WomenPowerConnect, Delhi publication

CONNECT

Professor Vibhuti Patel
Dear Friends,

Greetings from WomenPowerConnect!

We are pleased to share with you WPC’s quarterly newsletter. WPC has been successful over the past years in advocating for rights of women in India. We have continued to develop and expand our advocacy agenda and have targeted four areas of concern for women; Enhancing Mobile populations access to HIV & AIDS services information & support, addressing child marriage, asserting women’s land rights, and lauding women’s leadership in the green economy.

We have successfully undergone a Research on ‘College student’s perspective of Sexual Harassment: A Case Study of the Colleges in Bangalore City’ with support from the National Commission for Women.

WPC works closely as CARE’s Strategic Advocacy Partner under the Enhancing Mobile Populations Access to HIV/AIDS Services Information & Support (EMPHASIS) project. We support the project with advocacy strategies by providing policy briefings, evidence based advocacy with key stakeholders, developing methods for assessment of advocacy & alliance building efforts at source and destinations, networking, aiding collaborations, providing communication resources. We initiate direct interventions to address health and HIV & AIDS related human rights issues and the access of cross border mobile population at source and destination to HIV/AIDS treatment, instances of Violence Against Women and other vulnerabilities within the legal framework and view these within the International commitment of the concerned countries.

We have been working with Oxfam India with the aim to address the deep-rooted problem of women being denied equal land rights in India, due to the largely patriarchal and patrilineal structure of the Indian society. With the support of OXFAM India, WPC is currently implementing a project - ‘Ensuring women’s access to and control over land’.
With Ford Foundation, we continue to work on the issue of Child Marriage particularly in the States of Jharkhand, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh. The project seeks to generate positive actions in communities that would trigger significant reduction in the incidences of child marriage, and enable district and community-monitoring mechanisms at various levels to sustain these actions.

In addition to our advocacy and programmatic work we have been working tirelessly to engage funding organizations and develop fruitful partnerships and we have been successful in securing support for our advocacy work.

I am pleased that new amendments have been proposed in the marriage, dowry and sex selection legislations, but am disappointed that the Women’s Reservation Bill has still not been approved by parliament. WPC will continue to advocate for the development and implementation of gender friendly legislation and I am confident that with support from our members, we will be able to achieve improvement in the status of women’s rights throughout India.

The sincere efforts made by WPC would not be effective without the involvement and contribution from all the members and donors, who have brought our efforts this far. We need your support and guidance in taking the WPC agenda forward.

Dr. Ranjana Kumari
Chairperson, WPC
Historical Context

It is important to understand the context in which gender budgeting has acquired great attention in the Union Budget 2013-14. India’s record for achieving the Millennium Development Goals has been extremely poor as compared to several African, Latin American and Asian Countries. In international fora for a “Shining India” India has been named and shamed continuously for not being able to reduce maternal mortality rate and child mortality rate, widespread anaemia and malnutrition among women and children, starvation deaths in certain pockets, skyrocketing prices of essential goods for the poor, namely food, water and cooking fuel.

Gender Budget and Child Budget:

In this context, the allocation of Rs. 97134 crore for gender budget (less than 6 % of the total budget) and Rs. 77236 crore for child budget has been made in the Union budget 2013-14. Last year allocation for gender budget was Rs 18,878.5 crore. Due to sustained pressure from the women’s groups and gender economists, separate budgets for women and child are given.

Budget for Women in Difficult Circumstances:

Financial allocation of Rs. 200 crore for most vulnerable groups including single women and widows is an eye wash. Such paltry amount cannot support schemes like Swadhar, working women’s hostels, one-stop crisis centre, a national helpline and effective
implementation of the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act and recently passed Sexual Harassment at Work Place Act.

**Anti Poverty Programmes and National Health Mission:**

The budget has enhanced allocation for anti-poverty programmes such as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (Rs. 33000 crores) and flagship centrally sponsored scheme for public health-National Health Mission (Rs. 21239) whose principal beneficiaries are women as they are the poorest of the poor. Allocation for women specific schemes for economics services, welfare services and social defense have been increased up to 8500 crores.

**Multi-sectoral Programme for reducing maternal and child malnutrition**

It was announced last year, will be implemented in 100 districts during 2013-14. It has been allocated Rs. 300 to scale up to cover 200 districts the year after. This is grossly inadequate fund allocation to address 40% of children and 55% women of India who are malnourished.

**Integrated Child Development Scheme**

ICDS gets Rs. Rs 17,700 crore for this fiscal. In response to galloping inflation, the amount is quite inadequate. Successful implementation of ICDS requires nearly Rs 3 lakh crore over the 12th plan period as per an estimate made by nutrition experts while allocation has been for Rs 1.23 lakh crore. Financial provision social security and additional remuneration for Anganwadi Workers and ASHAs, the principal carriers of the flagship schemes has not been made.

**Public Sector Bank for Women**

The budget has also announced an allocation of Rs. 1000 for all-women public sector bank in which both the management and clients are expected to be women. The state owned Women’s Bank will work for financial inclusion and empowerment of self help groups, women entrepreneurs, self employed women and support livelihood needs of women. At last, the state finds women bankable!!! RBI will have to complete all
formalities of license of Women’s Bank by October, 2013. Bitter experience with private micro finance institutions (MFIs) who behave like financial sharks charging 24 to 48 % interest, used SHGs as foot soldiers and driven poor women borrowers to commit suicide due to harassment has made rural and urban community based organizations disenchanted with the private MFIs. In this context, announcement of Public sector Women’s Bank has given new hope to community-based women groups.

Nirbhaya Fund for Empowerment of Women

Sustained agitation by the Indian youth and women after Gang rape of young 23 year old woman (who was named by media as Nirbhaya) physiotherapist in a moving bus on 16th Dec. 2013 has shaken whole world. To appease the angry youth, the budget has announced Rs. 1000 crore as seed money for Nirbhaya Fund. There is no clear mandate for Nirbhaya Fund that it will be used for rehabilitation of survivor of sexual violence and acid attacks.

Inadequate Funds for Education

No increase in allocation to education against 6% as suggested by Kothari Commission in 1966 and demanded by all people’s organizations. Focus on only Sarva Shiksha Abhyan is not enough. Aspirations for higher education have enhanced exponentially among the Indian Youth. Government aided higher education and vocationalisation of education are need of an hour. The Union Budget 2013-14, has failed in its duty towards masses by leaving higher education to private sector.

No fund for Housing for women

In spite of repeated demands of women’s movement for over 30 years, specific allocations for safe houses and shelters for women who face domestic violence, incest, and for homeless women is not made. Girls and women facing incest are forced to continue to stay in the same house as their molester for want of a safe shelter. Homeless women remain ever-vulnerable to violence on the streets.

To win over educated middle and upper class women the budget has offered an incentive of duty free baggage limit for jewellery for women passengers raised to Rs 100,000, subject to some conditions.
Conclusion

From 2004 to 2013, 56 ministries have set up Gender Budget cells. But to make their fiscal policy gender responsiveness has been an uphill task. Galloping inflation has affected the toiling poor women of India adversely whose real wages have declined sharply. Due to withdrawal of the state from social sector, women’s work burden in unpaid care economy (cooking, cleaning, nursing, collecting fuel, fodder, water, etc) has increased many-fold. Subordinate status of women manifests in declining child sex ratio i.e. ‘missing girls phenomenon’, deteriorating reproductive and child health, feminization of poverty, increased violence against women, enhanced mortality and morbidity among girls and women and deplorable condition of elderly women and women in difficult circumstances.

EVENTS / ACTIVITIES ORGANIZED THIS QUARTER

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Date / Venue</th>
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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Consultation on the implementation of Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006</td>
<td>6th November, New Delhi</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Consultation on Addressing Declining child sex ratio: Challenges and Responses</td>
<td>7th November, New Delhi</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Madhya Pradesh State level Consultation to address Child Marriage</td>
<td>26th December, Bhopal</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Bihar State level Consultation on “Empowering Girls by Addressing Child Marriage”</td>
<td>28th December, Patna</td>
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6. State level interactive meeting in Bihar 11th January, Patna

7. National Level Felicitation “Celebrating women farmers who grow and gather our food” 26th February, New Delhi

**WPC’s ONGOING PROJECTS**

1. Research on ‘College student’s perspective of Sexual Harassment: A Case Study of the Colleges in Bangalore City’ with support from National Commission for Women

In the emerging context of the professional world, Bangalore is the much favored destination for students from all over the world to pursue their academic interest. The main aim of the present study was to find out “college student’s perspective of sexual harassment: A case study of the colleges in Bangalore city”

The broader conclusion that can be drawn from the data collected and the analysis of the same is that there is a high prevalence of sexual harassment in educational institutions. The respondents have openly expressed their views on sexual harassment i.e kind of harassment, place of harassment, forms of harassment, redressal mechanisms available, etc. However, despite the fact that they spoke about the prevalence, many of them were also hesitant to express their views on it and talk about it further. It was seen that many of the victims chose to remain silent on the matter whereas some said that they shared their opinion with their family members and friends. It was seen that a very small percentage of respondents discussed the issue and their experience with college authorities, legal advisors and police officers. It can thus be concluded that lack of
awareness and hesitance persist amongst students in discussing and sharing this issue with appropriate people and authorities.

