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Stakeholders Address Violence Violence Against Women

N SHANTHA MOHAN
B K ANITHA
C SRINATH

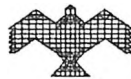


NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDIES
Indian Institute of Science Campus
Bangalore 560 012 India

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Violence Against Women

Dr. N. Shantha Mohan
Dr. B. K. Anitha
Mr. C. Srinath

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Acknowledgment

We are grateful to all the community representatives and partner organisations of the SRWK study that participated in the consultation to make it a success. We extend our warm gratitude to the Honorable Minister, Women and Child Development, Ms. Motamma for the commitment she expressed towards the issue. This consultation has greatly benefited by her interaction with the participants. Our deep appreciation goes to all the participants and the media for usefully contributing to the consultation.

We would like to thank Prof. Roddam Narasimha, Director, NIAS and other faculty of the Institute for their encouragement and interest evinced in our work. Our sincere thanks are also to Maj. Gen. M.K. Paul, Controller and the administrative staff for their unfailing support.

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August, 14, 2000
Bangalore

Project Team
Dr. N. Shantha Mohan
Dr. B.K. Anitha
Mr. C. Srinath



Backdrop

The advocacy project on “**Violence Against Women**”(VAW) undertaken by the Gender Studies Unit (GSU) is best explained in the backdrop of the findings of our earlier study – ‘Status of Rural Women in Karnataka’ (SRWK). This study clearly brought out those aspects of women’s lives that are undervalued and the gross violations of basic rights that they face in the so-called ‘private’ sphere of their homes. Around 70 per cent of women respondents related to these incidences of violence as punitive measures rightfully executed by their husbands. And, the thirty per cent of women who contested this male right belonged to the areas where Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) have been active or where these NGOs as part of their development agenda have taken up awareness of women’s rights.

Drawing from these findings, the advocacy project on VAW was initiated as the second phase of our earlier project. To follow up our commitment to the communities involved in the study, we decided to work with the same ten villages spread across the six districts of Karnataka, representing the various

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geographical zones in the state. These districts include Bijapur, Koppal, Chitradurga, Kolar, Kodagu and Udupi.

Being fully conscious of the sensitivity involved regarding the issue of domestic violence and the varying socio-economic conditions and the cultural milieu of the selected districts, we initiated the advocacy project through a participatory methodology involving the community and the NGO partners. Recognising the fact that many forms of violence can be understood only in the socialscape of their existence and in the interlinkages of institutions that perpetuate them, we attempt to understand, analyse and strategise the advocacy efforts with the cultural specificity necessary in addressing particular incidences of violence.

Violence committed against women is most often justified by societal norms, which, in turn, are rooted in the low status of women. The lower status of women reinforced by religious and state institutions is reflected in the private as well as the public spheres of life. Therefore, our advocacy efforts involve participation of all the stakeholders, namely the community, the NGOs, the state (local level institutions, the judiciary, the police department, other government departments) and the media. While in the selected districts we work with the community in partnership with NGOs, the advocacy strategies are envisaged in collaboration with all stakeholders.

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Registration



Almost Hundred Participated !

A View of the Audience



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We initiated our project by conducting focus group discussions with the community members. A one-day consultation was organised to share the field insights and strategise for action with the communities. The audience comprised of our study partners, the government representatives, police officials, NGOs, media, academia and most importantly community representatives from the respective villages.

Proceedings of the Consultation

Inaugural Session

Prof. Roddam Narasimha, the Director of NIAS, in his welcome address briefed the participants about the objectives and history of NIAS. Founded 12 years ago by JRD Tata and generously supported by the government of Karnataka, NIAS has the following objectives:

- Integrate the findings of scholarship from different branches of knowledge – science and technology, social sciences, arts and humanities. Every research investigation is multi-disciplinary in approach aimed at solving the complex problems facing our society by drawing the best from each discipline.
- Create new leadership in all fields of society with sufficiently broad horizons to tackle such problems.

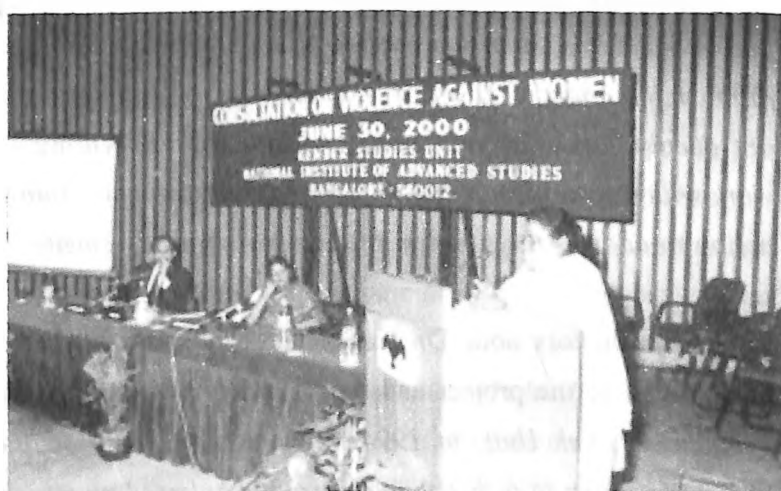
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Receiving the Chief Guest



Dr. Shantha Mohan, Fellow, GSU, NIAS, Ms. Motamma, Hon'ble Minister, W&CD, Prof. R. Narasimha, Director, NIAS, Maj. Gen. M. K. Paul, Controller, NIAS

Inaugural Address



Ms. Motamma, Hon'ble Minister, W & CD

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Relating to the consultation, he said that NIAS has had a long interest in the subject of gender and particularly in the status of women. The study on the 'Status of Rural Women in Karnataka' by the Gender Studies Unit highlighted that there was much more to be desired with regard to the status of women in the state. Further, he added *"to strengthen our society, it is important to bring women into the mainstream of governance. NIAS has evinced interest to draw the attention of a variety of people in the government, public and the scholarly community on the magnitude of the problem faced by women. As a part of this effort, the unit has undertaken a detailed study of the participation of women in Panchayat Raj Institutions. In continuation of this involvement with issues related to gender, the consultation on Violence Against Women is being held. Violence against women continues to be a serious problem and it is important that all actors concerned with this problem join together to address this issue. We, at the institute are deeply concerned with the problem and are willing to work with the various actors to formulate strategies for future action to address the problem of violence against women."*

In her introductory note, Dr. N. Shantha Mohan provided the background of the project and the need for the consultation. *"Gender Studies Unit, in 1994 began with a study on the status of women in 6 districts of Karnataka, based on which, the advocacy phase was planned to address the problems as prioritised by the community. Our partners in the study*

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expressed the need to focus on violence against women. Initially, it was decided to exclusively focus on domestic violence but later it was decided to facilitate the communities to prioritise the areas and forms of violence that they would want to address. After intense discussions with communities and NGO partners, each community prioritised its own area vis-à-vis violence – State violence in Kodagu, child marriage and devadasi system in Bijapur and Koppal, alcoholism in Kolar and dowry in Chitradurga and Udupi districts. While community members and the partners did not undermine the existence of domestic violence and its effect on women, they felt that it was too early to raise the issue. Hence, it seemed appropriate to identify the above areas as entry issues. We, at NIAS, realise that we in isolation cannot bring about a positive change. We need to involve the police, media, and Panchayat Raj Institutions, for collective action to address the problem. Community representatives have come here to share their concerns on violence and evolve remedial measures. We are here to formulate a step by step action plan in partnership to check and prevent violence against women. The question that arises here is how do we become partners in this process and bring about the needed change in the communities. The objective of this consultation is precisely for this. We hope to discuss and collectively evolve strategies that enable us to create a violence free society and hopefully create models to replicate.”

Inaugural Address

Ms. Motamma, the Honourable Minister for Women and Child Development, Government of Karnataka, in her inaugural address, commended the very idea of such a consultation. She said, *“Violence is faced by all women no matter where they are. The question is why? There is a saying in Sanskrit- where women are respected the gods are happy. Yet, with this tradition one wonders why women continue to be subjected to violence in our culture. We have tolerated enough and now women need to come together to challenge this.”* She said that March 8th is celebrated as Women’s day and we observe the year of the girl child and today, women rights are being considered as human rights. But just celebrating womanhood is pointless, unless something more concrete is done to enhance her status. She stressed, *“while the situation of women has improved over the years, there is also an increase in the quantum of violence they are subjected to”. Is this because women are excelling in all the fields due to the encouragement they receive and therefore are perceived as a threat or is there a serious problem with us? There are plenty of policies designed for women propagating equal property rights, all women police stations and so on. More recently, the 33 per cent reservation for women in Panchayat Raj Institutions has resulted in large numbers of women occupying positions in public spaces. In spite of all these, why is violence against women increasing? What are the joint efforts undertaken by women to overcome these problems?”* questioned the minister.

Highlighting the need to *sensitise men* as a pre requisite to address the issue of violence, the minister drew attention to the existing practice vis-à-vis natal homes and marital homes. *“Worrying about a daughter and preparing her to cope in her marital home is not only a mother’s concern. It is also important for father and brothers to give this a serious thought. We look after our daughters very well but when she goes to her marital home she is exploited. This experience is not just for daughters but is true for the daughters-in-law too. When a daughter goes to her husband’s home and she is not treated well, her father and other male family members get very agitated and angry. Yet, when the same thing happens to their daughter-in-law, they remain silent. Men, at best avoid such situations. They have to be made aware and sensitive to this issue. When there are conflicts between women, men refrain from taking a stand against their mothers. The situation is aggravated when there is a sister or daughter in the house who is married and living in the natal home and does not get along with the daughter-in-law. The men stay clear from such situations, by leaving home early and returning late”*. She questioned the responsibility of men by stating, *“Isn’t this a form of escapism? Men feel they should take decisions on everything else but why not on the issue of violence? Why do men not take the lead in the area of violence too? In the case of harassment and exploitation of the wife, why do men not take a stand? Why do men shirk responsibility to convince their mothers or sisters about the ills of dowry”*? She urged

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that only, when men take a stand on such issues will the many problems be automatically solved.

