



# Rashtra Mahila

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## Editor's Column

To commemorate the International Women's Day, the National Commission for Women organized a two-day national seminar on 8th and 9th March, 2007, on "Mentally-ill Women-is destitution the only answer?" in association with Institute of Human Behaviour and Allied Sciences, New Delhi and Ashrya Adhikar Abhiyan (AAA) an NGO. All the stakeholders including Directors General of Police, Secretaries of Ministry of Women & Child Development, Health and Family Welfare of States/UTs, Commissioners of Disability of States/UTs, experts, concerned NGOs and affected women and children participated in the seminar.

A few mentally-ill women shared the dais and spoke about their problems. The focus of the seminar was to highlight the difficulties in the lives of mentally ill women, destitution and to explore the role of the organizations involved in the care and the seminar were to:

**FOCUS**

**Mentally-ill  
Women**

including abandonment by family and Government and non-governmental welfare of these women. The objectives of



At the seminar on mentally-ill women, Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam flanked by Dr. Girija Vyas and Dr. Anbumani Ramadoss

- Get first hand information on the conditions of mentally-ill women.
- To obtain an insight into the problems faced by the service delivery system and to formulate a need-based action plan by obtaining feedback from the concerned stakeholders.
- To evolve an action plan for implementation of the recommendations emerging from the deliberations.
- Network with various organizations dealing with women and mental health.

Welcoming the audience, NCW Chairperson Dr. Girija Vyas said that the current Mental Health Act was not gender sensitive and did not ensure the rights of mentally ill people. As per the law, mental illness can be a ground for divorce and

all the 600 districts of the country would be covered, he added.

Inaugurating the Seminar, The President of India, Dr. Abdul Kalam said that NCW, along with various Government Departments and State Women's

counselling for the family and the Ministries of Social Justice and Women and Child Development providing necessary funds and infrastructural support.

He said the NCW could create a website where societal members could report about the destitutes they came across daily. The Commission could also seek the assistance of police, scouts and guides and volunteers for collecting and registering of data about the destitutes on the website. The police could be sensitised to pro-active action to report the existence of persons with mental illness who are found in their jurisdiction to the nearest rehabilitation centre, besides advising the relatives of the affected persons to take the individuals for treatment, he said.

On the second day of the seminar, the participants were divided into working groups to discuss issues such as availability of health care facilities, quality and standard of care, human rights violations against mentally-ill women, gender perspectives in the relevant laws, mobilizing public opinion and community initiatives, lack of adequate family support, rehabilitation facilities for mentally-ill women, etc.

The suggestions emerging from the seminar will provide a base for making recommendations to the Central and State Governments and help in formulating a policy for rehabilitation of mentally disabled women and children in the society.



*Dr. Kalam, Dr. Ramadoss, Dr. Vyas and the members of the Commission lighting the lamp*

such people could be deprived of their property rights.

She said there was also need to sensitise police as they were sometimes accused of harassing mentally ill people.

Speaking on the occasion, Union Health Minister Dr. Anbumani Ramadoss said that the Govt. has decided to review the Mental Health Act which has been termed as insensitive to women. He said that about 7 to 8% of the country's population suffered from some kind of mental disorder and 1.5 to 2% suffered from severe mental disorder which needed hospitalisation.

However, mental health service are grossly inadequate with only 36 institutes for the purpose. There are just two psychologists per ten lakh of population in comparison to America's 150. The government is planning to put in a lot of money in the area of mental health. All primary health centres would be given medicines for mental disorders. Currently, patients are required to go to specialists, Dr. Ramadoss said. The national mental health programme would cover 400 districts in the next three years. Eventually

Commissions, could work to create a hundred rehabilitation centres and 1,000 after-care homes in the country.

The corporate sector and societal transformers, with the help of trained people, could also work for this cause. The programme should include welfare of the children of the affected persons and



*Dr. Kalam and Dr. Vyas in discussion.*

## NCW seeks report on March 14 violence

Taking cognisance of the violence at Nandigram on March 14 in which a woman was among those killed in police action, the National Commission for Women (NCW) has sought a report from the West Bengal Government.

In a letter addressed to Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, NCW Chairperson Dr. Girija Vyas, while expressing concern at the death of a woman in violence and allegations of rape and molestation, said it was shocking to learn that many women and children were living in camps, unable to return home for fear of violence.

Ms. Vyas asked the State Government to inform the Commission about the number of women killed and injured in violence, whether any woman was killed by anti social elements at Nandigram in the past three months and whether police firing was the sole cause of the death and injuries to women and the kind of compensation being given to the families of those killed as well as the details of the enquiry being undertaken on the police action and whether a separate enquiry was being held on charges of rape.

## Indian woman gets top science prize

It's perhaps the first international recognition of an Indian woman scientist. Ramadorai Sujatha, an associate professor in mathematics at the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Mumbai, has been awarded the Ramunujan Prize for 2006 by the world renowned Abdus Salam International Centre for theoretical Physics located at Trieste, Italy.

## Members' Visits

- Member Malini Bhattacharya gave the keynote address at the National seminar on violence against women from Womb to Tomb organised by the Centre for Social Research in New Delhi. The seminar was sponsored by NCW.

Ms. Bhattacharya also attended the state-wide conference of women of the Tungkhul tribe at Shangshak in Ukhrul district in Imphal. It is interesting to note that the Tungkhul Nagas are the only tribe who have a written Constitution and recently a change has been made in the Constitution to allow women space in the local self-government system. In her speech, she spoke about violence in a conflict situation, domestic violence and the violence of trafficking.

Later, she attended the International women's day programme organised by the social welfare department and the newly constituted Manipur State Commission for Women.

