

Bhumika Women's collective Annual Report of 2005 – 2006

Bhumika Women's Collective has been involved in different activities and programs concerning women's issues.

Bhumika Documentation Center:

Bhumika is continuing with the documentation center activities and has been earnestly engaged in the compilation of resource material. Various important women's issues, relating to women and law, women and economy women's rights, literacy and education women's health general health, nutrition and various health problems, social issues, labour issues, environmental degradation and pollution, macro economic issues like WTO agriculture & patents, famous women personalities, globalization, material from conferences relating Dalit & women issues etc. have been compiled as booklets and the documentation is a very good source for any research project. Many researchers, students, activists and others visit regularly and use the resource center.

Other activities of Bhumika:

Bhumika conducted a story and poetry competition for young writers in the month of June 2005. A number of young writers participated in this competition. We appointed judges and they selected the winners. NIRNAYA and OXFAM supported financially for this competition.

Story, Poetry Competition and prize distribution Function:

On 31/08/05 we organized a prize distribution function for story and poetry competition in collaboration with NIRYANA and OXFAM INDIA. We gave 1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes for the winners of this competition. The only Aim behind this function was to give encouragement for the new writers. This function was held at Sundarraya Vignana Kendra and it went on well.

Ms. Indira Jena, Trustee, Nirnaya, Ms.V.S. Rama Devi Ex Governor, Ms. Abburi Chayadevi were the chief guest for this function

HELP LINE

In day-to-day life, several women are subjected to various forms of distress-eve teasing, molestation, emotional disputes, dowry harassment and more violence within the homes universal across culture, religion, class, caste and ethnicity. The latter part of the decade of 1990 witnessed a renewed interest in the phenomenon called dowry violence. Domestic violence now refer to the violence and abuse that women face in their relationship with men, therefore marital violence whether the relationship is legally valued or not.

Women lack access of formal and informal mechanisms for redress in situation of abuse. The majority of women experiences abuse do not access any form of medical care for either psychological or physical injuries. Social and economic constraints further compound their plight and how to seek help renders these women more unbearable to continued and escalating abuse by their husbands. As we publish a magazine a number of women contacted us using our office number and ask us for suggestions about their problems. These calls include Dowry harassment, Dowry deaths, and Divorce, Wife and husband relations. They were asking for Legal Help and enquired about Advocates and Psychologists. We were providing them the information from our documentation centers. We also referred them to other N.G.O.'s who are working on these issues. While doing all this we thought that why not we start an official help line for women in distress. Immediately we contacted Girija, Programme Officer OXFAM and shared our thoughts and ideas with her. She encouraged us to submit a proposal on this regard to OXFAM. After some discussions with Girija we submitted a detailed proposal to OXFAM and they accepted our proposal.

In order to help such women in distress we have started "BHUMIKA HELP LINE" to provide services to women and victims by lending our ears and responding and giving friendly counseling to them.

On 16th March 2006 we had a function at BHUMIKA office to give publicity to the help line number and to take opinion of the experts who are helping the women in distress. We invited Ms. Sowmya Mishra, D.C.P Cyberabad, Ms. Chayadevi, and Ms. Girija, Programme Officer, 'OXFAM' and many others.

All together 100 people attended this function that is presided by Ms. K. Satyavathi, Editor of Bhumika Magazine and Co-coordinator of BHUMIKA HELP LINE. There was an art exhibition of different showpieces made by only different varieties of leaves. Ms. Vasantha Kumari made these. The art exhibition was inaugurated by Ms. Ranjana Singwi W/o Chief Justice of Andhra Pradesh Justice Singwi. The programme was attended by a number of spouses of High Court Judges.

Nirnaya Projects :

In the year 2006 Nirnaya Women's Trust supported Bhumika in conducting 3 Short-term studies, which helped Bhumika build material resources in its research and documentation center.

The three short-term projects are

Research Project on "Anganwadi workers"

Andhra Pradesh is one of few States in the Country, where a separate directorate and a separate department in the secretariat are functioning to look after the welfare of women and children. This department had taken up a number of programs meant for children in addition to women welfare activities. This department was created for effective formation and implementation of policies for women and children and evaluating various programs intended for their welfare. A number of programs were initiated for the development of women and children.

The department is striving to achieve Women Empowerment through increased gender sensitization, addressing gender inequalities in education and employment, increasing gender sensitivity to health, welfare and building capacities to promote women's participation in all aspects of development. Another major intervention has been universalization of the ICDS to provide supplementary Nutrition and Health related services to the children and women in need.

Activities of Department:

The multifarious activities of the department can be broadly classified in to 3 categories.

- I. Nutrition and Health related services through Anganwadis.
- II. Welfare and empowerment programmes for women with special emphasis on girl children and to promote gender equality.
- III. Management of homes and other institutions for women and children in difficulties, duly enlisting cooperation of NGO's.

Nutrition and Health related services through Anganwadis: -

As India has the highest level of child under nutrition in the world, along with Bangladesh and Nepal, Govt. of India has universalized the Integrated Child Development Services [ICDS] scheme to provide a functional Anganwadi in every settlement and ensure full coverage for all children and this is also the best means of providing immediate protection to vulnerable children.

Even in 2001, the Supreme Court directed the Central and State Governments to ensure that there is a functional Anganwadi in every settlement.

Together with universalisation, extension quality improvement like nutrition's cooked food, take home rations for young children aged 6 months to 3 years, closer supervision, improved infrastructure, expanded health services and better growth monitoring are required if ICDS is to have a significant impact on the nutrition, health and well – being of children.

Supplementary nutrition programme is one of the prime services rendered under ICDS. 40% of children in the age group of 6-month children. 40 % pregnant women and lactating mothers are also identified for providing nutritious food. Priority is given to the families living below poverty line.