Highlighting the importance of sensitising the law enforcement authorities, the minister conceded: *“The protectors of law are the police and the judicial system. Not everyone is bad in the police force but when it comes to the community, especially women, they are often not very responsive. Family counseling centres exist, but they lack effective follow up mechanisms. For example, when a case is transferred from the family-counseling centre to the police, often their interaction with the police is not effective. Similarly the police do not follow up the case when a woman who seeks assistance is sent back home”*. She felt that even if her in-laws accept the woman, the police must follow-up the case to ensure her safety. Citing the example of dowry cases she questioned, *“What is happening to the dowry cases? How many people have actually been punished? If there is a death before five years of marriage, it is considered as a dowry death. To what extent do the police respond to these complaints? Can the police inform us as to how many people have actually been punished ? The police always report that they have booked the case, while it is important to punish the culprit. Is it possible to provide witness, when kerosene is poured on a woman and burnt or when she has been hanged? Despite information on the causes for dowry deaths, the police still do not file cases where people can be actually punished. The court likewise demands witnesses, documents and evidence. This is hard to*

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provide. The police and the justice system needs to be sensitised to help women— especially with respect to sexual harassment and dowry deaths.”

Reiterating her commitment to women’s issues, the minister informed the audience of the existing government programmes for women and the new programmes that are being planned by her department. *“There is an urgent need to establish women welfare centres to provide immediate shelter to women harassed and those who attempted suicide. We need to help and encourage them in all possible ways and provide access to these shelter homes at all hours. There should be no economic barriers to provide them assistance in getting protection. These women need to be equipped to face life by giving them education or employment based on their particular needs. We would like to set up these centres initially in Belgaum, Mysore, and Gulbarga.”*

Appreciating the help-line programme run by the police in collaboration with NGOs, the minister informed that the programme provides a 24-hour emergency line for distressed women to seek advice. *“These help lines are a source of information for the police department. Neighbours could access this help line to report cases of abuse or harassment. They can inform the police while the incident is occurring and this way the offender can be caught in the act. NGOs should come forward in this endeavor.”*

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The minister enlisted the other programmes of the government including,

- Attendance scholarships for girls who drop out of school due to economic problems at home.
- Incentive of Rs. 500 for women who have girl children (limited to two) to prevent female foeticide and infanticide.
- Loans for income generation for women below the poverty line to the extent of Rs. 50,000 and a 25 percent subsidy, 40 percent if SC/ST provided by Women Development Corporation (WDC).
- Registration of land and houses under any government schemes should include the wife's name.

However she lamented that despite these provisions, the situation of women remains unchanged. "*Women should be informed that they have equal right and opportunity to survive in this world*".

Minister's Views on the Long Term Strategies to Alleviate VAW

- **Education:** Provide education, not just schooling to rural women, to bring about attitudinal changes especially about the girl child. Highlight the importance of girl children. The dreams you have for your son should hold good for your daughter too!
- **Change Attitudes:** There is a need to change attitudes of educated women as well. In spite of women being

personally unhappy in their marriages they are eager to get their daughters married off.

- **Fostering Economic Independence:** Train women to combat problems in life. This can be achieved by giving women education, economic independence and equal property rights. Normally families are busy collecting dowry for the son-in-law, instead of equipping their daughters to be independent and capable to face problems. Furthermore, one needs to be cautious not to tolerate irresponsible men who exploit women who are economically independent.
- **Other strategies** include sensitisation of men particularly from the Judiciary, Government and Law enforcement agencies to ensure effective implementation of Government programmes and schemes for women.

Interactive Session

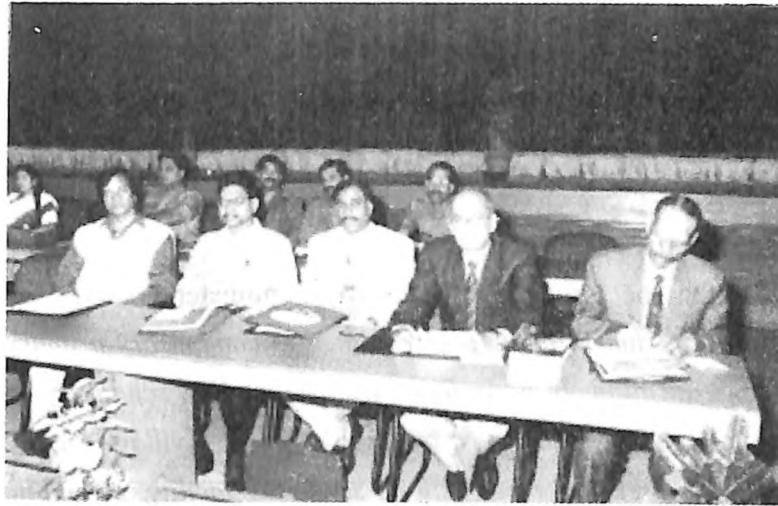
Following her inaugural address, she responded to queries raised by the participants.

Dialogue between the Minister and Participants

Listing community concerns, Ms. Girija, a social worker from Mulabagal Taluk, Kolar district raised the problems faced by them in relation to education, health and alcoholism:

- Education and health are important for women. However, the facilities available for education and health of women in the villages are inadequate.
- Women face mental and physical health problems. Health facilities for women in the villages are vital especially for the poor. Mulabagal Taluk has 100 Primary Health Centres (PHCs) and a female doctor is present only in one hospital at the taluk level. Women suffer from gynaecological problems and hesitate to discuss them with male doctors. In most cases, they do not even pay attention to these ailments, which lead to serious health problems. To address their reproductive health problems, they need a woman doctor.
- *Alcoholism* is the cause of domestic violence. Across villages there are unlicensed alcohol shops. Earlier only

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Police in Rapt Attention



*Ms. Gowramma from Chitradurga District urging
for Minister's Action*

men used to consume alcohol, but now even children drink as male family members set a bad example. Further, since the children are sent to the shops to purchase liquor they develop easy access to liquor for self-consumption.

Minister's response:

- On the issue of education, the minister stated, *"the government has a policy related to compulsory primary education. In accordance with this policy, schools have been opened in most of the villages. If a village has 40 children and more with no schooling facility, the public can demand for a lower primary school through the AEO and the Taluk Panchayat. In case of secondary and high school, the facility can be demanded for a group of villages located in close proximity to each other."* However she remarked, *"if there are habitats that have not been reached by the government and have encountered problems in seeking redressal, you can contact me and I will speak to the concerned officials"*.
- Regarding the need for a lady doctor the minister continued by placing in context the problem of posting doctors in the rural areas. She said, *"There is a scarcity of doctors, as most of them want to establish a good practice in the cities and very few desire to work in the rural areas. The government is still grappling with the*

problem of reaching health care to the rural areas. The selection process of the doctors has been completed and about 500-600 doctors have been selected for PHCs. After verification, they will be posted. In spite of this, if no doctors are posted in your area, you can write to me”.

- Responding to the problem of alcoholism the minister replied that *“People of all classes consume liquor. To stop this, the communities should unitedly protest and seek a ban on the sale of alcohol. In Andhra Pradesh the women had succeeded in stopping the sale of alcohol”.*

Discussing female responsibility, the police brought out the issue of violence caused by women against women. Responses to this issue were to unveil and emphasise male responsibility in such instances.

Dialogue Between Minister and Participants

According to Mr. Jagadish, a representative of the police department from Udupi, *“Men are not the only ones who perpetrate violence against women, often women are also responsible. Thus the problem has to be addressed at the societal level to bring about a positive change”.* Drawing from his personal experience he spoke about Spandhana. *“Spandhana is a joint effort of NGOs and police in Udupi who conduct bi-monthly meetings on every alternate*

Sunday. In these sessions, frequently violence perpetrated by women on women is discussed. Mothers- and sisters-in-law harass the daughters- and sisters-in-law. The other form of violence perpetrated by women is that of female foeticide”.

Minister's Response:

Speaking about male responsibility, the minister referred to her inaugural address by saying, “In my speech, I spoke about escapism and lack of responsibility shouldered by men. In saying that women are the cause of violence, you as men are not taking any responsibility. If you mutely watch your wife taking dowry, then what is your role in checking the practice? If your wife is being pressurised to abort a female foetus, what is your reaction? As parents you should not differentially treat the boy and the girl child and you should ensure that the girl child gets a fair deal. Even in the case of domestic violence, men need to take the responsibility to control this menace. As men, you are always regarded as the head of the family, you take decisions on all fronts, then why not on the matter of violence too? During conflicts between mother and daughter-in-law no man wants to stay at home. You leave early in the morning to work, meet friends, drink with them and come home late and sleep peacefully. Then you blame woman when you yourself do not take a decision”.

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Sharing views – The Minister and Panelists



Dr. B. K. Anitha presenting the field observations

Dr. B.K. Anitha presented the insights on violence against women as perceived by the community members.

Perceptions from the Field: Excerpts from the Presentation

Though a broad definition is more appropriate for our project to encompass the many violations of women's human rights to be addressed keeping in mind the danger of losing the descriptive power of the term 'violence', we have adopted the UN definition which states,

*'Any act of verbal or physical force, coercion, or life-threatening deprivation, directed at an individual woman or girl, that causes physical or **psychological harm, humiliation or arbitrary deprivation of liberty**'
(emphasis ours)*

We would like to highlight the latter part of the definition as it emphasises the social consequences of violence and helps distinguish culture-bound harmful practices meted out to women in varying forms by various agents and structures of society.

With this operational definition, focus group discussions (FGDs) with the communities were initiated. The following objectives were set for the FGDs:

- To re-establish rapport with the communities to facilitate an active involvement and participation of the communities in all stages of our advocacy effort.