As far as a redressal mechanism is concerned, very few colleges had Grievance/Complaint cells. It was also noticed that even though a few colleges had these cells, they were not operational and some did not have qualified counsellors and officers. A pressing need for a proper redressal mechanism was felt by all the respondents, where they suggested various means of addressing the issue: setting up of effective Student Grievance cell, setting up a Student counselling cell, having a full-time trained counsellor and setting up a drop box facility in the college. The issue can be dealt with and the complaints redressed through these measures. These may also be seen as student friendly mechanisms to handle the issue.

It may further be concluded that some of the major and essential points that need to be addressed for effective and appropriate action are: self-denial attitude of the respondents, social stigma attached to the issue and poor redressal mechanism.

2. ‘Ensuring women’s access to control over land’ with support from OXFAM India -

According to OXFAM India, nearly 84% of all working women in the country are employed in the agrarian sector. However, women workers tend to have very limited access and control of the land that they work on. Women farmers’ lack of access to land, limits their access to other agriculture inputs such as seed, agriculture credit, government schemes and programmes. It is because of the patriarchal and patrilineal structure of the Indian society that women have been unable to enjoy equal access to and control of land, as that of men.

With the aim of addressing the deep-rooted problem of women being denied equal land rights in India, due to the largely patriarchal and patrilineal structure of the Indian society, WPC with the support of OXFAM India, is implementing a project - ‘Ensuring women’s access to and control over land’.
The project focuses on Odisha, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Uttarakhand and Andhra Pradesh. It is estimated that women constitute approximately 50-60% of labor in the nation’s farm production.

The various activities conducted under it are:

I. Building of national level alliances with CSOs, INGOs, academicians, sector experts and interested government bodies

II. Documentation of case studies/ best practices

The Case Study document - Sprigs of Hope: Stories of Thirteen Lives- is dedicated “to all those women who have struggled over years to get access to and control over land, housing and property.” The case studies demonstrate how these women “are the role models of how women can take charge of their lives and empower the community.”

The document marks an attempt to “bring together the journey of women who dreamt and attempted to defy patriarchal norms and have created their own spaces in their communities. The selected case studies unfold the lives of thirteen rural women achievers from the states of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand, where Oxfam India works in partnership with grass-roots level organizations, to increase women farmers’ access to and claim over productive assets and to increase their economic leadership.”

III. National Level Felicitation

To acknowledge the women farmers’ contribution to the food production, Oxfam India, WomenPowerConnect and Landesa (RDI) jointly organized a National Felicitation of women farmers on 26th of February 2013. This event was an attempt to bring women farmers to the forefront. Around 32 women farmers from Odisha, Bihar, Andhra
Pradesh, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand have been felicitated for playing an extensive role in agriculture. The event also saw the release of two documents: Professor Swaminathan released a book titled, “Women, Land and Power in Asia” by Govind Kelkar and Ms. Rashmi Singh released a document “Sprigs of Hope-Case Studies of Women Farmers” which is a dossier of the lives of 13 women farmers. Representatives of various Ministries of the Government of India, National Commission for Women, UN organizations, Civil Society Organizations, Activists and Scholars participated in the event.

3. (EMPHASIS) CARE India - Enhancing access of the Mobile population to HIV & AIDS services’ information & support.

EMPHASIS is a regional project implemented by CARE. This project is a 5-year initiative (August 2009 - July 2014). EMPHASIS is implemented in the three countries of Bangladesh, India and Nepal under their respective CARE Country Office Teams and partner NGOs. The central feature of the project is evidence-based advocacy on prevention of HIV with its purpose being to address and reduce the vulnerabilities to HIV & AIDS among the mobile population crossing Bangladesh and Nepal to and from India. The project pilots a cross-border approach to increase access to prevention and treatment services; to strengthen the capacity of civil society, government institutions and policy makers to address the needs of mobile populations; and to create an enabling environment for safer mobility, stay and repatriation.

WPC is the Strategic Advocacy Partner for CARE under this project. WPC supports the project with advocacy strategies by providing policy briefings, evidence based advocacy with key stakeholders, developing methods for assessment of advocacy & alliance building, making efforts at source and destinations, networking, collaborations, communication resources. It also engages in direct interventions to address health and HIV & AIDS related human rights and access of cross border mobile population at
source and destinations to HIV/AIDS; Violence Against Women and other vulnerabilities within the legal framework and the International commitment of the countries. Activities that took place during this period were:

**Synopsis of Media Reports on Violence against Cross Border Migrants and Illegal Immigration Controversy in India. Report Coverage for the Month of August 2012**

**Background:** The month of July to August 2012 has observed unprecedented violence against cross border migrant population in India. Starting off with the state of Assam in India where 4-6 districts recorded violence & death of people from Bodo (a tribal community from Assam) and so called ‘illegal immigrant settlers’ from Bangladesh, the violence, riots and arson spread across the country in major states like Delhi, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra within a span of weeks. While the government took stern measures to prevent spread of the ethnic clashes and distributed relief materials for the hundreds of thousands left homeless and injured, the Indian media set off in different directions to analyze and report on the issue. Since the issue of cross border migration or immigration is integrally linked to the identity that people bestow upon migrants across borders in India, WPC felt the necessity to analyze the reports and present a summarized view to EMPHASIS project team. Media is one of the strongest wheels in democracy and has been responsible strongly for capturing and influencing public opinion. Media, electronic and print, captures not only the voice of the people but also acts as a bridge between policy makers, political will and reality. Yet media is often not rational and unbiased. In India media is politically driven and influenced itself at times. Hence the course of events that sparked off a bloody bath across 7 states in India and lead to millions of people living under the threat of genocide for months, needs to be understood because of the influences it had on policies and position of the government and people in India against migration and ‘illegal immigrant settlers’. WPC has focused its efforts on diving into all the media reports that came across in relevant and most widely circulated dailies or most widely viewed clips in order to analyse, understand and present the trend that media has tried to set in on the issue.

The state of Assam is the largest state situated in the North Eastern part of India. With more than 1000 km border with Bangladesh, Assam is believed to have received more than 2 million immigrants from Bangladesh since Independence. The actual figures
have never been captured because of the close ethnic, religious and linguistic similarity between various communities in Assam and those coming down and settling in Assam from the neighbouring country. But the original ethnic communities in Assam, particularly the Bodos, Assamese and other communities, have been complaining since the 1980s that unprecedented migration of Bengalis from Bangladesh and adjoining West Bengal has restricted their access to land, livelihood and employment in the state. In the not so distant past there have been popular movements as well as violent skirmishes between the new settlers and the local ethnic communities in Assam over such issues. The suspicion that exists among the Bodo population of Assam that their land and their right to employment and livelihood is reduced due to unrestricted illegal immigration & settlement particularly in Bodo dominated districts of lower Assam, may have led to militant and violent action. However, the way such violence later created a sense of fear and insecurity among both the migrant population and the local people in other parts of the country and the emergence of a mass hatred on a religious connotation spearheaded by mass circulation of a concocted MMS clip on violence against Bangladeshi settlers in lower Myanmar, created a public debate in India.

What is happening across the country now is the ripple effect of what started in Assam in July 2012, but the implications it set off is far beyond a local issue for India as a major destination for cross border migrant population.

Significance of Media Reports

The genesis of the Assam riot has caused the displacement of many people in Assam and the loss of lives, and the destruction of individuals, homes and families, both in the Bodo community and also among migrant population from Bangladesh. This very incident as is evident, has caused heights of insecurity, tension, suspicion and hate (most of which have been caused by rumor and false alarm) among two groups of people. Such tensions and insecurities leads to several situations, discussed below:

- The issue of threat to Identity- This is felt strongly by the local population of a region when they feel and see that a large number of migrants have settled in the area that is originally theirs. This threatens the very existence, the identity, right to land and resources of all indigenous people of a particular region and also the entire State.
• Such tensions create a ripple effect in other parts of the region or country because each individual or group of people is integrated or linked by a specific ethnicity, religion and region.
• In any such condition of conflict in any area or place, women become vulnerable and easy targets to the oppressive nature of the conflict mongers.

Though we often overlook the situation, what often happens in any conflict area is that women are most affected. In the case of Assam and the chaos which has allowed the tension of this incident to spread further to other parts of the country, is that women become targets of violence and harassment and in the case of migrant women, many of them are left with the loss of their spouse and loss of their immediate property, employment, security and shelter leading to complete disruption of life.

“National AIDS conference” held in Pokhara, Nepal.

There was a National AIDS Conference held in Pokhara, Nepal. CARE Nepal invited Dr. N. Hamsa for this event where she was also asked to speak on their satellite session on “Safety, Dignity and Advocacy to reduce gender based violence on cross border mobility, issues and challenges.” This visit was important because it gave WPC and CARE Nepal the opportunity to interact and exchange view points on the issue of migration and gender.

“CARE EMPHASIS Quarterly Learning and Review Workshop” in New Delhi.