- Member Yasmeen Abrar attended a three-day National Seminar on 'Women and AIDS - a growing challenge at Chandigarh. The objective was to sensitise teachers and students to this deadly disease. Inaugurating the seminar, Ms. Abrar emphasised on awareness of the masses, the rights of women and the need for educating rural women.

The Member also visited Tonk in Rajasthan and held a discussion with the Collector and S.P. to discuss steps to be taken for uplifting the status of women and discuss pending cases. She also asked for a report on the Dayan Pratha. She interacted with women bidi workers and assured them of NCW support in solving their problems.

Later, she attended an awareness programme on trafficking of women and girl children at Jaipur.

- Member Neeva Konwar attended the regional workshop on trafficking in Kolkata organised by the West Bengal State Commission for Women. Later, she left for Guwahati and discussed with the Senior officials regarding Panchayat Women Shakti Abhiyan to be organised in Assam. Ms. Konwar attended the workshop on the powers of the civil court vested with the commission at Shillong. Later, she held a meeting with the officials of the Central Social Welfare Board and NGOs in Guwahati to discuss networking of NGOs with NCW.

Ms. Konwar attended as the chief guest a two-day workshop, sponsored by NCW on the problems of weavers of Handloom and Textile Industries in Sivsagar. Speaking on the occasion, she appealed to the weavers to take advance training for designing and dyeing process to cope with the demands of customers for mooga silk. She also stressed the need for economic empowerment of rural poor as a measure for arresting insurgency problem in NE region.

- Member Manju S. Hembrom attended a meeting organised by the Managing Committee of Indian Backward class, Jharkhand, at Ranchi, attended by a large number of women from West Bengal, Orissa and Jharkhand.

Later, she attended a seminar inaugurated by the Deputy Chief Minister, Jharkhand. Speaking to 150 representatives of various NGOs, she stressed the need for awareness of the problems of trafficking. Later, she met the DM and S.P. and discussed with them women-related issues and Govt. programmes.

On the basis of a complaint to NCW by an MP from Hazaribag, Ms. Hembrom visited Hazaribag to enquire into alleged brutality by the district police against the villagers of Chano Baheri block Sardar. After examining many witnesses, the Member felt that indeed atrocities had been committed against women and villagers by the police, though this was denied by senior police officials. She suggested to the D.C. and SP that a committee should be formed to maintain peace as quick action was required to ward off any further caste riot in the District.



Member Malini Bhattacharya addressing the Seminar



Member Neeva Konwar addressing the Workshop

## Workshop on Trafficking

A two-day workshop on 'Prevention and combating human trafficking with special focus on children and women' was organised by NCW at a South Goa resort. Addressing the workshop Chief Minister Mr. Pratap Singh Rana revealed that a Goa state action plan has been devised with a code of conduct for foreign tourists to curb the growing menace of trafficking of women and children, which lead to prostitution and paedophilia.

Speaking further, Mr. Rana said women and children are the greatest sufferers during any calamity and poverty is a great evil, which forces women and children into sex racket. There are 800 red light areas in the country where 75 percent of the women are HIV positive. This is both alarming and a setback for a country which is trying to jump economically ahead.

By eradication of poverty and illiteracy, the problem may be combated and the coming assembly budget session will be directed to women and children, especially of the rural sector of society, so as to make them independent, he said.

The Goa Governor, Mr S.C. Jamir said that consciousness needs to be aroused amongst the people to solve one of the most formidable challenges faced by the society today; mere law, legislations and NGOs would not be enough. Trafficking of children is not only a crime but also a shame to society and seeing the statistics which show that it is on the rise, we must concentrate more on prevention than on rehabilitation, the Governor said.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chairperson of the National

Commission for Women, Dr. Girija Vyas informed that according to the United Nations Fund for Women, every year seven million women and girls are trafficked across the globe. The majority of India's 4,00,000 child prostitutes attend to local clients or West Asian businessmen.

She said that the reasons for prostitution and trafficking are poverty, illiteracy though some girls turn to prostitution by choice. We need five pillars to combat the same namely -- strong laws, sensitisation of the police, awareness programmes, strong role of the civil society and the media. All these pillars should come together to solve the problem, she added.

NCW Member Mrs. Nirmala Venkatesh, Child Protection Officer, UNICEF, Mrs. Vijay Laxmi Arora and Secretary General, NHRC, Mr. Ravi Kamal Bhargava also spoke on the occasion.

Chairperson, Goa state Commission for Women, Dr. Pramod Salgaonkar proposed the vote of thanks.

## Awareness programme on Trafficking

Sponsored by NCW, an awareness programme on trafficking of women and girl child was organised by the Centre of Social Development at Jaipur.

Inaugurating the workshop, the Chairperson of the National Commission for Women, Dr. Girija Vyas, has sought formulation of new laws to meet changed situations as well as strict application of laws to prevent trafficking in women and children

in the country. Along with implementation of the legal provisions, sustained rehabilitation programmes are also needed for the desired effect, she said. Women turn sex workers only when all doors are closed for them, Their rehabilitation also should be carried out with this understanding.

Every year as many as 7 million women get pushed into flesh trade the world over. In Mumbai alone two lakh women from Nepal are engaged as sex workers, Dr. Vyas observed. The Centre is planning



Dr. Girija Vyas addressing the workshop  
Member Yasmeen Abrar is on her left.

to make amendments in the Immoral Traffic Prevention Act 1956 (ITPA) and countrywide consultations are on in this connection, she said.

The problem with the existing laws is that they were not formulated with the participation and involvement of women. Speaking on the occasion, Member Yasmeen Abrar said that education and eradication of poverty were the basic essentials to stop trafficking of women and children.

Representatives of UNICEF, the Rajasthan Government officials along with academicians and social workers also addressed the workshop.

for further information visit our website at : [www.ncw.nic.in](http://www.ncw.nic.in)

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