

#### **SUBTHEME 4: INTERFACE BETWEEN ACTION AND RESEARCH**

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#### **ABSTRACTS FOR THE PANEL**

### **1. Contraceptive Behaviour, Unmet Need and Intentions to Use Family Planning Method Among Married Adolescent Women in Uttar Pradesh**

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Uttar Pradesh, the most populous state has a great significance in achieving replacement level fertility at the national level. The low prevalence of contraceptive use and the low age at marriage are some of major challenges in reducing fertility rate in the state. The concept of unmet need for family planning refers to a discrepancy between expressed fertility desires and contraceptive practice. Unmet need for contraception and its variants are statistically derived measures of potential demand. Therefore, it would be immensely important to understand the knowledge and behaviour among married adolescent women regarding contraception. In addition, the findings regarding the level of unmet need and intention to use a family planning method among adolescents will help the state to understand the future course of action as far as the potential demand for contraception matters. In the above light, this study examines three specific objectives: (1) the level of awareness about the different family planning methods and their use among married adolescent women by their background characteristics, (2) the unmet need and intention to use a family planning method among them and (3) the likelihood of adolescent women in unmet need and having intention to use a contraceptive method in future.

The present study borrows data from recent District Level Household Survey (2002-2004). The data was collected from 64,207 married women in Uttar Pradesh and among them 7,030 women were adolescents.

Logistic technique has been used to find out factors affecting unmet need for family planning methods. Multinomial regression has been used to see the influence of various factors on intention to use a method among those adolescents who had unmet need for family planning. The study suggests that a majority of adolescent women were belonging to low socio-economic status. The practice of low age at marriage forced many adolescent women to enter into childbearing at younger ages. Only 8.2 percent women use any method of family planning, which is very low. The level of unmet need is much higher among married adolescent women than the state average of all women. Women belonging to SC/ST background have low knowledge of modern family planning methods and they use mainly traditional contraceptive measures. Almost 70 percent of adolescents who were identified in unmet need for family planning did not intend to use any method in future. In comparison to OBC and Others, a higher proportion of SC/ST women being in unmet need for a family planning methods did not intend to use them in future. This indicates how far a woman is consistent while responding about her reproductive goals and intentions at two different places in the same survey. This again left policy makers and programme managers confused pondering upon whether unmet need has any practical relevance to be chosen as an indicator of potential demand for family planning in future for adolescent women in a state like Uttar Pradesh.

## **2. Construction of Masculinities and Femininities among Young Men and Women Respectively in Low-Income Communities in Mumbai**

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Male behavior/masculinity/ 'working with men' has currently figured in the priority agenda of many funding/ research/ and implementing agencies in the development field worldwide. Involvement of men in challenging and changing unequal power relations is increasingly perceived to be important and constructive.

Feminisms challenged cultural interpretations of being a 'male' and of the 'masculine'. Social-scientific studies of masculinity since 1980s have delineated how gender and other power structures interact with various socializing institutions to produce masculinity. It is now widely believed (based on the research) that there is no single, linear construction of masculinity, rather multiple patterns of 'masculinities' are produced around axes of time, space, context and cultures. The research on masculinities has also delineated that even within a given cultural setting, multiple masculinities are produced.

Masculinities and femininities being products of large-scale gender structure and gender relationships entail unequal and hierarchical relationships within them (inter and intra). Largely masculinities and femininities get constructed in such a way that they together maintain, reinforce and perpetuate unequal gender relationships. Violence is used to police the gender boundaries.

The proposed paper is based on the findings of two inter related operations research (*a collaborative effort of 'CORO' a Mumbai based NGO, 'Population Council', New Delhi an international research organisation and 'Institute of Promundo', a Brazil based NGO*) on 1) 'construction of 'masculinities' amongst young men and 2) construction of 'femininities' amongst young women in low income communities in Mumbai, which addressed unequal gender norms as a strategy to reduce violence against women and risky sexual behavior amongst young men. The research delineated that construction of masculinities ranged from macho men to feminine men along a continuum while construction of femininities ranged from docile, submissive women to 'manly' women along a continuum. The perceptions/notions of young men and young women about concepts like gender, love and violence were observed to be complimenting each other in producing and reinforcing unequal gender relationships rooted in power structures.

The findings of the operations research are helpful in understanding links between violence, male sexual entitlements and gender oppression of women and in designing large scale interventions to challenge and change unequal gender attitudes of men and women.

## **3. Collaboration with GWLO in Gujarat: An Experience of Learning Together**

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Working Group on Women's Land Ownership (GWLO) is an informal network of a number of Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) in Gujarat working on the various issues pertaining to women's land rights in the state. Apart from working on an issue, which is fairly complex issue, the network has certain special features such as long stretch of the initial spadework, working with the Government organizations, and constant drive for refining the understanding of concepts, contexts, and approaches. Collaboration with academic organizations in the state has been an important feature right from the beginning of the initiative.