On the 6th and 7th of December 2012, CARE India had an “EMPHASIS Quarterly Learning and Review Workshop”, where all the EMPHASIS India partners participated. The purpose of the workshop was to enable a common understanding on achievements and learning among EMPHASIS teams in India. WPC was also a part of this workshop, being SAP to CARE under the EMPHASIS project. Partners gave their recommendations to SAP on the emerging advocacy issues that need to be taken up.

There was a list of emerging Advocacy issues that were raised by the partners during the workshop, to be taken up by WPC. These issues were further deliberated and
polished on the 8th of December 2012, with the guidance of the project’s Regional Advocacy Manager.

**Advocacy Issues:**
- Violence and Harassment at border and destination (looking at this from a human rights perspective for both the NMPs and the BSPs).
- Issues related to Identity (lack of documents leading to no access to health, banking, education and employment opportunities for the NMP’s)
- Legal Issues/Challenges (Documentation of laws, policies and entitlements, and provisions for CBMPs in India).

**Outcome:**
- A document has been made on “the Advocacy Issues identified” during the workshop

**Cross border visit to Bangladesh, initiated by CARE EMPHASIS**

A cross border visit to Bangladesh was initiated by the CARE Emphasis Project from 16th to 21st December 2012. A team of 17 people consisting of project partners and staff from Nepal and India were part of the visit.

The purpose of the visit was to gain firsthand experience of the intervention in Bangladesh, especially on vulnerability of cross border migrants and their families, with focus on women; to learn about the kind of advocacy that has been carried out by the implementing partners at the Bangladesh level; to get factual data on ground realities of the living conditions, health conditions and working conditions of the migrants and to discuss ways in which there can be better cross border synergy between the EMPHASIS project teams.

**Outcome:**

A detailed report on the visit has been made by WPC staff Ms. Nisha Agarwal.

**Synopsis of Media Reports for December 2012**

A synopsis of media reports has been made for the month of December 2012. This report covers the issues of influx of migrants from Bangladesh into India.
It covers the issue of where both countries (India and Bangladesh) refuse to accept the existence of undocumented cross border migration and how this further aggravates the problem.

**Outcome and Action Plan:**

Synopsis of Media Report has been posted on ninemphasis.com

“Cross country meeting of Monitoring and Evaluation Managers” in New Delhi.

SAP team attended the meeting held in Delhi by CARE EMPHASIS team. The meetings consisted of the Monitoring and Evaluation Managers from Nepal, Bangladesh and India. During the meeting, the partners shared briefs on the activities taken up by them in their project areas. They also shared with the teams, the challenges they face while working with the migrant community.

**Action Plan:**
Document the activities and the challenges faced by the implementing partners (Nepal, India and Bangladesh)

**Field visit to EMPHASIS project areas in Mumbai:**

A field visit was undertaken by the WPC staff to Mumbai, Maharashtra on the 21st and 22nd of January 2013 for the purpose of gaining an understanding of the implementation of the EMPHASIS project by CARE local partner “Action Research Centre(ARC), Mumbai”. To the focus was on identifying the issues, problems and challenges that exist in the field areas and also to internalize the situation to develop advocacy strategies that WPC as SAP can undertake for Advocacy with various Stakeholders in India. The visit was facilitated by Mumbai CARE project Partnership coordinator Mr. Sandeep Gaikwad.

The objective of the visit was to also understand the ground reality of the cross mobile population and their vulnerability as migrants living in a foreign country. Based on the
objectives, the two-day visit and discussion were focused on specific areas with the project staff of Action Research Centre (ARC) at Thane district; Kalwa slums with Bangla speaking women migrants; Goregaon with Nepali women migrants; and Jogeshwari with Nepali migrants (People Living with HIV/AIDS).

In our discussions and interactive sessions with the project partners and Nepali Migrants, three major issues related to migrant status emerged:

1. Opening of bank accounts for Nepali population
2. Access to Health facilities for Nepali population
3. Access to education (Schooling) for Nepali migrants children

The implementing partner have requested WPC to advocate for acquiring ID cards or address proof for the Nepali population, as it is due to the lack of these documents that they are unable to access the above facilities. The id proof will enable them to move freely without the harassment and exploitation of police or other stake holders. ARC believes that ID proof and residence proof will facilitate or enable the Nepali migrants in the acquisition of birth certificate from local administration for their children to get school admission and also it will facilitate in opening bank accounts and accessing health facilities.

With regards to both the Nepali migrants and Bangla speaking population, there is a need for sensitization of the Border police (specifically the Uttar Pradesh police since migrants from both communities have stated that UP police is most cruel and violent) for the safe crossing (NMPs) and repatriation (BSPs) of these migrants (especially women).

**Future Plans:**

- Periodic meetings with RBI Officials to fully understand the policy that exists for Nepali migrants to open a bank account in India.
- Plan for a workshop for the sensitization of BSF (India Bangladesh border).

**Field Visit to EMPHASIS project areas in Delhi NCR:**
A field visit was undertaken by the WPC staff on the 28th of January 2013, to understand the implementation of the EMPHASIS project by the CARE local partners - Modicare Foundation. The visit was facilitated by Modicare Foundation staff Mr. Kuldeep who took the WPC Staff to the communities and introduced them so as to enable them to have a discussion with the community members.

The objective of the visit was to meet the implementing partners and to understand the ground reality of the mobile population and their vulnerability to HIV/AIDs. Also in addition, the attempt was to understand and analyze these issues with respect to taking them up as emerging advocacy issues, considering WPC is the strategic advocacy partner to CARE EMPHASIS project.

The visit was also important from the point of view of meeting and interacting with the partners working for the project and also to gain firsthand experience of the intervention in the field area, especially with the point of view of the cross border vulnerability of the migrants the women in particular.

Based on the objectives, the visit and discussion were focused with the entire project staff of Modicare Foundation at Rajeev Gandhi Camp and Kapasera intervention area; with Nepali migrant population and their families.

In the discussion with the project partners and Nepali migrants’ four major concerns were visible:

1. Opening of the bank account for Nepali migrants.
2. Helping the Nepali migrants to form ID proofs which get acknowledged in India.
3. Access to health facilities especially HIV and reproductive health for women.
4. Ensure less harassment at all the points and especially at the transit point.

The implementing partners and the Nepali women migrants have requested to specifically look at the identity related documents and bank accounts and to ensure less harassment at all the points while coming to India. The harassment is usually initiated by the UP Police wherein the migrants are usually asked to open their luggage and are often taken bribe from. It emerged from the discussion that Nepali migrants are not
fully aware of their rights in India, especially about the currency and their rights as citizens in India.

**Future Plan:**
- To come up with a document of the rights of Nepali migrants in India.
- To meet the officials from RBI to understand the policy on the opening of bank accounts of the Nepali migrants in India.

“Gender Vulnerability Training” organized by CARE EMPHASIS for the Delhi Partners.

SAP team was part of the training programme organized by CARE EMPHASIS for its partners in Delhi. The Workshop had WPC team, Anchal Charitable Trust team and Modicare Foundation team as participants.

The workshop consisted of various group activities through which the resource persons were able to put forth to the participants the issues of Gender discrimination that exist in our Society and ways on how we can work in a society that consists of different cultures and belief systems.

**Field visit to EMPHASIS project areas in Kolkata.**

A field visit was undertaken by the SAP team to Kolkata on the 6th and 7th of February 2013 to meet with “Bhoruka Public Welfare Trust(BPWT)” which is the implementing partner of CARE EMPHASIS project in Mumbai. The purpose of this visit was to identify the issues, problems and challenges that exist in the field areas and also to internalize the situation to develop advocacy strategies that SAP can undertake for Advocacy with various Stakeholders in India. The visit was facilitated by Kolkata CARE project Partnership coordinator Mr. Surajit Chakraborty and Ms. Poulami Banerjee, Project coordinator of BPWT.

The main objective of the visit was to understand the ground realities of the cross mobile population coming from Bangladesh into India, which would further our
understanding o their vulnerabilities as undocumented migrants living in a foreign country, with focus on women and the families of migrants.

Based on the objectives, the two day visit and discussion were focused with the project staff of Bhokura Public Welfare Trust (BPWT), Kolkata at the Community Resource Centre (CRC), situated in Madhamgram; at Kashipur and Madhamgram where a discussion with the community members and representatives of the local club were carried forth; and an interactive session with the BPWT staff at the field office at Barasat, Kolkata. A meeting was held with the entire project staff of Bhokura Public Welfare Trust at the Community Resource Centre, in Madhamgram. This meeting was facilitated by Mr. Surajit Chakraborty. The project staff were present in the meeting consisted of Outreach Workers, Counselor’s and peer educators.

In our discussion with the project partners and Bangla speaking population the following areas of concern emerged:

I. Helping to reduce the harassment at the borders (since it is violation of human rights).
II. To work towards safe repatriation of undocumented Bangla speaking migrants back to Bangladesh.

**Future Plans:**

- Plan for a workshop for the sensitization of BSF (India Bangladesh border).

**Field Visit to Uttarakhand**

Another field visit was done by WPC in Uttarakhand (Banbassa) and Uttar Pradesh (Palia, Gaurifanta) on the 7th and 8th of March 2013. The purpose of the field visit was to gain an understanding of the implementation of the EMPHASIS project by CARE local partner “Bhartiya Gramotthan Seva Vikas Sansthan, BGSVS” and to also identify the issues, problems and challenges that exist in the field areas. The field visit was also to allow SAP to internalize the situations that exist in the field areas in order to develop advocacy strategies that SAP can undertake for Advocacy with various Stakeholders in
India. The visit was facilitated by BGSVS Project Coordinator, Mr. Bhupendra Kumar Verma.