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- To mainstream the issue of ‘violence against women’ as prioritised by our partner organisations.
- To introduce the issue of violence against women within the framework of rights and social justice.
- To understand different forms of violence that women experience and are aware of in their everyday lives - its apparent causes and manifestations.
- To understand the differences between communities both inter-district and intra-district, with regard to various forms of violence perpetrated against women.
- To strategise collectively in continued consultation the advocacy efforts for a “violence free” community.

Methodology: In each village, we conducted two Focus Group Discussions one each for women and men separately. In many places, groups were formed along caste lines to avoid tensions and inhibitions due to intermingling of caste groups with differing social status. For example, in Bijapur, the FGD was conducted separately for men and women belonging to the Madar and Madiga communities. Separate groups of men and women were formed in the main village comprising of caste groups of relatively higher status like Devangas, Lingayats, Kshatriyas and the Kurubas.

The average strength of the groups varied between 8-16 members. The attendance in the FGDs was relatively low in the non-NGO intervention areas. We adopted a life cycle

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approach to discuss the issue of violence against women. Along with their perceptions on various forms of violence, issues were classified as violence pertaining to childhood, adolescence, adulthood, marital home and old age.

The intention of the FGDs was largely to reacquaint, establish rapport and have an insight into the perceptions and priorities of the communities about violence against women. We focussed more on understanding the cultural context, existing levels of awareness and the inhibitions of the communities regarding this issue. We present our observations emanating from the 23 FGDs in six districts in a format that brings out our concerns. The categories we have used in the presentation reflect the forms as expressed by the community members themselves. For this reason, the data presented have overlapping issues, which are mutually non-exclusive categories. Table -1 provides a profile of the FGDs – districts, villages, major communities, and the issue/s identified by the groups as the major form of violence.

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District	Village	Caste groups	No. of FGDs		Average group size		Issue identified
			Men	Women	Men	Women	
Bijapur	Mallapura	Madar, Madigas, Devangas, Lingayats, Kshathriyas, Kurubas	2	2	14	15	Devadasis, decline in girls' age at marriage
Chitradurga	Hosahalli	AdiKamataka, Bovis, Gollas, Nayaks, Shetty, Lingayats	2	2	15	13	Dowry, ostracism of deserted women
Kodagu	Rangasamudra	JenuKurubas, Koraga, BettaKuruba, Billavas	1	1	10	8	State violence
Kolar	Minjenahalli, Nagamangala	Gollas, Bhovis	2	2	12	16	Abuse due to alcoholism
Koppal	Talkere	Valmiki, Lingayats, Vokkaligas, Holeyars	2	2	14	11	Child Marriage
Udupi	Padur	Koraga, AdiKamataka, Buntis, Billavas, Shettys, Poojaris	1	2	8	10	Dowry

Our subjective impression about each village and community vis-a-vis the major form of violence that women face does not necessarily coincide with the issue of violence identified by the groups. This impression was the outcome of our observations and from the discussions with the partner NGOs working in these areas. Emphasising one issue for an area/village does not imply by any means that other forms of violence were not prevalent or insignificant. Nevertheless, we attributed this variation to the subjective realities of men and women and the differences in the priority of issues to be addressed.

For example, in Bijapur, where the devadasi system prevails and child marriages are rampant among the lower caste groups

and drop out of girl children from school in the post-menarche stage across almost all caste groups, the groups had their own reasons for prioritising or omitting issues. The scheduled caste groups discussed the dedication of girls as devadasis, since the NGO present in the area along with the community had already prioritised this issue. However, they were not keen to discuss the issue of child-marriage, another form of violence against women prevalent amongst them. The women's group belonging to relatively higher caste groups like the Devanga, Lingayat and Kshatriya discussed social pressures leading to early marriage of girls.

Similarly, in Udupi, the discussion on domestic violence centered round the increasing rates of dowry, the consequent late marriage of girls, family's economic burden and the cases of dowry harassment in the neighbourhood.

In Udupi the exorbitant increase in dowry manifests in the form of late marriage of girls, whereas the same problem in the districts of Koppal and Bijapur results in the perpetuation of practices like devadasi, child marriages and a decrease of the age at marriage. The complex responses of communities to similar issues highlight the variations that need to be understood within contextual cultural-specific realities.

In Kodagu, a largely tribal area, domestic violence especially in the form of wife abuse due to alcoholism was an every day fact of women's lives. This however was not their priority

since the male and female groups confined themselves to the discussion on violence perpetrated by the state, especially the Forest department, since the livelihood of these communities depends on the forest.

The question then is how do we understand these varying factors that determine the priorities of the communities? Based on our observations the following points emerge:

Priorities of the Community

- Those forms of violence against women due to culturally enforced codes, norms and practices are seldom the priority of the people, and therefore are less likely to be considered as violence. However, the issue becomes significant if the organisation addresses it as a specific issue as a part of their developmental work in the area for a considerable period of time. For example, in Bijapur- the dedication of girls as devadasis, and in Kodagu- the violence perpetrated by the State.
- Forms of violence that are detrimental to the family's well being assume relatively more importance. For example, if the husband beats the wife it is not a priority, but if it is accompanied by alcoholism that disturbs the household economy or is extended to children and other members of the family, it becomes an issue. In Kolar, alcoholism was identified as an issue.

Receptivity/Openness of the Group in Discussing VAW

Given the cultural constraints and limitations of a survey method, our earlier study observed gross under reporting of incidences of violence. This under reporting, however, needs to be understood against the values attached to family honour and more so the responsibility of women to uphold it, particularly among women belonging to the upper strata of the class hierarchy.

A shift in the approach from survey method to a more participatory method of FGD was adopted to invoke a community feeling amongst women and men to share their lived experiences. However, given the *privateness* of the matter and the fear of violating the sanctity of marriage and family relations, groups differed in their openness to discuss the issue. Many younger women were unable to open up in the presence of older women in the community. Most of the men's groups denied any form of violence against women in the initial stages of the discussion. However, the openness and receptivity shown to the issue of VAW in general and to domestic violence in particular, violence enforced by cultural practices and violence perpetrated by the state need to be differentiated to capture the contextuality of the responses.

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Table II: Receptivity/Openness of the Group								
District	VAW		Domestic		Cultural		State violence	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Bijapur	6	4, 5	5	5	5	5	-	-
Chitradurga	6	5	6	5	6	5	-	-
Kodagu	7	7	5	5	5	5	3	3
Kolar	5	4	6	3	6	4	-	-
Koppal	6	3, 5	6	5	6	5	-	-
Udupi	6	4	6	5	6	5	-	-

1. Low receptivity due to lack of awareness
2. Low receptivity due to Cultural inhibition
3. Open for discussion
4. Open for discussion but lack awareness
5. Low receptivity due to high level of acceptance accorded to VAW
6. Guarded response
7. Open for discussion on specific issues

District Variation: Violence Against Women

It can be discerned from Table-II, that a discussion about violence against women per se was received by most of the men's group with '*guarded and most appropriate*' response. For example, in Bijapur, Chitradurga, Udupi and Koppal, the men's groups were categorical in saying that their women do not face any form of violence. In Kolar, they maintained low receptivity to the discussion on VAW in general as they felt that it was an integral part of their family life.

In all the districts irrespective of caste-class differences, women's groups did not show any resistance to discuss VAW. All the group members were able to relate to the issue as a matter of concern though they showed wide variance in perception, forms of existence, and causes etc. However, one common perception observed across women groups is the

almost total casualness accorded to VAW. Therefore women showed a lack of interest during the initial stages of the discussion. Some groups who were more open for discussion lacked awareness about the issue. For example, women groups in Bijapur and Koppal were open for discussion, but were totally conditioned by the norms of a patriarchal culture. However these women could identify during the process of discussion, decreasing age at marriage for girls as an issue and could relate it to the escalating rates of dowry. Whereas men in the discussions persistently denied any form of violence against women.

While discussing violence at home and violence enforced by cultural norms on women, men maintained their “*guarded and appropriate*” response. In the district of Kodagu, where the village is predominantly of tribal population, both men and women were open to discuss violence against women perpetrated by the state. Living on the fringes of a reserved forest and a majority of them being active in an organisation that fights for tribal rights over land and forest, they perceived the state as the main perpetrator of violence. Though the women did not deny the existence of certain forms of violence that they are subjected to, like wife abuse, their emphasis above all, was the concern over the increasing state violence. However some inter group differences were observed within the districts. For example, in Bijapur, the low receptivity to the issues by upper caste women can be attributed to the

resigned acceptance involved and experienced, whereas scheduled caste women groups were relatively more receptive to discuss the issues pertaining to various forms of violence. It must be noted that the Mahila Samakhya has been working with the scheduled caste women over several years. This explains the above mentioned variation between the two women's groups within the same village.

Domestic Violence

Male response to domestic violence as evidenced from Table-II, restricts to either low receptivity due to high level of acceptance of violence and guarded response. However, subtle differences between men groups requires mention. For example, in Koppal, while the lower caste men accepted their indulgence in domestic violence as natural, the acceptance by the upper caste men followed strong justifications such as, "*It is for their good, it is for maintaining family values, and punitive measures have to be adopted when women fail in their duties and responsibilities*". Moreover, while providing this kind of justification, they denied accepting this as a form of violence. Women in all the districts except Kolar unfortunately concurred with the opinions of men about domestic violence. In Kolar, as the NGO, GRAM VIKAS, has taken up alcoholism as a major issue to be addressed within their framework of developmental activities, women in the district were able to relate to the issue and were open for discussing further, the causes as also other forms of violence.

