOs, across Odisha. She had words of appreciation for the members of OSCW and admired their dedication towards women in Odisha. She urged the house to develop such dedication and motivated them to work in the same lines.

The Consultation ended with vote of thanks given by Ms. Lalita Missal. On behalf of NAWO she thanked Professor Vibhuti Patel, SNDT Women’s University, Smt. Sashiprava Bindhani, Ms. Rajini Menon, Regional Coordinator, Gender, Oxfam, India and Shri Akshay Biswal, Oxfam, Advocate Sujata Jena, and all the Resource Persons from Odisha, Jharkhand and Chattisgarh and all the participants. She also thanked all the staff members of NAWO for making the consultation a success.