The objective of the visit was to also understand the ground realities of the cross mobile population and their vulnerability as migrants living in a foreign country. This visit was also conducted for the purpose of getting a firsthand experience of the issues and interventions in the field areas, especially on vulnerability of cross border migrants and their family, with focus on women. Based on the objectives, the two-day visit and discussion were focused with “Bhartiya Gramotthan Seva Vikas Sansthan, BGSVS, at Palia with the Peer educators; Gaurifanta with the Outreach workers and Nepali Migrants; and Banbassa with the Peer Educators and 2 Nepali migrants, Outreach workers and Counselors. During the two-day field visit, SAP visited two India Nepal transit points: Banbassa in Uttarakhand and Gaurifanta in Uttar Pradesh.

**Future Plan:**

- To centre the Advocacy workshop on the issue of HIV/AIDS (since BGSVS works specifically on the issue of HIV/AIDS).
- Discuss with CARE Nepal or India with regards to providing BGSVS with more IEC materials.

4. **“Empowering girls by addressing child marriage” with support from FORD Foundation**

To address the important issue and work towards elimination of child marriage, WomenPowerConnect, with the support of Ford Foundation, is undertaking a three year project in three states: 1) Bihar 2) Jharkhand and 3) Madhya Pradesh through an innovative, civic-driven and public accountability approach to social change.
The focus would be on: 1. Ensuring that the gaps in the PCMA 2006 are addressed and related laws, such as those regulating dowry and prohibiting trafficking, are implemented by creating conducive environment for empowering girls and women to benefit from the existing women-friendly laws and policies. 2. Facilitating the much needed mindset and attitudinal change towards child marriage with a focus on girl children.

The project seeks to generate positive actions in communities that would trigger significant reduction in the incidences of child marriage, and enable district and community-monitoring systems (mechanisms) at various levels to sustain these actions. Additionally, the project will pay due attention to highlighting and assessing the unique challenges related to the practice of child marriage within different communities and caste groups. As part of this project WPC and its partners have carried out interventions at national, state and community level. As part of advocacy, the strategy has been to provide information on ground realities and advocating for necessary policies, administrative interventions, preparing and submitting well researched advocacy documents, inviting concerned ministers/officials and elected representatives for state/national level workshop, conducting media workshops, analyzing the state budget and advocating for allocation of funds in the budget for specifically addressing the issue of child marriage.

**Activities Undertaken**

A half day consultation on the implementation of Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006, was conducted on November 6, 2012, in New Delhi. The event focussed on the gaps that exist in the PCMA, 2006. The participants and invitees included all the project partners, Government Representatives, NGO partners, and other Stakeholders and groups working on the issue of child marriage across different states of India. The focus of the discussion was on the challenges faced by WPC and its partners in implementing the project.
Baseline Survey

The baseline survey was carried out in the selected villages of one district in Bihar, and two districts each in Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh. The main observations that were derived from the survey were as follows: In Madhya Pradesh and Jharkhand, awareness on child marriage is higher-up to 71% whereas in Bihar awareness on child marriage practice as low as 21%; more than half of the respondents reported knowing the right age of marriage for males whereas 90% respondents are not aware of the right age of marriage for females; Customs, traditions and beliefs are pointed out as the major reasons for child marriage (48%) whereas 1/3rd reported community pressure as one of the reasons for child marriage; large proportion of people had heard of a law pertaining to child marriage but the exact knowledge of PCMA is very low- 27% among the respondents; Almost 90% child marriages were family driven with clear roles of family members in child marriages; Almost 70% couples married below 18 years had no knowledge about marriage at the time of their marriages. 66% women were sent to their nuptial home within a week of marriage clearly indicating health hazards attached to child marriage; almost every Panchayat under the baseline study knew about the PCMA but at the same time 77% PRI’s accepted the child marriage menace in their respective Panchayat jurisdiction; As many as 75% respondents have no knowledge on registration of marriages, only 8% respondents registered the marriage; Awareness among the stakeholders about institutional help to stop child marriage is low. In all, 23 PRI’s accepted the fact of help and guidance received from governmental institutions; Communities see State and PRI as main source of awareness and intervention to stop child marriage; Awareness and education are seen as major intervention areas alongside stringent implementation of PCMA.

State Level Consultations

As part of the project titled “Empowering Girls by Addressing Child Marriage” three State Level Consultations have been organized. The main objective of these consultations was to come out with a state level strategy to address the issue of child marriage with short and long term goals, to present the baseline survey result and to advocate the required actions with the concerned Government Departments, Ministries and elected representatives to the state assemblies, district collectors, and media to initiate the process of forming State level alliance of the various organizations working on child marriage.
rights and child related issues for advocating towards making child marriage an integral part of all policy advocacy on children and adolescents.

The three consultations were held on 26th December in Bhopal, on 28th December in Bihar and on 9th January 2013 in Jharkhand. The meetings had participation of about 60-70 people from government – WCD, Social Welfare Department, SCPCR, State Commission for Women and Child Rights and representatives from CSOs, NGOs, INGOs and UN agencies.

The outcomes of these meetings were the following decisions and observations:

1. Form a task force of all stakeholders, keeping a time frame to advocate on this issue.
2. NGOs have to take up this issue on a campaign mode.
3. There should be a convergence of all the concerned departments to work on this issue.
4. Develop a new website on this issue and share resources on child marriage which can be used by all.
5. There should be multi stakeholder mapping.
6. There should be an assessment of NGOs working on this issue.
7. Integrate the issue in the NGOs work especially in community related activities.
8. Developing IEC material which can be circulated to NGOs and in the community
9. Capacity Building of all relevant stakeholders is very important to implement the programs effectively.
10. Incorporate women friendly laws in the school curriculum.
11. Legal age for both girls and boys should be made 21 years age.
12. Punishment under the law should be more stringent.

**State Level Interactive Meeting**

Bihar state level interactive meeting was held on 11th January 2013 in Patna, with the broad objective being to develop strategies for creating an enabling environment for effective implementation of PCMA Act and necessary policy initiatives to combat child marriage in the state of Bihar. This meeting was attended by Smt. Parveen Ammanullah
Hon’ble Minister, Social Welfare, Govt. of Bihar; Ms. Rashmi Singh, Executive Director, NMEW; Smt. Nisha Jha, Chairperson, SCRPC, Bihar and Child Labour Commission Mr. Ramdeo Prasad, Chairperson, Child Labour Commission, Bihar.

Based on the presentations and deliberations, WPC and its partners planned to develop an action plan to synergize efforts of various stakeholders, including different government departments, through a convergence model.

Monitoring Visit

A monitoring Visit was undertaken by WPC team member to two villages in each State. Under the first visit from 21st-22nd September 2012, WPC Staff visited Mahila Chetna Manch (Project Partner) in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh followed by the visit made from 3rd - 4th October, 2012, to Chetna Vikas (Project Partner) in Deoghar, Jharkhand, from 5th - 6th October, to Badlao Foundation (Project Partner) in Jharkhand and from 7th - 8th, WPC staff visited GENVP (Project Partner) in Patna, Bihar. The main objective of the monitoring visit was to measure the impact of the community mobilization activities done by the organization.

Community Mobilisation

Through various interventions aimed at mobilizing community and creating awareness, partner organizations reached out to households from 85 villages in five districts of three states. These activities included meetings with groups of various stakeholders, street plays, capacity building of the task groups, awareness drives on Prohibition of Child Marriage Act 2006 and meetings with Mahila Sabha and PRIs. The awareness programs mainly looked at addressing the consequences of child marriages on education, instances of sexual and domestic violence, health conditions due to early child bearing, maternal and infant mortality, financial dependency, bearing of family and social responsibilities at a young age. Through these interventions the project reached out directly to about three thousand people in thirty nine panchayats of the five districts in three states.
Advocacy and Networking

*Signing of the charter of collaboration with NMEW: WPC has signed a charter of collaboration with the National Mission for the Empowerment of Women for thematic convergence of the ongoing three-year project with support from Ford Foundation. The MoU looks at the development of a convergence strategy and monitoring and evaluation of the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 in the states.*

5. **Addressing Declining child sex ratio: Challenges and Responses with support from UNFPA India**

The half day event was organized by WomenPowerConnect (WPC) to address the issue of declining Child Sex Ratio (CSR) and to discuss the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead in eliminating Gender Biased Sex Selection (GBSS) from India. The event witnessed the release of two important documents, which have been prepared to sum up and share the experiences and learning from the three-year project jointly implemented by **UNFPA** and WPC through 31 development partners across 11 states of India. The project was undertaken to strengthen the implementation of PCPNDT Act and change the mindset of low value placed on girl child along with social practices such as child marriage and gender based discrimination.

The event brought together representatives from all the organizations who were involved in the project implementation, relevant government departments, and various civil society organizations working to address the trend of declining CSR and GBSS.
The event served as an important platform for various grassroots representatives from different regions of the country to come face to face with each other and share their respective experiences, learn from the experts, and voice their concerns about the challenges they face in tackling the problem of gender biased sex selection.