Cultural violence

In relating to violence enforced by cultural norms, responses of men remain almost the same. Most of them accept it as an unchangeable state of affairs while the others justify these forms of violence by *situation* as integral to their culture and their community life. Women too reiterated these views supporting the sanctity of cultural practices. Even those groups who were open for discussion in Kolar could discuss only the various forms of cultural violence within frames of perceived inevitability. Violence perpetrated by the state on women was taken up only in the district of Kodagu for the reasons already mentioned. The preoccupation with state violence that threatens their livelihood leads one to believe that all other forms of violence that they undergo in their marital homes and within the overarching cultural oppression, all in the name of preserving their identity are relatively less important.

Perception about Forms of Violence Reported by the Group

We have adopted a life cycle approach to understand violence against women. The checklist prepared to facilitate the discussions covered a wide range of the forms of violence. However both men and women discussed only a few issues. *It was after a gap of over four years that we were re-establishing contact with the communities. Therefore it was only normal for them to feel inhibited and reluctant to open up and discuss the issue with the sensitiveness that we were expecting.* It can be understood from the earlier table (Table-II), that the lack of

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awareness to the prevalence of the issue and inability to relate to the violation involved with it, did not allow discussions to proceed to other incidences of violence. The issues that we were able to discuss with the community were largely wife beating, child marriage, dowry harassment and abuse due to alcoholism. The other incidences of violence taken up in the discussion were received with passivity, as many of the women were unable to relate to them as instances of violation of their rights. Similarly, most of the men could not relate to themselves as perpetrators of domestic violence as they were convinced that they adhere to the socially accepted standards of male conduct, particularly within the institution of marriage.

Table III: Perception About Forms of Violence Reported by the Group

District	Wife beating		Child Marriage		Dowry harassment		Abuse Due to alcoholism		Restrictions on education, work, etc.		Differential Socialisation of girl children		Ostracism of deserted women & widows	
	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W
Bijapur	1	1	2	2	3	4	6	4	3	3	6	3	3	4
Chitradurga	1	1	6	3	3	4	6	4	3	3	3	3	3	4
Kodagu	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	3	3	-	-
Kolar	1	4	3	3	1	1	1	4	3	4	3	3	3	4
Koppal	6	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	3	3	3	3	1	1
Udupi	6	1	6	6	3	4	6	1	3	4	6	6	3	3

M – Men and W – Women

1. High degree of resigned acceptance
2. Religious sanction
3. Socially acceptable
4. Resentment but pessimistic
5. Acceptance with subversive defense
6. Denial of the incidence

We preferred to let the discussions flow freely. Therefore the standard categorisation of violence against women, especially,

the categories physical, mental and psychological, used in domestic violence were not strictly followed. Rather, the respondents' understanding and experience largely guided the discussions, which very often did not fit into previously determined categories. Therefore, many a times, forms of violence that they face in their lives cut across the standard categories (physical, mental and psychological) and in their eagerness to highlight specific instances as the predominant form of violation of rights, certain other forms of violence were not discussed by the group.

However, some other issues were raised and received considerable attention in the communities although our expectations of what should be given attention were different. For example, the social stigma faced by deserted women and widows in Chitradurga is a case in point. In Chitradurga, women acknowledged that this discrimination was in practice. A high degree of checks and controls to accepted behaviour prevails, which draws attention to the fact that for no fault of their's, single women face even more restrictions and societal scrutiny over their character, than other women in the community.

A general observation about the perception of violence is that there is a high level of acceptance due to social and religious sanctions. Many women expressed resentment about certain issues but were resigned due to the lack of alternatives. As

can be seen from Table-III, the maximum frequencies of denial, resigned acceptance and social acceptances were observed in the case of men groups. However, it has to be noted that resigned acceptance does not necessarily imply that they accept it as violence. The nuances that exist in these three responses – denial, resigned acceptance and social acceptance provide an interesting analysis in understanding the perception of men towards incidences of violence against women. Some incidences were denied straight away. For e.g., abuse due to alcoholism. Denial was also reported when they do not interpret the incidence as a form of violence for e.g., wife beating. Most often, it was stated as a fact of everyday life for which there was no alternative, which is categorised as resigned acceptance. Similarly, social acceptance of an incidence is accompanied by familial and societal sanctions. However, all these responses perceive home as sacrosanct and thereby justify indulgence by men and expect tolerance from women. The responses have also to be perceived as converging points on a continuum of accepted male behaviour.

Maximum resentment amongst women was found in the case of dowry harassment, abuse due to alcoholism and ostracism. As the most endemic form of violence against women, wife abuse meets with high degree of acceptance and is one of the few incidences that women feel that they can speak about and seek some form of redressal.

Religious beliefs and social pressures dominating perceptions about child marriage, restriction on the education of the girl child and differential socialisation etc., are factors contributing to violence. However, the justification for incidences of violence was interesting, which both men and women would supplement with relevant proverbs. These stages of women's life cycle through stereotypical images of good and bad women and dos and don'ts associated with them. It is worth mentioning here that there is a proverb, which justifies differential distribution of food to sons and daughters. If a son were to eat the last portion of ragi balls, he will be less of a man.

The continuous violence on girl children as part of the socialisation process was also explained as a way of life determined by social arrangement. In such an arrangement it must be noted that both men and women find it difficult to think of a different kind of socialisation.

For example, child marriage in North Karnataka is a predominant cultural practice. It also involves religious beliefs of certain scheduled caste communities. However, economic reasons are used to rationalise this practice; thus child marriage assumes sanctions along with other social norms.

Causes Attributed by the Group to Different Forms of Violence

Being a part of a society characterised by deeply embedded attitudes about male-female relations, social taboos against discussing private matters in public, prescribed culture codes and the pressure of primary institutions like family and marriage, limited the real causes for the few identified incidences of violence. The complete internalisation of patriarchy by both men and women makes them natural perpetrators and victims of violence. The rationalisation of violent behaviour as accepted, not resisted, pushes beyond the realms of people's worldview the possibility of analysis. Therefore, it was noticed during the discussions – that most of the participants could not think of causes for something they consider all along a fact of life or the way to be. Therefore they were unable to distinguish between the causes and symptoms of violence against women, when questions were raised during the discussions.

Table IV: Causes Attributed to Different Forms of Violence Reported by the Group

District	Wife beating		Child Marriage		Dowry harassment		Abuse due to alcoholism		Restrictions on education, work, etc		Differential Socialisation of girl child		Ostracism of deserted women/ widows	
	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W
Bijapur	4	4	1	2	5	5	4	4	5	5	2	2	2	1, 2
Chitradurga	4	1	2	2	5	5	4	4	5	5	2	2	1	2
Kodagu	4	4	-	-	-	-	4	4	5	5	2	2	-	-
Kolar	4	4	2	2	5	5	4	4	5	5	2	1, 2	2	1, 2
Koppal	-	4	3	2	5	5	4	4	5	5	2	2	2	2
Udupi	-	4	-	-	5	5	4	4	5	5	1	1	5	5

1. Poverty and other economic reasons
2. Fear of violating social norms
3. Cultural and religious beliefs
4. Expected social behaviour within the institution of marriage/family
5. Adherence to dominant social practices

However, the 'causes' identified by the community can be grouped under two broad categories, namely:

- the social norms and cultural practices and
- Expected social behaviour within the institution of marriage and family.

Hence, the causes identified for the seven major forms of violence are not mutually exclusive since the expected behaviour and family norms do form a part of the cultural rubric of the society. Nevertheless, participants distinguished the causes of incidences of violence as those emanating from within the family and those enforced by the cultural norms. *The vicious circle of patriarchy that combines structural, cultural and direct violence reinforcing each other did not come up as the participants perceive themselves as individuals with absolute control of their lives in dealing with their families while at the same time portraying themselves as victims of cultural norms.*

Causes of child marriage: The causes identified for this varied across groups. In Bijapur and Koppal, child marriage was attributed to social norms, i.e., as a traditional practice to ensure chastity and control of the girls' sexuality, which, in turn, has a direct bearing on family honour. Another cause reported was the practice of "*punya/kalyana karya*" or a virtuous act. Further, child marriage is seen as having an economic basis. It entails no dowry and is performed with minimum expenditure. In some cases, benevolent landlords conducted mass child marriages, as a sign of rendering social service.

In Kodagu and Udupi, the community did not discuss child marriage. In fact in Udupi, late marriage became the focus of the discussion.

Causes for Dowry: With the exception of the tribal in Kodagu, all districts unanimously stated that they practice dowry in order to adhere to existing social practices. Communities with the tradition of dowry were able to relate to it as violence against women. The percolation of dowry practice among the lower caste communities that traditionally followed the custom of paying a bride price, is attributed to the social pressure as well as to sanskritisation. Similar instances of sanskritisation resulting in newer forms of violence among these communities such as restrictions on mobility, especially in public places is being replicated by well-off families among the lower caste communities also.

Drawing from the above observations, the following points can be highlighted:

Highlights

- There was considerable difference in the resistance levels between men and women groups in discussing VAW. Men were found to be less open for discussion.
- Communities from the NGO intervention areas were relatively bigger in size as well as more open to discuss VAW, when compared to those representing the non-NGO areas.
- A common perception noticed across all discussions, irrespective of status and districts is the prevalence of violence within the institution of the family.
- The level of acceptance of violence by women is directly proportional to the potential it has in effecting the well being of the family, especially in economic terms.
- While women attribute a high degree of acceptance to forms of violence they experience, denial, trivialisation and justification of incidences of violence were common to men.
- The causes for all forms of violence as articulated by both men and women, emanate from the sanctity of cultural practices and familial values.
- The variations- inter-district and inter-community – in the cultural responses to certain forms of violence like dowry and child marriage, necessarily imply strategic intervention with specificity of areas/communities.