Welfare and empowerment programmes for women: -

Empowerment of women is the hallmark of the approach of the Government in its development initiatives. The state empowerment policy for women aims at gender equality and justice, social security, elimination of discrimination against women in all walks of life, economic development and integration of women into main stream of economy.

The department is playing a conscious role empowering of women by striving to enforce the reservation of 33 1/3 % jobs in Govt. and public sector, 33 1/3 % of budget for developmental programs for women, implementation of girl child, protection scheme, opportunities to participate through mother's committees and IGA groups.

Atrocities on women are on the increase given the low status of women and ineffective enforcement and existing laws for women. Violence on women includes sexual assault, death due to demands and dowry, socio-cultural traditions of subordination there fore jogins and devadasis.

Then women welfare department is providing financial relief to the victims of atrocities and enabling them to seek justice in the court of law.

The department even constituted committers at the State level, District level, advisory bonds to review dowry cases, complaint committees to deal with sexual harassment in the work place, short stay homes, and rescuer home, family counseling centers and help lines.

Research Project on “Women prisoners in Chenchalguda Jail”.

We are doing another research project on “women in prisoners in chenchalguda,Jail”. The small study on “women in prison” is one of the most under-researched areas in sociology.

Scholars have attributed the relative invisibility of women in prison [compared to their male counterparts] to a number of factors: women constitute a small proportion [typically around 5 percent] of the total prison and jail population, generally women are incarcerated for less dangerous and serious crimes than men, and incarcerated women are less likely than incarcerated men to “riot, destroy property make reform demands”. The field site of this project is the Chanchalguda women’s state prison. The research design is a case study. The research is based on the data collected by observation, research questions on the nature of crime, its causes and its prevalence. This nature of crime will examine the determinates of violence and also the relevant economic, social and cultural factors.

We had conducted a study to find out the condition of women prisoners, and to what extent they are aware of their right to basic minimum needs, right to have medical treatment and presence of lady doctors, nurses and right to work and earn, right to meet their family members, right to communicate through letters, right to have free legal aid and right to talk and appoint a lawyer etc.

This study also includes the facilities available to women and children in prison and is there any kind of harassment provision of separate cells for young prisoners and to the age-old prisoners, separate cells for civil crime prisoners and criminal crime prisoners etc.

The objectives of our research study even include the investigation on the percentage of nature of crimes, time taking for the judgment to come, and the facilities available for legal aid etc. we will submit the final report in due course.

Research Project on “Women Police Stations, Family Courts, Family Counseling centers”- How they are useful to women- a small study.

Domestic violence against women has become an age-old practice. Different type of cases is coming into light. Married women seeking redress against abusive and violent husband, and also parents, whose daughter’s had been murdered by their in-laws, seeking help in getting justice from the police and courts. However, the experience of approaching then police and law courts turned out to be a very disappointing one for most of the women.

To begin with, the police would put all manners of hurdles in even registering cases of domestic violence, even when the victims feared for their very lives. In cases where wives had been murdered, the police were found to play an active role in destroying evidence and passing off these cases as suicides or accidental deaths- simply because they had been suitably bribed. The story in the law courts was not very different. Husbands and in-laws got away with torture and even murder, because the women and their families found it difficult to ‘prove beyond doubt’ that they were victims of violence and extortion.

From the experience, we can conclude that what we needed were stringent laws. By comparison, far less importance was given to figuring out ways of making our law enforcement machinery behave lawfully. But most important of all, domestic violence and abuse came to be seen as a one – way affair, largely because most of those whose cases reached women’s organizations, police stations and law courts, happened to be wives who had complained against their husbands.

Many women’s organizations feel that despite the existence of supposedly stringent laws.. most victims fail to receive necessary relief.

As a result of determined campaigning and lobbying by women’s organizations, significant amendments were made to the Indian penal code, the Indian Evidence Act and the Dowry Prohibition Act, with the intention of protecting wives from marital violence, abuse an extortionist dowry demands.

With this growing percentage of domestic violence we had taken up a project to find out the role of Women Commission, Women Protection Cell, Women Police Stations, Family Courts, Family Counseling Centers, Help lines, Legal Services Authority, Lok Adalats, and Human Rights Commission their services availability to the women in solving the problems.

We will submit the final reports to Nirnaya after completion of the reports.

Other Activities of Bhumika

Bhumika team attended a number of meetings and developed a good network with so many organizations by attending these meetings we learn so many issues and we also collected material on different women issues for our documentation center and for Bhumika.

The meetings we attended:

In January 06, Ms. K. Satyavathi attended meetings on women employment-globalization; education for women’s equality, workshop on child rights, Anveshi meeting, and Sparrow-writers camp at Mumbai and child marriage-child rights at Banglore.

In Feb. 06, Bhumika team attended two meetings- is Guruprasad cultural drams Festival and Rachakonda Rachana Puraskaram.

In March 06-meetings on Sahitya Anuwadham-problems organized by Potti Sriramulu Telugu University, book release function of Ms. Shailaja Mitra and award ceremony function of Acharya Nayani Krishna Kumari.

Future activities of Bhumika: -

Story, Essay Competition on the effects of Globalization on Women:

This year also we are conducting story and essay competition to women writers. We gave paper advertisement and writers responded positively. We received stories and essays. The selection process is going on and we are planning to announce the winner's list in the middle of August 2006.

Women Writers Camp:

We are also planning to organize a Women Writer's camp in the month of September 2006. The main objective of this camp is to create a space for communication and sharing. The camp will be for three days and we planning the camp at Perupalem Beach in West Godavari Dist.