### OTHER ACTIVITIES

1. Training was conducted by WPC in HCL infosystems Ltd. on Sexual Harassment at workplace on 11th October 2012.

2. Session for women employees to ensure faster career growth on 12th December 2012 in HCL infosystems Ltd.

3. Workshop on legal rights of women in Lady Irwin College on 22nd January 2013.

4. Press conference held by the PWDV Advocacy group (WPC being a partner) demanding for more financial allocation for implementation of DV 2005 Act on 22nd January 2013.

5. Dr. N.Hamsa was the co-chair in the Focus Group Discussion on ‘Shift rationalization from the point of view of security of women’ conducted by National Mission for Empowerment of Women on 27th February 2013.

### SPECIAL FEATURE

**Women’s Reservation Bill**

The framers of the constitution set out to create a document that would ensure that India would be a vibrant democracy with clear and adequate representation for all. There were provisions for the protection of the lower caste groups and minority religious groups. However, one group whose history was also one of marginalization was given recognition only later.
Socially, politically or economically, women have always had the poorer deal. The history of the subcontinent tells us how women were always kept behind the curtains. This perhaps gave the stimulus for the idea of women’s reservation in Indian politics. The attempt has been made to provide a level playing field for both men and women to decide the way in which the country moves forward.

Reservation is essentially a temporary tool to ensure that there can be a status quo between all citizens of a state, whether different in religion, caste or gender.

It can be argued that this restricts the franchise power of citizens by reducing the pool of representatives from which they can elect their leaders. However, what must also be looked at is the fact that this is not an attempt by the government to curtail their right to vote. Rather, it is an attempt to reform a society which, until very recently, has been extremely insensitive to the cause of the female.

**What does women’s reservation demand for?**

A Constitutional Amendment Bill that reserves one third seats in the House of the People (Lok Sabha) for women.
Reserves one third of seats reserved for Scheduled Castes (SC) in the House of the People (Lok Sabha) for women.
Reserves one third of seats reserved for Scheduled Tribes (ST) in the House of the People (Lok Sabha) for women.
Provides for one third of the seats reserved for women (including seats for women belonging to SCs and STs) to be filled by direct election to the House of the People (Lok Sabha) to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies.
Provides for similar reservations in State Legislative Assemblies.
Provides for such reservation for a period of 15 years from the period of commencement of the Constitutional Amendment.

**Concern**

Although India was one of the first democratic nations to grant women the right to vote, women are neither represented in the legislative spaces nor contributing towards the formation of national laws. Women currently hold only 8%
of parliamentary seats. Due to female foeticide and issues related to women’s health, sex ratio in India is alarming at 1.06 males per female. It is expected the Bill will change the society to give equal status to women. Women are supposedly more resistant to corruption, so this bill might prove to be a factor restraining the growth of corruption.

Having been at the receiving end of sexual harassment, dowry deaths, discrimination in the fields of sports, education etc the need for women’s reservation in parliament has strengthened.

Activists in favor of the bill suggest that women represent half of the population of the country and therefore have a right to half of the seats, since decisions made in parliament have a direct impact on their lives.

Also, women have different social and biological experiences and conflicting interests with men which should be represented in institutions of governance.

The women’s reservation bill proposes to reserve 33.3 percent seats in Parliament and state legislatures for women, meaning, if it’s passed, there will be reservation for women at each level of legislative decision-making. Incidentally, 33.3 per cent seats in panchayat elections have been reserved for women already and the experience has been very heartening.

**The struggle behind the bill**

The struggle goes back to September 1996 when the Women’s Reservation Bill was first introduced on the 4th of September 1996 by the United Front (Deve Gowda) Government as the 81st Constitutional Amendment Bill.

During the 1996 elections to the Eleventh Lok Sabha, all major political parties declared in their election manifestos that they would bring a Bill to introduce 33% reservation for women in Parliament and the State Assemblies.

In 1996 during the United Front government, the first move for a women’s quota in Lok Sabha and state assemblies was made but it ran into resistance from the OBC chieftains, Mulayam Singh Yadav and Lalu Prasad. Subsequent attempts to introduce the Constitution Amendment bill in 1998 and 1999 failed, again because of OBC -led
resistance. In 2008, UPA-I introduced the bill in the Rajya Sabha despite strong protests from Lalu Prasad, then an important ally of the Congress.

**Challenges**

The 14 years journey of the Women’s Reservation Bill was marked by high drama and hit roadblocks in each of its outings in Parliament before the historic measure cleared the first legislative hurdle. The battle for greater representation to women in Lok Sabha and State Assemblies was routinely punctuated by frayed tempers and war of words which sometimes got physical, as different governments since 1996 tried to get the Women’s Reservation Bill passed in Parliament without success.

For instance, it as been observed that the male dominated political parties are interested only in the female vote-bank and not to promote female membership in the party beyond a certain limit, so that men could hold maximum number of important positions. In all the main national parties there are separate sub-sections for women—Mahila Congress of the Indian National Congress, Mahila Morcha of the Bharatiya Janata Party, National Federation of Indian Women of the Communist Party of India etc. The women’s wings are eternally agitating against price rise, atrocities against women or such other topics, which any government should take up in the priority list and address, with the objective of resolving them. But in practice, the governments leave such issues unresolved, and women go on making a little noise now and again, and gain certain illusory gratification that they have performed some great political task.

Over the years this bill has had supporters and detractors. Sonia Gandhi, Sushma Swaraj and Brinda Karat have openly argued in favor of it. While Mulayam Singh Yadav, Lalu Yadav and Sharad Yadav have famously fought against it.

Mulayam Singh Yadav has argued that the bill would benefit only women from the privileged strata of the society. Hence this reservation should contain 33% reservation within the women’s category, for SC and ST women. 

According to detractors of the bill, it would bring forth more relatives (wives and daughters) of current politicians into public space and hence destroy democracy.
Also, the concept of quota is morally wrong and stigmatizes those from the reserved category. Women in modern India do not need reservation. It is said that women can only represent issues pertaining to gender development.

Reservation should be at the level of distributing party tickets.

It has widely been observed that reservations for 60 years for Dalits and tribals have failed to end discrimination. They have merely created a creamy layer of the formerly unprivileged, leaving others barely better off.

**Women's Reservation Bill** or the **The Constitution (108th Amendment) Bill**, is a pending bill in India which proposes to amend the **Constitution of India** to reserve 33 per cent of all seats in the Lower house of **Parliament of India**, the **Lok Sabha**, and in all state legislative assemblies for women. The seats to be reserved in rotation will be determined by draw of lots in such a way that a seat shall be reserved only once in three consecutive general elections.

The Upper House- **Rajya Sabha** passed the bill on 9 Mar 2010. As of May 2012, the Lower House- **Lok Sabha** has not yet voted on the bill.

Samajwadi Party on the 9th of November 2012 said that despite pressure from the government and the threat of CBI, it is firmly opposed to the reservation in promotion bill and will vote against it in Parliament.

**Women's reservation in other countries**

Reservation has greatly increased women’s representation in legislative bodies in several countries. Rwanda is the only country in the world with more women (56%) than men in their national legislative body through the quota system. Sweden follows with 47%, South Africa (45%), Iceland (43%), Argentina (42%), the Netherlands (41%) and Norway and Senegal with 40%. In Pakistan, the percentage of women in the National Assembly has reached 22%, in Nepal, the percentage of women members is 33% and in Bangladesh, 45 seats out of the total of 345 are reserved for women. China has 21% women in the National People’s Congress without any quota policy.
In Rwanda, a much-needed law that defines rape and protects victims of sexual abuse was passed only after women legislators became a force to reckon with. Their male counterparts saw the subject as taboo.

India political experts, Indian sociologists, Indian political scientists, feminists and Indian historians and almost everybody has said that if the women bill becomes an act then it will be the biggest social-political news since independence. The women reservation bill can be seen as a Long Delayed and a Much Needed Step which would prove to be milestone towards the empowerment of women and their participation in the parliament, into the decision-making process where it counts. Although the bill seems to be a good venture for the future, certain questions still remain unanswered.

However, though it is a societal problem, only women can ensure that these issues are sufficiently dealt with. All major social organizations including the U.N. agree that women's needs are unique and can be understood best by women. Therefore, it is essential that women should be a major part of the decision-making bodies of the country to guarantee the elimination of gender-specific social evils.

Debates will continue, stands will change and the media will be on a relentless pursuit over an issue such as this. But whatever the Lok Sabha holds in store for the bill, what we all know for certain is that the feminine face of Indian politics is slowly changing, and one can confidently believe that it could be for the better.

FEATURE ON PARTNER

**Young Citizen of India Charitable Trust**

Fifteen like-minded friends of the Mehsana district of Gujarat state joined hands on 12th January 1997-on Swami Vivekananda Birth Anniversary to discuss the issues of the district such as HIV/ AIDS, falling girl child sex ratio, drinking water, sanitation etc, following this on 29th May 1997, Young Citizens of India Charitable Trust (YCITC) was established to address identified issues. The mission of the organization is to
develop a sustainable model of Prevention, Care and Support for overall development of the society; particularly for the issues envisioned by the Young Citizen Of India.