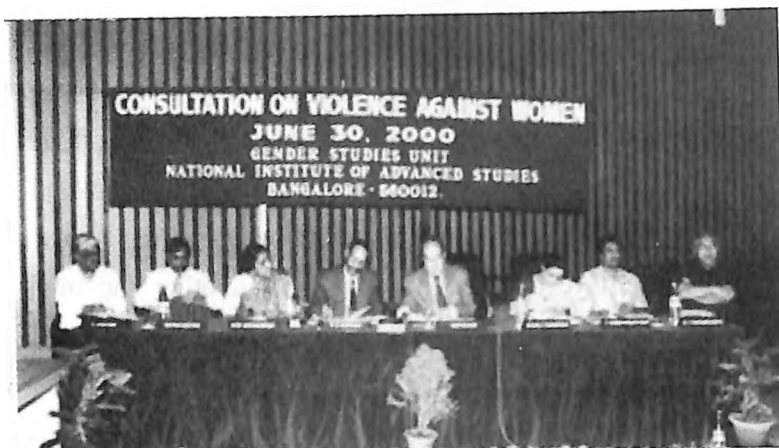


- Each society/community has mechanisms that legitimise, obscure, deny and therefore, perpetuate violence. Even when a particular act of violence might be deplored, powerful social institutions- norms set by family, cultural codes enforced through proverbs and other sanctions maintain the stereotypical behavioural patterns of men and women.

Though we would like to share the above as our observations from our experiences with the community members during the FGDs, we do not claim any absolute veracity of these observations. We got back to the communities after a gap of four years. This time gap we believe, would have inhibited the communities in discussing the sensitive and private issue of violence freely.

Moreover, we also do not claim these observation to be representative of the communities, as few members from each community participating in the FGD cannot possibly represent the voices of the entire community. Nevertheless, these observations are useful insights in understanding the complexities involved in the perception, existence and forms of violence against women prevalent with its cultural specificity between districts and within the districts.

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Justice Sadashiva moderating the Panel Session

The Panel Session

The presentation was followed by a panel discussion. The renowned jurist and champion of human rights, Mr. Justice Sadashiva, chaired this discussion. The panel consisted of distinguished persons representing different agencies. They include Mr. V. V. Bhaskar, Director General of Police, COD; Mr. S. K. Chakrabarty, IFS, Chief Planning Conservator of Forests; Ms. Dona Fernandes, Vimochana; Ms. Gita Aravamudam, Journalist; Mr. C. Narayanaswamy, Ex-member of Parliament; Mr. Palakshappa Pujar, Deputy Director, Department of Women and Child Development and Mr. Sathyanarayana Rao, Director, Karnataka Police Academy, Mysore.

The major issues raised in the panel discussion were:

- Domestic Abuse and Alcoholism
- Harassment by Government Officials
- The Police and Violence Against Women

Domestic Abuse and Alcoholism

Women participants discussed problems they face such as wife beating, alcoholism and irresponsible behaviour of men, especially economic irresponsibility. They were pessimistic about stopping alcoholism. Raising the issue, Gowramma from Chitradurga district said, “ *Illicit liquor has to be banned in the entire state, as imposing a ban in individual villages will not resolve the issue. How do we stop men from gambling which makes them lazy and dependent on their wife’s income, which often leads to violence in the case of non-compliance?*”

Responding to the query, the panelists acknowledged alcoholism as a serious problem faced by women. However, they recognised that its implications for women in rural and urban areas were radically different. Urban women have easier access to women’s organisations, which is not the case for rural women. Therefore they emphasised the need for a grassroots support system, instead of being dependent on external agencies such as the government or on urban NGOs. Responding to the problem of alcoholism, Ms. Gita Aravamudam replied “*it is true that women’s earnings are*

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spent on vices that men engage in. The reason for this is mainly the lack of awareness and education among women. Hence, there is a need for women to organise themselves locally and work towards the removal of all forms of violence against women, rather than depending on government to take the initiative especially in the case of liquor which has political implications”.

Drawing the attention of the participants to the role of Gram Panchayats, Mr. C. Narayanaswamy stated that “*while the decision concerning the banning of alcohol is in the hands of the ruling government, the permission to open a liquor shop rests with the Gram Panchayats. A no objection certificate issued by the local panchayat is a pre-requisite to obtain a license. This information is however lacking both among the panchayat members and the community. Thus people need to organise at the local level and pressurise the Gram Panchayats not to issue licenses. If this happens on a large scale, there would be a social movement in which the NGOs can play a proactive role”.*

Harassment by Government Officials

Another major concern discussed in the panel session was related to the harassment meted by government officials. This was specific to the district of Kodagu, which is predominantly tribal. The community participants from Kodagu raised the issue of indifference of the forest department to the tribal

communities. They elaborated on the inadequacy of facilities provided to them and the harassment the tribals faced. Mr. J.P. Raju from Kodagu reported, *“In Nagarahole, the forest department had taken money from the World Bank to shift the tribal families out of the forest.”* He said *“Recently, they shifted about 50 families at night and in the process eight people died. The officials of the forest department harass and use force to move the tribals from one place to another and further restrict their movement within the forest. Without prior information and providing adequate alternatives, the tribals are evicted overnight”*. Specifically narrating the harassment meted out to women by the government officials he said, *“The authorities harass women when they go to collect firewood. There was also a case when a dog, because of the indifference of the forest department, ate a woman’s child. It is true that women are harassed everywhere, but in the case of tribals the magnitude is greater. We keep protesting in vain. The police should pay more attention and make sure that the women get justice”*. Highlighting the atrocities committed by the forest department on the tribal women, Ms. Jayashanthi, Gram Panchayat member representing the tribal community from Kodagu district added, *“Apart from the harassment meted out to women, we lack basic health facilities. There are women who are pregnant and those suffering from acute ailments, yet no doctors visit our habitat. The Forest officials harass us when we go to collect firewood and wild fruits. Alcoholism is yet another problem. There are liquor shops in the forests. If*

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women engage in protesting against the sale of liquor, they are targeted by agencies that are involved in the sale of liquor. Even the men who support the anti-liquor action are harassed. We feel totally isolated in our struggle”.

Panelists: The Panelists placed the problem of the harassment of tribals in the context of Wild Life Protection Act. In concurrence with the Act, the government has to restrict the overuse of the forest resources. According to the Act, certain forests have been declared as sanctuaries and the rights of tribals within them have been restricted. Nagarahole is one such sanctuary. Responding to the queries, Mr. S. K. Chakrabarti, Chief Planning Conservator of Forests explained the process of rehabilitation of the tribals - “...*The tribals did logging and seedling work and worked with the forest department. In certain areas logging is not allowed due to a ban introduced by the new laws, hence, the forest department no longer employs the tribals on a regular basis. This has resulted in building tensions between the tribals and the forest officials. Further, according to the Act, no one has rights to enter the national parks. Being fully aware of the hardships the tribals will face with the implementation of the new laws, new procedures were also recommended to help them. The tribals are not a homogeneous community. Although they work mostly in the forests, there are tribals who are willing to settle in hamlets located at the outskirts of the forests, so that they can access better facilities. Though force*

can be used to evict people from the forest, it has not been used since we are aware that they work with us and it is our responsibility to look after them. In order to provide better facilities for them, they are moved from the interior regions of the forests. Due to this, for the first time in the history of tribals, they have engaged in community harvesting. Five acres have been tilled. Learning from this experience, the forest department plans to shift about 100 more families during the current year". Dismissing the charge about the lifting of a child, Mr. Chakrabartha said that the charge is baseless and no such complaint was registered in the forest department. An incident that occurred outside the forest cannot be the responsibility of the forest department. Responding to the issue of sexual harassment of tribal women by forest officials, Mr. S.K. Chakrabathi assured the participants that action would be taken against them if specific charges of sexual harassment are brought to his notice. He also agreed to explore the possibility of constituting a Sexual Harassment Committee based on the suggestion of the co-panelist, Ms. Gita Aravamudam.

Reiterating the commitment of the government, Mr. Chakrabartha highlighted several schemes undertaken by the government for the welfare of the tribal community. For instance, in the Beneficiary Oriented Tribal Development Scheme (BOTD), the Government of India gives a sum of one lakh and the state government gives two hectares of land to

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fifty families, willing to do cultivation outside the forest area. Mr. Chakrabarti claimed that the families that have voluntarily moved out of the forest area now have better access to basic facilities like school, hospital etc. in the relocated areas. He emphasised that this scheme was a venture of the forest department and not of the World Bank.

On similar lines to improve the living conditions of the tribals, the Eco Development Scheme was launched with the support of the World Bank. This scheme primarily aimed at keeping the people out of the forest and protecting the animals. As no one has the right to collect firewood from the national parks, he emphasised that they are provided with gas cylinders and pressure cookers. These national parks have been created by the government and have the approval of the Parliament.

The Police and Violence Against Women

The third issue that received attention in this session pertains to the response of the police department to aspects related to violence against women. Women articulated their concerns about 'police inaction' to women's problems such as gambling, wife beating, alcoholism, the erratic functioning of ration shops, etc. While Ms. Jayashanthi, Gram Panchayat member from Kodagu district reported of police inaction against illicit liquor shops and gamblers in her village, Ms. Manjula representing Koppal district drew the attention of the police department to the practice of dedication of young girls as devadasis in

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NirManvi of Manvi taluk, where liquor is served as *Thirtha* (holy water) during the ceremony. Ms. Lakshmi, representing Chitradurga district apart from referring to the impact of gambling on the well being of the family, especially the women, also spoke about the erratic functioning of the fair price shops. She narrated an incident, where a male police arrested a mahila sangha woman without a warrant despite her being aware of her rights. The offence committed by her was that she had protested against the owner of the fair price depot for misusing the ration meant for public distribution. She blamed the media for reinforcing patriarchy and misinformation such as, male police arresting women in popular serials, which in reality is incorrect.