The activities of the organization are primarily focused on prevention and control of communicable and non-communicable diseases such as HIV, TB, Anaemia, BP, Diabetes, addressing the issue of declining girl child sex ratio; economic empowerment, drinking water, sanitation and environment protection. YCITC also worked towards improving the Human development Indicators, specifically IMR/ MMR, education, poverty alleviation. YCITC is working in all the nine blocks and urban Mehsana.

Strategies adopted by YCTC are to prepare a model of development by facilitating action research, implementation of the various projects and advocacy; Constitute local organizations and empowering them to participate in the process of development; Empower youth as catalyst for social change.

**Awards received by the YCITC**

1. The Young Citizen has been awarded by district authority of Mehsana for excellent work on PNDT issue in the year 2009-2010.
2. YCITC received award for best achievement in Target Intervention (HIV/AIDS) in the whole state for the year 2009-2010, from Gujarat State AIDS Control Society
3. YCITC received State level award for the (Integrated Rural HIV/AIDS Programme(IRHAP) in the year 2008-2009.
4. YCITC received award for the best work on HIV/AIDS Care and support award from Mehsana People Living with HIV/AIDS(MNP+).
5. Dr. Amar Vyas founder of the YCICT is a member of the district PC&PNDT advisory committee of the Mehsana.

**Efforts in the area of Save the Girl Child**

The child Sex Ratio (CSR) is a powerful indicator of social health of any society. The major reason of the declining child sex ratio is practice of determination of the sex of the unborn child or foetus and eliminating it if found to be a female. India is moving towards a developed country from a developing country. Gujarat is considered one of the prosperous and progressive states of India but Gujarat, specifically in Mehsana District has a very poor girl child sex ratio. It is the lowest in the whole country, (760
Girls) the root cause for the sex selection is the low status of women in society and the deep-rooted prejudices they face throughout their life. In a patriarchal society ‘son preference’ and practice of dowry translates into daughters being considered an economic liability. It has resulted in discrimination and neglect of the girl child.

Keeping the above context in view YCTC) is addressing the issue of declining girl child sex ratio, since 2004. Over the years the organisation has worked extensively with local/political leaders/, school and college students and media. During May 2009 – April 2011 the organisation implemented the integrated project titled ‘Support to community mobilization on and people driven response in preventing the sex selection and arresting child sex ratio decline’ in partnership with WomenPowerConnect, New Delhi.

Under this project, 16000 families of fifteen villages of Mehsana, Visnagar and Unjha blocks of the Mehsana district were covered. Efforts were made to create awareness about the steadily declining CSR and its ill effects on the society and spread of HIV-AIDS and other STDs (Sexually Transmitted Diseases) in partnership with social, religious and political leaders. Students, teachers, village youth, Govt. Officers, health workers and media, pregnant women and their family members and newly married couples should become aware of the adverse effects of the practice of pre birth elimination of the females and about the PCPNDT Act.

It was also observed that rapid reduction in the number of girls led to many adverse social evils such as buying brides /trafficking for marriage. Those who could not afford to buy a bride either indulged in homosexuality or prostitution resulting in increased cases of HIV AIDS or other STDs.

Various efforts made by the organisation to improve the girl child sex ratio has significantly contributed in changing the mindset of people and improving the CSR marginally in the district (from 801 in 2001 to 845 in 2011) but there is a long way to go for balancing girl child sex ratio.

While implementing the project it was learned that there is a need to empower adolescent girls/ boys for instilling the concept of gender equality in young minds and also it is essential to discuss the issue with male members of the family and community. Partnership with local leaders and other stakeholders will be very effective.
As per the 2011 Census, Mehsana District girl child sex ratio is below 850, keeping this reality in view YCITC is planning to continue its work on this issue in future also.

**OBITUARY by Dr. Vibhuti Patel**

Prof. Lotika Sarkar who played a central role in several path-breaking and crucial legislations for gender justice and empowerment of women during 1975-2005, passed away at the age of 86 on 23rd February 2013. In the women’s rights movement, she was known as Lotikadee. When other stalwarts of women’s studies touched our hearts with inspirational speeches in the women’s movement gathering, Lotikadee floured us with her legal acumen. She was the first Indian woman to graduate from Lotika Sarkar (1927 to 2013) Cambridge. Lotikadee was at the peak of her career, when she was asked to join Committee on Status of Women in India, 1972 that prepared Towards Equality Report, 1974. As a pioneer in the fields of law, women’s studies and human rights, she prepared the chapter on laws concerning women in the Status of women’s Committee Report with gender sensitivity and analytical clarity for furthering women’s rights.

Dr. Lotika Sarkar was the first woman teacher of law faculty at the University of Delhi and taught Criminal law and was a mainstay of the Indian Law Institute, Delhi during 1980s and 1990s. She was a founding member of the Indian Association for Women Studies.

In 1980, along with Dr. Veena Mazumdar, Lotikadee founded Centre for Women’s Development Studies. Along with three professors of Law of Delhi University-Prof. Upendra Baxi, Prof. Kelkar, Dr. Vasudha Dhagamwar, Lotikadee wrote the historic Open Letter to the Chief Justice of India in 1979, challenging the judgment of the apex court on the Mathura rape case. I remember cutting stencil and making copies on our cyclostyling machine of the 4-page long letter for wider circulation. Translation of this letter into Gujarati and Hindi served a crash course for me to understand nuances of criminal justice system, rape laws and sexual violence as the weapon to keep women in

When Lotikadee came to Mumbai for the first Conference on Women’s Studies in April, 1981 at SNDT Women’s University, we, young feminists were awe-struck!! Ideological polarization in this Conference was extremely volatile. Lotikadee’s commitment to the left movement did not prevent her from interacting meaningfully with liberals, free-thinkers and also the new-left like me. Indian Association of Women’s Studies was formed in this gathering. In the subsequent conferences, Lotikadee attracted innumerable legal luminaries to IAWS.

At the initiative of her students, Amita Dhanda and Archana Parashar, a volume of Essays, Engendering Law: in Honour of Lotika Sarkar was published in 1999 by Eastern Book Company, Delhi.

Lotikadee and her journalist husband Shri. Chanchal Sarkar, both were kind, generous and trusting. After her husband passed away, she was under immense trauma and grief. Taking advantage of this situation her cook and the police officer whose education they had sponsored usurped her property and house. Her students, India’s top lawyers and judges mobilized support and signed an open letter studded with such names as Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer, Soli Sorabjee, Gopal Subramaniam and Kapila Vatsyayan. Jurists, advocates, academics, bureaucrats, journalists and human rights activists had signed the open letter demanding justice for her. Finally, during her last days, Lotika Sarkar’s property was transferred back to her and her assets handed over to her to allow her to live her life in peaceful serenity, which she so deserved. Lotikadee’s traumatic experience invited serious attention to safeguarding the rights of senior citizens by both state and civil society.

Lotikadee was a conscience keeper not only for policy makers and legal fraternity but also of women’s studies scholars and women’s movement activists. The most appropriate tribute to Lotikadee is to proactively pursue the mission she started with her team in 1980- to fight against rape and various forms of structural and systemic violence against women and to strive for social justice, distributive justice and gender justice. Resurgence of activism against sexual violence and feminist debate around Justice Verma Commission’s Report as well as Criminal Law (Amendment ) Ordinance,
2013 constantly reminds us of the pioneering work of Lotikadee in terms of creating a strong band of committed and legally aware feminists who are following her footsteps. Let us salute Lotikadee, torchbearer of gender justice by continuing her heroic legacy.

## IMPORTANT NEWS THIS QUARTER

- **SC/ST quota bill tabled in RS, fate uncertain**
  
  **PTI Sep 5, 2012, 10.26PM IST**

  NEW DELHI: The bill to provide quota in promotions to SC/ST in jobs was introduced in Rajya Sabha amid unprecedented fisticuffs between members but its immediate passage looks unlikely with opposition emerging from within UPA and the continuing deadlock in Parliament.

  In a bid to wriggle out of the logjam over the coal controversy, Government has decided to move the bill for consideration and passage tomorrow but BJP, which has been disrupting Parliament for the last two weeks, is unrelenting.

  The Samajwadi Party has openly opposed the measure and it has been joined by UPA constituent DMK, which too has demanded quota for OBC in the measure.

  On the rival side also, divisions came to surface with JD-U supporting the bill and Shiv Sena strongly opposing it.

  The BJP, whose support the BSP sought for quick passage, has said it stands for social justice "subject to the limitation of Constitutional permissibility".

  The party said it has conveyed to the Rajya Sabha Chairman that it was willing for a debate but before that the government should take effective steps to resolve the Parliamentary stalemate by cancelling the coal block allocations and ordering an independent inquiry.

  The talk in political circles is that major parties like Congress and BJP are also said to be facing some sort of resistance from sections within and a parallel is being drawn to the Women’s Reservation Bill, which is still in a limbo.
Mayawati, who is strongly pitching for the measure, attacked both the NDA and the UPA for delay in passage saying they were keen on their political gains and not bothered about the SCs/STs.

More women in politics? Bring ‘em on!
Rushali Pawar, TNN Oct 5, 2012, 12.00 AM IST

Taking the majority of India’s political babus back to school and educating them about governance may be what we’d all like to see. As a first step in the right direction, a city business school has formulated a course for those with political aspirations, albeit only for women.

What started as an initiative to empower women has now inspired the business school to include a three-month course that offers a practical approach to politics in India. Aptly titled Women in Leadership, the course has caught the interest of women who wish to make a mark in politics. Professor Rajeev Gowda, also the president of the Centre for Public Policy, points out, "Women occupy only 10% of the seats in Parliament. The percentage is expected to rise when the Women’s Reservation Bill gets passed."

Actors-turned-politicians from the city are gung-ho about this course. Says Ramya, who joined the youth wing of a political party last year, "This is a nice initiative. I’d enrol in a course like this." Rakshitha Prem, who is heading the women's wing of a newly-launched party, adds that she would have loved to attend such a course had it been available before she took the plunge into politics. "I had to learn everything on the job. From building self-confidence to mastering the art of effective public speaking, to knowing about the existing policies, there’s a lot to learn," says Rakshitha.

MLA Krishna Byre Gowda thinks that such courses will enhance one’s understanding of politics. "Leadership is produced within society. This should be for women and men because more and more institutional support is required for youngsters."
The real challenge, though, is to increase the number of people who apply for the course, says Rajeev. "Very few want to join. I want to see at least 100 of these students in Parliament," he says.

Former state minister Nafees Fazal believes that apart from aspirants, freshers from political parties should also be seen in a course like this. "If political parties send freshers to such courses, it would usher in a welcome change in the country's political landscape," she says.

*(With inputs from Sunayana Suresh)*

❖ **Congress women's wing gears up for poll 2014**

**TNN Jul 29, 2012, 01.45AM IST**

YAVATMAL: The women's wing of Indian National Congress began a statewide contact programme with the cadre level workers. National vice president, Shobha Shah, of the women's wing, on Saturday, said that the party will be organizing state, district and regional level conventions and training camps for the grass root level workers in a phased manner.

"We took a statewide tour to make the cadres aware of the party's policies and programmes so as to strengthen the base of the party before the next general election in 2014," Shah said.

When asked if the party is providing support to frontal organizations like the women's wing and whether women are given adequate representation various forums, Shah said that the party is male dominated and women often get step motherly treatment.

"We raise our issues before the top rung leaders of the party but governments both at the centre and state, give least response to our problems," she said. She added that in order to achieve the necessary bargaining power steps to strengthen the organization is to be taken up first. Efforts would be made to ensure that capable women workers across the country get party tickets for the next election, Shah further said.

While answering a question as to why the Women's Reservation Bill was not passed in the Lok Sabha, she said that her party is keen to get the bill passed but some parties in
its coalition along with those in the opposition do not want the bill passed. It is a "man versus woman" struggle and women would one day win the battle.

Ex-mayor of Pune and Congress Women’s Wing state president Kamal Vyavhare expressed her concern over the atrocities being committed on women across the state. She also said that the cause of the needy women get affected when some women utilize the loopholes in the law made for their protection and misuse it against the men.

"We shall arrange training camps at each district and division phase by phase. The final convention would be held at the state level," Kamal Vyavhare said. National general secretary, Sandhya Sawalakhe, (Yavatmal), district president and former MLA Vijaya Dhote and others were present at the press conference.

❖ End violence against women: Let 2014 elections be fought on the issue of protecting our women and children

*Tuhin A Sinha* Dec 20, 2012, 12.00AM IST

So it took Sunday night's dastardly gang rape in Delhi for our women politicians to finally acknowledge the gravity of the problem! For it's only now that we're hearing Sushma Swaraj and Mayawati talk about the menace with the sense of urgency, which the issue had always deserved.

Let’s finally face it: crimes against women today have assumed the proportions of an epidemic. In Delhi, they happen to unsuspecting women who avail of public transport at night; in Har-nya, they happen to women to remind their parents that they ought to have been married off early; in Kerala the crime is of a more incestuous nature, what with umpteen reports surfacing of girl children having been raped by fathers, uncles, brothers, cousins et al. Even Mumbai, which until recently had been resilient to such crimes, is no longer so.

So the bottom line is that women in our country are in danger. If they are lucky enough to survive female infanticide, they are threatened by a society of lascivious beasts who don’t blink an eye before forcing themselves upon hapless prey. What the Delhi incident has once again reiterated is that the next victim could be anybody - just about anybody - which includes people dear to you.
For me, personally, every time I have begun my day by reading about a rape incident, it has made me feel ashamed of my manhood. It has made me feel inadequate and helpless in being able to do nothing to stop the scourge. And that feeling of inadequacy and helplessness is even more today. What baffles me most is our government's frivolous approach to the problem.

First of all, the government needs to acknowledge the sheer gravity of the problem. The Women's Reservation Bill is fine. But if adequate measures are not taken to protect women, it would shame the nation even more to see 180 women MPs not able to do anything to stop women from being raped.

In combating this menace, the government needs to understand that it's not merely a law and order problem. There is a social and psychological aspect to the problem as well. Hence, the curative approach ought to be two-pronged.

To begin with, laws against such crimes definitely need to be made more stringent. All rape cases ought to be settled in fast-track courts where the judiciary is bound to pass a judgment within six months of the filing of the chargesheet. The convicted should not have the right to appeal to a higher court against the judgment of the lower court in open and shut cases, especially in cases of gang rape. The sentence for such crimes should be upgraded to life imprisonment in all cases. Even lesser crimes like eve-teasing should lead to impounding of passports and driving licences so as to deter potential rapists. Most importantly, crimes against women cannot be delinked from the larger problem of falling gender ratio of women. Hence, female infanticide ought to be treated at par with homicide.

In addition to overhauling laws, we ought to remember that we are a country where such a huge chunk of male population lives away from its spouse to earn a livelihood. It is this chunk of the population, which has shown greater propensity towards committing gender crimes.

It makes sense, in this situation to consider legalising prostitution. It would be naive for me to speak in favour or against legalising prostitution right away. But at least, the Delhi mishap should kick-start a national debate on this.
There is of course an altogether different aspect to the problem too. In India, one out of 30-40 rape cases actually gets reported. In rural areas again, the nature of the crime and issues involved are very different. Let's acknowledge that dalit girls have been used as sex slaves for ages in villages across the country.

**Reservation bill won't benefit 'unattractive' rural women: Mulayam.**

*Parvez Iqbal Siddiqui, TNN Nov 10, 2012, 04.06AM IST*

LUCKNOW: Samajwadi Party chief Mulayam Singh Yadav on Friday reiterated his opposition to the Women's Reservation Bill in its present form, saying it would only help affluent women as poor and rural women "are not considered attractive enough" to reap its benefit.

Mulayam made these remarks while addressing a gathering in Barabanki. But he said his party could reconsider its stand on the bill provided a sub-quota is offered to women from backward and minority communities.

Women organizations have taken exception to Mulayam's remarks with Lucknow University's former vice-chancellor Roop Rekha Verma terming them as "ridiculous".

In Delhi, Bharatiya Janata Party spokesperson Nirmala Sitaram said Mulayam must abandon such assumptions and treat women with respect and not as commercial product.

Later, Mulayam skirted the issue when asked to clarify his "sexist" remarks. "I have opposed the bill earlier...but if Dalits, Muslims and backward classes are taken care of, we can consider supporting it," he said. "We always feel that men and women should work shoulder to shoulder but women are still suppressed in the society."

Mulayam had earlier in March 2010 opposed the bill saying, if passed, it would "provoke young men to whistle" in parliament.

The Congress had earlier ruled out possibilities of any sub-quota. The Union government has proposed 33% reservation for women in Lok Sabha and assemblies, but the parties like SP and RJD have been opposing it even as it was passed in the Rajya Sabha in March 2010.
Despite protest, ordinance on sexual offences promulgated

*The Hindu, February 3, 2013*

A day after dozens of civil society and women’s organisations termed the sexual offences ordinance approved by the Cabinet an anti-thesis of the Justice Verma Committee report, President Pranab Mukherjee on Sunday accorded his assent to it.

At a news conference here on Saturday, women’s rights activists had questioned the motives of the government in going ahead with the ordinance post-haste and appealed to the President not to sign it. They are chalking out plans for nationwide protests to pressure Parliament not to allow the government to have its way.

Coming less than three weeks ahead of the budget session, the ordinance makes changes in the criminal law by amending the Indian Penal Code (IPC), the Code of Criminal Procedure (Cr.PC) and the Evidence Act. It provides for capital punishment in cases of rape that leads to death or leaves the victim in “persistent vegetative state,” a proposal disfavoured by the Verma Committee.

The ordinance would have a life of six months unless Parliament approves a bill or bills incorporating the amendments effected to the IPC, the Cr.PC and the Evidence Act. The government managers have sought to give an impression that the ordinance was meant to address ‘a sense of urgency’ in the wake of the nationwide tumult over the brutal gang rape of a 23-year-old paramedical student inside a bus in the national capital on December 16, 2012.