Speaking on the issue of police inaction, several participants narrated personal experiences. Proclaiming that women's rights are human rights, Ms. Ruth Manorama, Women's Voice asserted, "*For ordinary women to go and report to the police station, a conducive atmosphere has to be created. The women should have confidence to go and report to the police*". Demanding the police to take timely action Ms. Donna Fernandes, Vimochana stressed its importance especially in cases related to violence against women. She questioned, "*In most cases where women are killed, police take time in arresting the offender. If a top official files a complaint they respond immediately and even travel as far as Dubai to make an arrest. But when it comes to a problem of domestic violence,*

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why do the police take so long to respond?" She narrated two incidences of dowry deaths, one in Nelamangala and other in Subramaniapura, which was a double murder. Even after a duration of six to eight months, no arrests till date have been made. She questioned the delay in cases related to offences against women, be it rape, wife beating, dowry deaths or unnatural deaths. She asked why do the police give the offender time to get anticipatory bail? Further, she added, *"when a woman makes a police complaint, typical responses from the police has been on rationalising the action and framing her as an offender"*. She argued, *"Women do not approach the police for psychological analysis. They come for justice and protection. Even when there is a court order restraining the husband from visiting his wife, yet he goes home drunk and abuses her. Even in such cases women do not get police protection. We would urge the police to be responsible and provide protection for women. A similar problem exists in the case of dying declaration of dowry victims, as well as during the arrest and detention of women by the police"*. She requested the police to positively respond to the problems related to women to gain back public confidence.

Responding to the issue raised, Mr. Sathyanarayana Rao, Director, Karnataka Police Academy was in total agreement that a ban on alcohol will improve the living conditions of the poor. Citing the example of Andhra Pradesh, he reported, *"In a study carried by a Social Institute to measure the impact of*

the ban of illicit liquor in the state, the monthly income of rural households had gone up by Rs. 500/-". He ascertained that the police are also taking action against gamblers. For Chitradurga district alone, he said, "during the past three years the police had booked 205 cases arresting 608 people and recovered Rs. 3.98 lakhs of stake money". Responding to the prevalence of the practice of dedication of young girls in Manvi taluk, Mr. Sathyanarayana Rao assured that he would personally write to the concerned officer to take immediate action. He informed the participants that the police department noted the distorted portrayal of the police in the media and has suggested that media persons consult the department before telecasting scenes that involve the police. He reiterated that the department has taken stringent action against police officers who refused to take timely action. Referring to the issue of reconciliation in the case of dowry, wife abuse, Mr. Sathyanarayana Rao said, "The police are instructed to file the First Information Report (FIR), and the reconciliation process to be carried out in the family counseling centres. Recommendations made by the Joint Legislation Committee on procedures to be followed during registration, inquiry and postmortem are published and made available to the officers". He reiterated "though women have legal rights in the Constitution, it is hardly implemented. This may be due to the lack of sensitivity of the police personnel at the lower levels as they are a part of the society and reflect the same attitude by not attaching importance to charges of atrocities against

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women. Efforts are made to address this issue in the training and refresher courses of the police department". Mr. Sathyanarayana Rao took this opportunity to seek the support of research institutions, NGOs and the community in the following areas for the effective functioning of the police department. They were:

- To inform the police of any illegal activity in their area.
- Any harassment by the police should be brought to the notice of the senior police officers.
- To play a supportive role in helping community women to lodge complaints.
- To inform the community that the dying declaration should be recorded in the presence of a police officer and a doctor.
- In the case of dowry harassment, the declaration should be made in the absence of marital family. It is important that this declaration is signed by the doctor.
- Enable witnesses to give evidence successfully by briefing them on the cross-examination procedures.
- Sensitise the police by associating in the police training programmes.
- To conduct research studies and inform the department of the findings so the services of the police could be further strengthened.

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- To inform the police about cases of dowry law misuse.
- To encourage more women to join the police force and play a pro-active role in the decision making process as well as during implementation to reduce cases of atrocities against women.

In the conclusion of the panel discussion, Justice Sadashiva appreciated the effort of NIAS to bring together participants from various fields of expertise to discuss such an important and sensitive issue such as 'Violence Against Women'. He admitted that this subject is complex and requires careful study especially in a diverse country like India. Referring to the poor understanding of violence among the community, particularly women, he said, *"In our country crores of people, especially women, are not able to differentiate between what is, and what is not a violation of their rights. This is due to the lack of value education in our country that does not teach young students social responsibility, public concern, and human values. In such a situation it becomes pertinent that women organise themselves mentally, culturally and socially to understand, experience and demand for their rights"*.

Group Discussions

Following the panel session, the six districts met separately to focus attention on individual districts and formulate action plans. Each group consisted of community representatives.

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Group Discussion



Bijapur District

Presentation of District Action Plan



Ms. Saraswathi, Mahila Samakhya, Bijapur District

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partner NGOs, police officers from the respective districts, along with women activists and NIAS representatives. The groups were asked to identify district specific forms of violence that women are subjected to, in their respective communities and prioritise the entry point for advocacy. Further, groups were asked to draw detailed action plan for the coming year. The discussion that followed in the small groups was intense and ensured the participation of all the members. It was very encouraging to observe that the presentations by various district groups were shared among community representatives, NGO representatives and the Police officers. The priority issues and the district wise action plan are presented below.

BIJAPUR district

The group representing Bijapur district identified child marriage, girl child discrimination and the dedication of girls as devadasis as priority issues in the region. However, they recognised that the community has been instrumental in reducing the incidences of dedication of girls as devadasis over the years. Hence, their action plan for the ensuing year is:

- To increase awareness in the community about the problems related to child marriage.
- To encourage Mahila Sanghas to address the issue of violence against women with the help of the police department. While stating the need to co-ordinate with the police department, community members were of the

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Group Discussion



Chitradurga District



Koppal District

Stakeholders Address Violence : Violence Against Women

opinion that the police have to be people friendly. They expressed that at the moment, approaching the police was seen as the last option.

- To educate parents on the issue of violence against women to ensure active community participation.

CHITRADURGA district

The issue identified by Chitradurga was alcoholism leading to low monetary contribution by men to the maintenance of the household. The group, while prioritising this issue, expressed the need for support from the GSU, NIAS in the form of training, monitoring and follow-up. The need for supporting a community level volunteer with an honorarium was seen as a crucial step in sustaining the participation of the community in addressing the issue of violence against women, on rights, roles and functions of various stakeholders. Apart from this, the following activities were listed as part of the action plan.

- To prepare and disseminate information related to violence against women.
- To organise awareness camps for community members by the local police officers and lawyers using Grama Sabha as the forum.
- To ensure the active participation of the local NGO in playing a supportive role by helping the affected women to get assistance from the related departments.

Shantha, Anitha, Srinath

Group Discussion



Kodagu District

Presentation of District Action Plan



Ms. Jayashanthi, GP Member, Kodagu District

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- To promote the participation of the Gram Panchayat members and village leaders in community meetings, thereby enhancing the role of the community to be proactive on issues related to violence against women.
- To encourage the education of girl children so that they are able to access relevant literature on the issue of VAW.

KODAGU district

During the small group discussion, this district identified State violence, particularly the exploitation of the tribals by the officials of the Forest department. In addition to this, they identified exploitation by upper castes and alcoholism as priority issues. The salient features of their action plan for the coming year were:

- To re-activate the Women Help line in Kodagu district, a programme undertaken by the police department.
- To address the cases related to violence against women through the Family Counseling Centres.
- To take stringent action on police officials who refuse to file FIR related to the atrocities meted out on the scheduled caste/tribe communities. In case of inaction by the local police, the cases have to be directed to the cell in the district headquarters.
- To facilitate elected representatives of panchayats to take up issues related to violence in the Gram Panchayats.
- To train communities to address the issue of VAW through the Grama Sabhas.

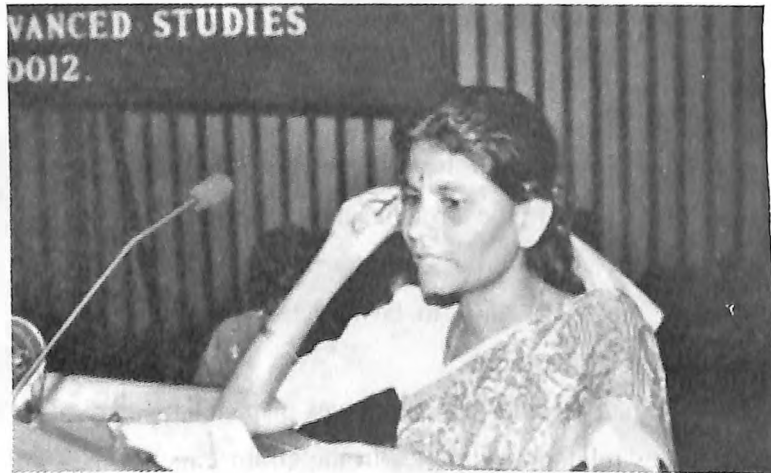
Shantha, Anitha, Srinath

Group Discussion



Kolar District

Presentation of District Action Plan



Ms. Papamma, Gram Vikas, Kolar District

KOLAR district

The representatives of Kolar district were categorical in identifying alcoholism as the priority issue. Their action plan included:

- To seek assistance of the police to check the supply of liquor into the villages.
- To promote networking of the local police department with the existing Mahila Sanghas to formulate a joint action plan to prevent violence against women in the communities.
- To ensure that a copy of the FIR is given to the individual who files it.
- To disseminate information amongst community members regarding the nature of assistance available from the police department including the procedures, names, addresses and contact numbers of the police officials in-charge.

KOPPAL district

In Koppal, child marriage, bigamy and alcoholism were stated as the priority issues. The action plan for the year is given below:

- To empower the community to address the issue of violence against women.
- To encourage the participation of the police to address unresolved issues related to violence against women and urge them to register the case and take pro-active steps to tackle them.

Shantha, Anitha, Srinath

- To promote frequent public contact programmes between the police and the community to establish rapport with the communities.

UDUPI district

In Udupi, a relatively progressive district, dowry was the priority issue. The year plan had enlisted the following activities.

- To create an environment where community members are comfortable to meet the police and register cases of violence against women.
- To advocate for All-Women police stations in each Taluk.
- To ensure the participation of local NGOs in providing supportive evidences for the cases of violence against women.
- To create awareness about women's rights and related laws among community members. Multimedia approaches have to be tapped in the form of written materials, street plays, public debates, report cards and so on.
- To create awareness about specific women's programmes promoted by the government.
- To disseminate information about the schemes along with the names of the respective government official, so that such information is available particularly to women.

Stakeholders Address Violence : Violence Against Women

Group Discussion



Udupi District

Presentation of District Action Plan



Mr. Jagadish, Circle Police Inspector, Udupi District

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*Ms. Ruth Manorama, NAWO, Wrapping up
the Concluding Session*

Summing up the Consultation

Ms. Ruth Manorama, President of the National Alliance of Women (NAWO), summed up the consultation by stating that the discussion had been an attempt to understand violence against women in all its complexities and cultural diversities. She said that the focus of the group discussions were on the role of the police, Gram Panchayats, NGOs and the facilitating organisations particularly GSU, NIAS. In performing their role, she said that these agencies need to take into cognisance the impact of globalisation and other developmental processes, as they have a direct bearing on the different forms of violence that women face. Thus, concluding that all the stakeholders had an uphill task ahead to face.

Maj. Gen. Paul, Controller of the Institute delivered the vote of thanks. He took this opportunity to mention Ms. Motamma's commitment to the issue and hoped that the Gender Studies Unit of NIAS can work in line with the government's effort towards a violence free society.

Consultative Action Plan

The deliberations of the consultation directed the strategies to be adopted for the project. They are:

Cultural Specificity: Since most forms of violence against women are culturally muted and sensitive, its manifestations, acceptance and responsiveness vary across cultures. Therefore, the consultation emphasised the need to understand violence within its cultural space. Further, the strategies in sensitising the communities and in addressing particular forms of violence, should be culturally sensitive

Sensitising Communities: The field insights and the discussions in the consultation clearly brought out that most of the communities are inhibited about the issue of violence against women, especially in intimate relationships and with regard to culturally sanctioned violations. Along with this, the almost total ignorance of the support mechanisms, which are characterised by their poor response to women, contribute to the indifference to the existing forms of violence. The

consultation expressed the need to evolve innovative ways using culturally accepted symbols and language to raise awareness amongst the communities.

Providing Basic Information: One of the effective ways of sensitising the communities is to provide basic information about violence against women. This includes simple reading materials to disseminate information on violence against women, case studies of victims of violence, legal rights of women, legal mechanisms to combat violence and support mechanisms by government departments, non-governmental organisations and the enforcement agencies. Other fora like street theatres, public debates and cultural activities could also be used as alternate popular media for communication.

Involving all Stakeholders: As violence against women is pervasive in almost all spheres of life, any effort to address the issue by the communities should be multi-pronged involving the police, government officials, the members of the Panchayat Raj Institutions and NGOs. The consultation reiterated the need to consciously include representatives of these agencies at the village, taluk and district levels since the community interacts with these officials at these levels more frequently.

Legal Training: This increases the access of the community to legal mechanisms of redressal. Apart from providing legal

Stakeholders Address Violence : Violence Against Women

training to women, men and the youth should also be made a part of this training. By doing so, they can be potential agents to bring about a positive change within communities.

Demanding Accountability from the State: State accountability surfaced as an important concern for the participants. Efforts should be made to ensure positive response from the state machinery, to act with regard to the follow-up of the cases by the police department or to expedite the cases pending in the family courts. The consultation endorsed that NIAS should play a pro-active role in facilitating dialogues between various agencies and to monitor accountability from the various actors.

Conclusion

The consultation brought together various actors on a common platform to pledge their commitment to address the problem of violence against women. The consultation placed in context the complex nature of the issue both in form and content as well as the varied responses of the communities that legitimise, obscure, deny and therefore perpetuate violence. It also resulted in building bridges with various stakeholders, which is the first step in the right direction. The deliberations of the day reconfirmed the belief that the participation of the community and more importantly, the male members is absolutely essential in creating a gender-just and a violent free society.

Government moots welfare centres for women

Staff Reporter

BANGALORE: Karnataka government plans to set up women's welfare centres in the divisional headquarters of Mysore, Gulbarga, Belgaum and Bangalore to provide shelter to victims of sexual harassment, exploitation and violence.

Minister for Women and Child Development Motamma announced this on Friday during a consultation on 'Violence against women', conducted by the Gender Studies Unit (GSU) of the National Institute of Advanced Studies here. Motamma stressed on making helplines effective.

Despite public awareness there were reports of unnatural deaths. With police and judiciary insisting on the availability of a witness or evidence to book cases against the culprit, adequate punitive action was not being taken, she observed.

Though a few programmes like Balika Samridhhi Yojane, where parents get Rs 500 on the birth of a girl child; attendance scholarship which supports the education of a girl till PU following regularity in attendance; a Rs 50,000-loan for



Karnataka Minister for Women and Child Welfare Motamma speaks at the inauguration of a consultation on Violence Against Women in Bangalore on Friday

income generation for women living below the poverty line along with 25 per cent subsidy, had been implemented, a lot more was desired to prevent atrocities against women. "We require a change in attitude among men. Women alone

can't fight for their rights and privileges," Motamma noted.

Enumerating the problems in different districts, fellow of GSU N. Shantha Mohan said a field study of 10 villages had shown that the issue of priority was state violence.

Coorg, Bijapur and Koppal reeled under the scourge of child marriage and the devadasi system, and Udupi suffered the curse of exorbitant dowry and the ensuing ills.

The interactive session, with panelists including Justice Sadashiva, chief executive chairman of the Legal Services Authority; DGP-CoD V.V. Bhaskar; former MP C. Narayana Swamy; Paalakshappa Poojar, deputy director, department of women and child development, discussed how women should also form groups and fight atrocities.

Increasing alcoholism and the accompanying domestic violence was brought up by a participant from Chitradurga. Replying to her, former MP Narayanaswamy said the government should find other means of revenue. "Of what use can this ill-gotten wealth be," he questioned. Narayanaswamy suggested that government grant licence only after obtaining a no-objection certificate from local bodies.

The consultation was organised to chalk out a strategy to be followed in the 10 villages which will become model ones after the project's second phase in four years.

Appendix 1: Press Clippings

Shantha, Anitha, Srinath

Area July 1, 2000, Times of India.

Stakeholders Address Violence : Violence Against Women

State to set up women welfare centres soon

CHI News Service
 BANGALORE, June 28
 Minister for Women and Child Development Motamma today said that the state government would soon set up women welfare centres to provide shelter for women who had subjected to harassment and atrocities at the four divisional headquarters in the state.

Speaking after inaugurating a consultation on "violence against women" organised by the National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS), she said the centres would be initially set up in Bangalore, Mysore, Belgaum and Gulbarga and would be extended to all the other districts in a phased manner.

The centres will work round the clock and will provide shelter for women subjected to harassment and atrocities in the specially Counselling and rehabilitation facilities will also be provided at the centres.

She said the new scheme of providing shelter centres for women was a part of the series of projects launched by the government for the upliftment of women. The attendance scholarships for the girl child, loan facilities for women below the poverty line, announced by the government will be taken up in full swing shortly, she said. The minister stressed the importance of participation of men in eradicating social evils like dowry. "Men should shun their exceptional attitude towards family problems and take up the responsibility of eradicating the evil," she said.

NIAS Director Rodham Narasimha, Dr N Shantha Mohan, fellow Gender Studies Unit, NIAS, former MP C Narayana Swamy, Mr Prakashappa Poojar, deputy director, department of women and child development, Mr V V Bhaskar, Director General of Police CID, were among those present.



Minister for Women and Child Welfare Motamma (second from right) listening to the grievances of delegates of various welfare women's organisations at a seminar on "Violence against women" in Bangalore on Friday. Prof R Narasimha, director, NIAS is also seen. DHI Photo

July 1, 2000, Deccan Herald

National Institute of Advanced Studies: Women and Child Welfare Minister Motamma inaugurates consultation on "Violence Against Women". Prof Rodham Narasimha, director, NIAS, Dr N Shantha Mohan, fellow, Gender Studies Unit, NIAS and Dr B R Ashoka participate. NIAS Auditorium, IISc Campus, 19.30 hrs.

Welfare centres for women

By Our Staff Reporter

BANGALORE, JUNE 30. The Minister for Women and Child Development, Ms. Motamma, said today that plans were afoot to start women welfare centres in the headquarters of four districts where women who were harassed and exploited could seek refuge.

Such centres would be opened in Bangalore, Belgaum, Mysore, and Gulbarga, initially. Later, centres would be opened in all other districts, she said.

Addressing a "consultation" on "Violence against Women" here, she said attendance scholarship and "Balika Samvrudhi Yojana" were among the programmes evolved by the Government to ensure that girl children were not neglected by their parents.

The consultation was organised by the Gender Studies Unit of the National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS). Eminent persons from the Judiciary, officials from the Police Department and the Department of Women and Child Development, and members of Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) participated.

Explaining the schemes, the minister said a girl student would be granted scholarship if she was found to have adequate attendance in school. This would be an incentive for the parents to allow her to pursue higher studies. Under "Balika Samvrudhi Yojana", a grant would be provided to the mother of a girl child, to motivate her.

Mr. Rodham Narasimha, Director, NIAS, expressed hope that the consultation would lead to a broad agreement on strategies for development.