The Verma Committee was constituted to recommend changes to the law for addressing such brutal sexual offences. As if responding to civil society’s anguish over the dichotomy between the ordinance and the Committee report, External Affairs Minister Salman Khurshid said: “All you can do is that when Parliament is not in session, we can promulgate an ordinance. It does not mean that widespread consultations cannot take place when the actual bill is brought in Parliament.”
He asked the women’s organisations and all political parties to come together for widespread consultations with “all the sensitivity” needed.

Besides the death sentence, the ordinance enhances punishment for other crimes like stalking, voyeurism, acid attacks, indecent gestures or words and inappropriate touch.

Activist Kavita Krishnan, addressing a press conference here, said: “We wonder what objective and purpose will be served by such a hasty, non-transparent measure since the ordinance does not retrospectively apply to the Delhi gang rape case.”

- **Govt to set up 100 one-stop crisis centres for women**
  - *The Hindu, February 7*

The Ministry for Women and Child Development is setting up one-stop crisis centres for women across the country to provide redressal to women who are victims of violence at home or workplace.

“We are planning to set up the centres in 100 districts initially, which will be made operational from the next fiscal,” Krishna Tirath, Minister for Women and Child Development, said at a regional consultation meet on National Plan of Action for Improving Child Sex Ratio.

The centre will be headed by a coordinator, who will be senior doctor of the hospital. Besides the coordinator, there will be a team of about ten people consisting of counsellor, police officer, lawyer and doctor.

“These centres will provide all kinds of relief to women victims, including counselling and treatment,” she said.

Tirath said a provision of about Rs 100 crore a year has been approved from 2013 for appointment of protection officers who could exclusively work towards implementation of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act for the 12[+t]{+h} Plan.

The Minister said a national plan for improving child sex ratio was being prepared, with as many as 27 states and Union Territories registering a fall in the child sex ratio in
the last decade. Sharp decline in the range of 22-82 points have been reported in child sex ratios in many states, including Jammu and Kashmir, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Sikkim. The decline in the ratio has been the highest in Lakshadweep (-51 points), followed by Odisha (-19), Andhra Pradesh (-18) and Kerala (-1).

“Declining child sex ratio is the manifestation of bias against girls and women in our country. Discrimination against women begins even before the girl child is born. The sex selective elimination is a serious concern and needs to be eliminated from our society at the earliest,” Tirath said.

The Ministry has constituted a high-level committee to holistically look into the various issues concerning women.

Parliament approves law on sexual harassment of women at workplaces

Parliament on Tuesday finally put its stamp on a legislation to end sexual harassment of women at workplaces. The bill on sexual harassment of women was approved by Rajya Sabha unanimously, as the lower house had approved it in last session. Thanking MPs for giving nod to the bill, women and child development minister Krishna Tirath promised to follow up the legislation with strict rules for its implementation after President Pranab Mukherjee returns it with his mandatory stamp to make it part of statute book.

The bill covers under its list of offences sexual remarks, demand for sexual favour, or any act of physical advance or an unwelcome touch. Tirath said the bill will cover both organised and unorganised sectors and will include domestic workers. “The aim is that women are able to work freely whether it is workplace in organised or unorganised sector,” she said.

The bill makes it mandatory for any organisation with 10 or more employees to set up an internal complaint committee. For an employer not following this, the penalty will be Rs.50,000. Repeated violations may lead to higher penalties and cancellation of licence or registration to conduct business. However, in the case of false or malicious
complaint, the bill provides for action against the complainant in accordance with service rules and in any other manner in case no service rules exist.

The bill covers not only employees, but also clients, customers, apprentice or daily wage workers who enter the workplace. Its provisions will also apply to private sector organisation, societies, trusts, educational institutions, NGOs, service providers of commercial, professional or entertainment activities.

Repeated non-compliance of the provisions of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Bill, can even lead to higher penalties and cancellation of licence or registration to conduct business.

The sexual harassment has been defined as any one or more of unwelcome acts or behaviour such as physical contact and advances, a demand or request for sexual favours or making sexually coloured remarks or showing pornography. The acts or behaviour whether directly, or by implication, include any other unwelcome physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct of sexual nature.

The legislation further defines domestic worker as a woman employed to do household work in any household for remuneration whether in cash or kind, either directly or through any agency on temporary, permanent, part time or full time basis, but does not include any member of the family of the employer.

❖ Union Budget 2013-14: India's first all-women bank by October: Chidambaram

- Times of India, 28 February

The country is all set to get an all-women bank by this year with the government announcing an initial capital of Rs 1,000 crore for the purpose.

Announcing the Budget proposals for 2013-14, finance minister P Chidambaram said the bank is likely to be set by October this year.

"I...propose to set up India's first women bank as the public sector. I shall provide Rs 1,000 crore as initial capital. I hope to obtain the necessary approval and banking licence by October, 2013," he said.
The proposed bank will lend mostly to women and women run businesses, support women SHGs and womens livelihood, he said.

It will employ predominately women which addresses the gender related issues and empowerment and financial inclusion, he added.

Anti-rape Bill passed in Parliament
By IANS - NEW DELHI, 21st March 2013 03:00 PM

The anti-rape bill, providing for enhanced punishment for rape, making stalking and voyeurism criminal offences and fixing age of consent for sex at 18, got parliamentary approval Thursday with the Rajya Sabha passing the bill with voice vote.

The Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill, 2013 was passed by the Lok Sabha Tuesday.

The widely-debated bill seeks to provide enhanced punishment for crimes such as rape and gang-rape, prescribing punishment extending to death sentence for offenders for inflicting any injury which causes death of the victim or causes them to be in a persistent vegetative state.

Replying to the debate on the bill in the upper house, Home Minister Sushilkumar Shinde said the gang-rape and subsequent death of a 23-year-old in Delhi shook the conscience of the whole nation, and there was a demand for a stronger law against rape.

He said changes in the existing laws were necessary for dignity of women and to increase their sense of security.

Describing the bill as tough and rigid, Shinde said the legislation will have its effect in the coming years.

Stressing that the bill was not against men, he said men also wanted the bill to be passed for the protection of their mothers and sisters.
The minister said the bill provides for action against police officials not registering complaint of victims, while sections dealing with the position of dominance imply political dominance too.

He noted that the ordinance promulgated last month kept the age of consent at 18 and this was retained in the bill. The age of consent was 16 under the Indian Penal Code till it was changed in the ordinance.

While introducing the bill, Shinde remembered the Delhi gang-rape victim.

"The brave heart who fought for her dignity, we can at least honour her by passing this bill soon," he said.

Debating the bill, members across the political spectrum expressed concern over security of women. The debate in Rajya Sabha was shorter compared to the Lok Sabha but saw participation of several women members.

Communist Party of India-Marxist's T.N. Seema suggested that age of consent for sex should be kept at 16. "Age of consent should be 16 years... a safeguard can be put that the boy should not be more than five years older than the girl," she said.

She also demanded that rape of a Dalit or tribal woman by a non-Dalit or non-tribal man should be considered an aggravated crime.

DMK’s Vasanthi Stanley suggested inclusion of trans genders in the bill, while Rashtriya Janata Dal member Ram Kripal Yadav demanded removing provisions against stalking.

Maya Singh of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) said anyone above 16 years of age should be punished if found guilty in a rape case.

"If anyone is above 16, and rapes a woman and murders, he should be given the death sentence," she said.
One of the accused in the Dec 16 Delhi gang-rape is a juvenile, whose case is being heard by the juvenile justice board.

Her party colleague M. Venkaiah Naidu said the government should add more women to police force and suggested adding moral science as subject in school curriculum.

Prabha Thakur of Congress said that more women will be file cases if they see justice being done. "If punishment is given, the criminals would also feel afraid," she said.

"Presently women do not feel free to register cases of rape or molestation because they fear that they will be maligned and would not get justice," she said.

The bill incorporates suggestions of the Justice J.S. Verma Committee formed to make the anti-rape laws stronger. It seeks to punish repeat offenders of rape with imprisonment of life (which will be the remainder of the person's natural life), or with death.

It provides for rigorous imprisonment for a minimum of 20 years extendable to life imprisonment to those convicted for the offence of gang rape, and also defines and prescribes punishment for stalking, voyeurism and sexual harassment.

The anti-rape bill will replace the ordinance promulgated last month. The legislation had to be passed by parliament before April 4, when it would have lapsed.

❖ **M.S. Swaminathan bats for women’s reservation**
- NEW DELHI, March 23, 2013

Voting in favour of the Women’s Reservation Bill in the Rajya Sabha in March 2010 was the most important occasion for him during his tenure in the upper house, said nominated member agricultural scientist M.S. Swaminathan on Friday.

Dr. Swaminathan was addressing members as the House bid him farewell ahead of his term coming to an end next month.
Making a strong pitch for 33 per cent reservation for women in Parliament and State Assemblies, he expressed the hope that the Lok Sabha would pass the Bill soon so that the socio-political empowerment of women, which started at the local body level, could “be extended to the highest decision-making bodies of our democracy.”

Dr. Swaminathan, fondly known as the “father of the green revolution” was greeted by the entire House, including Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, with thumping of desks.

He, however, regretted that the Women Farmer’s Entitlements Bill, 2011, could not come up for discussion during his term, despite being listed twice, as proceedings were disrupted.