THE HINDU - JULY 1, 2000

Appendix 2: List of Participants

1. Ms. Motamma
Honourable Minister for
Women and Child Welfare
Government of Karnataka
Bangalore
2. Prof. Roddam Narasimha
Director,
National Institute of Advanced Studies
Indian Institute of Science Campus
Bangalore - 12
3. Dr. N. Shantha Mohan
Fellow, Gender Studies Unit
National Institute of Advanced Studies
Indian Institute of Science Campus
Bangalore - 12
4. Justice Sadashiva
Retd. Judge
Phone: 2863571(O) 6761453(R)
5. Mr. H.N. Sathyanarayana Rao (IPS)
Director, Karnataka Police Academy
Mysore
6. Mr. V.V. Bhaskar (IPS)
Director Gen. of Police - COD
Training Special Unit
Economic Offenses
Carlton House, Palace Road
Bangalore - 01
Phone: 2254789
7. Ms. Donna Fernandez
VIMUCHANA
2124, 16B Main,
HAL II Stage, I A Cross
Bangalore - 38
Phone: 5269307
8. Mr. S.K. Chakrabarthi (IFS)
Chief Planning Conservator of Forests
(Wildlife) & Chief Wildlife Warden
Aranya Bhavan, II Floor
Malleswaram 18th Cross,
Bangalore - 03
Phone: 3341993
9. Ms. Gita Aravumadam, Journalist
"Sagar", K 5/3, 10th Cross
Rajmahal Vilas Extn
Bangalore - 80
Phone: 3344211
10. Mr. C. Narayana Swamy, Ex-M.P.
N.N. Farms, Geddalahalli
Bangalore - 94
Phone: 3412252
11. Mr. Palakshappa Poojar
Deputy Director,
Women & Child Welfare Dept.
M.S. Building, Vidhana Veedhi
Bangalore
Phone: 2252329
12. Ms. Ruth Manorama
Women's Voice, # 47, St. Marks Road
Bangalore - 560 001
13. Dr. Anitha B.K.
Research Fellow,
Gender Studies Unit
National Institute of Advanced Studies
Bangalore - 12
14. Mr. Prakash Murgod
Circle Police Inspector
Yelburga Taluk
Koppal District
15. Mr. Sannathimmappa
Police Inspector
Gudibande
Kolar District
16. Mr. Jagadish
Circle Inspector
Udupi District
17. Mr. H.K. Revanna
CPI Hosadurga
Chitradurga
Phone: 20217 (O) 20214 (R)
18. K.N. Madaiah
Circle Inspector of Police,
Madikeri Town
19. Mr. Sujith Kumar Banerjee(IPS)
Additional Director General of Police
- CoD
20. Mr. P. Ravindranath(IPS)
S.P. - CoD
21. Dr. P.R. Nath (IPS)
S.P. - CoD
22. Ms. D. Jayamma
Spl. Officer to Minister for Women
and Child Welfare
Govt. of Karnataka, Bangalore

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23. Ms. Mercy Kappen
Visthar, Dodda Gubbi
Bangalore - 562 149
Phone: 8465294/295
24. Ms. Manjula A. Hugur
Senior Resource Person
Mahila Samakhya Karnataka
Kinnal Road, Koppal
25. Ms. Gandamma
Bhagyalakshmi Mahila Sangha
Bukanatti, Yelbarga Taluk
Koppal District
26. Ms. Durgavva
Bagyjayothi Mahila Sangha
Talkere, Yelbarga Taluk
Koppal District
27. Ms. Saraswati J.R.P.
Mahila Samakhya Karnataka
Bijapur
28. Ms. Danamma
Malapura, Mudol Taluk
Bijapur District
29. Ms. Sallemma
Malapura, Mudol Taluk
Bijapur District
30. Mr. Sidappa Matapur
Malapura, Mudol Taluk
31. Dr. K. Vijaya Kumar
Consultant, Visthar
Bangalore
32. Ms. Girija M.S.
Grama Vikas (NGO)
Mulbagal
Kolar District
Phone: 08159-45243
33. Mr. Seenappa
Nagamangala
C/o Grama Vikas,
Mulbagal, Kolar District
34. Ms. Narayanamma
Grama Vikas
Mulbagal
Kolar District
35. Ms. Parvathamamma
Grama Vikas
Mulbagal
Kolar District
36. Ms. Munivenkatamma
Grama Vikas
Mulbagal
Kolar District
37. Mr. Venkataswami
Grama Vikas
Mulbagal
Kolar District
38. Mr. Venkataramappa
Grama Vikas
Mulbagal
Kolar District
39. Mr. Rangappa
Grama
Challakere
Chitradurga District
40. Ms. Gowramma
Grama, Challakere
Chitradurga District
41. Mr. R. Luked
42. Mr. S.G. Kochhar
70. Burton Centre,
M.G. Road
Bangalore
43. Dr. M.K. Sahu
Senior Executive STEM
Bangalore
44. Ms. Anuradha
Mahila Samakhya Karnataka
45. Ms. D. Lakshmi Rani
Gender Coordinator
Gandhi Peace Centre
Bangalore
46. Mr. Satish B.
Photographer
The Asian Age
47. Mr. Vijesh Kamath
Staff Reporter
Deccan Herald
48. Forzia Haurga
The Times of India
49. Mr. Anand K.
Photographer
Rajasthan Patrika
50. Ms. Padmini Sitaramu
The Hindu
51. Ms. Suman Kolar
Bijapur
52. Ms. Usha Abroel
NIPCCD
Bangalore
53. Ms. Seema Singh
The Times of India
54. Mr. K. Venkatesh
EENADU

Shantha, Anitha, Srinath

55. Mr. Ramesh
City Channel
56. Mr. Hanumesh
Udaya T.V.
57. Ms. Mariam Daniel
P.O. Box 8419
St. Thomas Town P.O.
Bangalore
58. Ms. T.S. Kusumakshi
GRAMA, Challakere
Chitradurga District
Phone: 50857
59. Ms. Aruna Balakrishna
73, Millers Road
Benson Town
Bangalore - 46
Phone: 3330335
60. Ms. Krishnakumari L. Rao
Joint Women's Programme
73, Millers Road
Benson Town
Bangalore - 46
61. Mr. G. Guhaganesan
Doordarshan
Bangalore
62. Mr. Rajendran
Doordarshan
Bangalore
63. Mr. Sanath Kumar
Photographer
Deccan Herald & Prajavani
64. Mr. Roy David
CORD
Kushal Nagar
65. Ms. Shamee
CORD
Kushal Nagar
66. Ms. Shanthi
CORD
Kushal Nagar
67. Mr. Raju
CORD
Kushal Nagar
68. Mr. Yunus Saleem
Farmers Development Agency
#240, J Cross, Nagarhpet
Chikballapur - 562101
Kolar District
Phone: 08156 - 73108
Fax: 08156 - 72586
69. Ms. Rajalakshmi
Kolar District
70. Ms. Deepa Vasant Kumar
ISST, Bangalore
71. Ms. Sangeeta Purushotham
BPF, Bangalore
72. Ms. Simone Purohit
BPF, Bangalore
73. Dr. Usha Ramkumar
ISEC, Nagarbavi
Bangalore - 72
74. Ms. Anita Gurmurthy
IIM - Bangalore
75. Mr. Murukesh (IPS)
76. Ms. Meera
ISST, N-601, North Block,
6th Floor, Manipal Centre,
47, Dickenson Road
Bangalore - 42, Phone: 5583701
77. Ms. Asha Ramesh
Research Associate,
Gender Studies Unit
NIAS, IISc Campus
Bangalore - 12
78. Ms. Piush Antony
Research Associate,
Gender Studies Unit
NIAS, IISc Campus
Bangalore - 12
79. Mr. Srinath
Research Associate,
Gender Studies Unit
NIAS, IISc Campus
Bangalore - 12
80. Ms. Sudhamani
Research Coordinator
Gender Studies Unit
NIAS, IISc Campus
Bangalore - 12
81. Dr. Parameswarappa
Research Coordinator
Gender Studies Unit
NIAS, IISc Campus
Bangalore - 12
82. Dr. Pugazhendi
Research Coordinator
Gender Studies Unit
NIAS, IISc Campus
Bangalore - 12

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83. Mr. Rajendra
Research Coordinator
Gender Studies Unit
NIAS, IISc Campus
Bangalore - 12
84. Mr. Venugopal
Research Assistant
Gender Studies Unit
NIAS, IISc Campus
Bangalore - 12
85. Mr. Mahesh Kumar
Research Assistant
Gender Studies Unit
NIAS, IISc Campus
Bangalore - 12
86. Prof. B.V. Sreekantan
Philosophy of Science
NIAS, IISc Campus
Bangalore - 12
87. Prof. Prabhakar G. Vaidya
Sir Ashutosh Mukherjee
Visiting Professor
NIAS, IISc Campus
Bangalore - 12
88. Prof. Dilip Ahuja
ISRO Professor of Science
and Technology Policy Studies
NIAS, IISc Campus
Bangalore - 12
89. Prof. C.V. Sundaram
Honorary Visiting Professor
NIAS, IISc Campus
Bangalore - 12
90. Prof. K. Ramachandra
Honorary Visiting Professor
NIAS, IISc Campus
Bangalore - 12
91. Dr. H.K. Anasuya Devi
Fellow, Epigraphy Unit
NIAS, IISc Campus
Bangalore - 12
92. Dr. A.R. Vasavi
Fellow, Sociology and
Social Anthropology Unit
NIAS, IISc Campus
Bangalore - 12
93. Dr. M.G. Narasimhan
Research Fellow, Philosophy of
Science
NIAS, IISc Campus
Bangalore - 12
94. Dr. P. K. Shetty
Research Fellow, Environment Studies
NIAS, IISc Campus
Bangalore - 12
95. Dr. Anindya Sinha
Research Fellow
Philosophy of Science
NIAS, IISc Campus
Bangalore - 12
96. Mr. Arvind Kumar
Research Associate
International and Strategic Studies
NIAS, IISc Campus
Bangalore - 12
97. Dr. Sangeetha Menon
Research Fellow
Philosophy of Science
NIAS, IISc Campus
Bangalore - 12

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