Gujarat Institute of Development Research (GIDR) has been one of the active collaborators right from the early phase of GWLO. The need for consulting academicians had (perhaps) emanated from the fact that the original conceptualization, analysis and motivation for uploading the idea of women's land rights on ground had come from the work of a feminist

economist, which however posed challenges of empirical validation in context specific situations. Over time the trajectory of collaboration involved a number of steps such as explaining the concept to a larger body of practitioners; identifying critical gaps in contextualisation of the concept; generating evidence from the field realities; dissecting the issues across categories like legal-procedural; gender relations; and women's agency; interpretation of the results; and finally creating platforms for negotiations with the policy makers/implementers on the one hand and academicians on the other.

The collaboration between GWLO and GIDR has been mainly need based. There has been a conviction on both sides that learning from the other is almost inevitable if the movement/concept, which is relatively more alien to Indian society, is to take roots into the socio-economic settings in large parts of the country. The collaboration between GWLO and GIDR has yielded some positive outcomes with hardly any negative externalities since the collaboration, as noted earlier, is based on the foundation of academic discourse; felt need for learning from each other; and mutual respect as well as freedom to take-off on once own path at certain junctures on the long pathway towards attaining a common goal.

The paper will discuss the context, the *modus operandi*, and the outcomes till date from this collaboration. This will be discussed in the backdrop of the larger context of land reforms and the role played by academia as well as the civil society organizations in initiating processes of positive changes especially in gender context. The paper will highlight main features of research agenda to be undertaken by each partner and also jointly by the two. It will also identify boundaries of collaboration between academia and the network and discuss limitations of collaboration such as this. The paper, it is hoped, would provide a possible model of combining research and action in a constructive manner where the idea is to draw from others' strengths rather than merely duplicating the efforts.

#### **4. Shattering the Silence: Research to Collective Action Amongst the New Industrial Women Workers**

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India has been an exporter of readymade garments (RMGs) for more than 25 years now. However, it is only in the last 10 years or so that the RMGs industry is beginning to be concentrated in certain geographical areas – Bangalore, Chennai and Tiruppur in the South and the Gurgaon-Faridabad region in the North, thus causing a new wave of industrialization to be witnessed in these areas. Women form bulk of the workforce in this new industrialisation, especially in the South.

During an earlier phase when large numbers of women joined the industrial workforce – in electronic units, jewellery units etc. – there was a lot of academic interest in the phenomenon and researchers were keenly involved in understanding that process. This time around, there has hardly been any interest – be it regarding the issue of migration, working conditions or occupational health issues. Apart from this, the kind of verbal, physical and sexual harassment that women workers are subjected to and the numerous instances of corporal punishment meted out to them, need to be researched; it leads to providing crucial explanations about the nature of the industry.

The very fact that corporal punishment is used to punish and discipline instead of the processes established by law, indicates that the nature of employee-employer relations is almost feudal. In addition, the practices such as the "Sumangali scheme" adopted by garment factory workers in Tamil Nadu, especially Tiruppur, bring out the contradictions of gendered labor relations in an export driven industry, which has seen tremendous changes in the global market. This paper seeks to lay bare the fact that there is an absolute paucity of research in

this new industrial workforce, foreground the importance of research itself in exposing these inherent contradictions, and finally, its relevance and value in supporting the organization of women workers within industry. In effect, the continued relevance of research leading to action, giving voice and bargaining power to women workers.

## **5. Naga Mothers as Agents of Peace**

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The paper deals with a region in the northeast, which has been in conflict almost perpetually. The situation in Nagaland particularly draws attention. Dissension rip parts of the region today and the socio-political and religious bonds among the tribes are severely affected. The state administration and the constitutional set-up time and again fall short of providing lasting solutions to the ensuing crisis. Conflict has afflicted its passage from the pre-modern to the modern stage, and remains as the defining mode of action since then, because interests acceptable to it continue to be contested. Our intention is to focus on a very specific case; an association called the Naga Mothers Association (NMA) and its engagements in the public sphere. We use this case as an instance to reflect on the possibilities of activism attainable by women and also to define the parameters, which govern the de-limitation of the same.

The Naga women's case presents interesting grounds for study: First, their case best exemplifies the modes adopted by women confronting conflict situations. So far, studies of women in similar situations reveal, adoption of either of the two roles, adoption of outright anti-state projections of militancy, which is the more common case; or, the more uncommon role of peace-makers, it is in the latter role that the Naga women exhibit their specificity. It becomes significant therefore to know the specific mode of their interaction.

Second, despite the vantage gained from the latter role, the Naga women have never used it to the extent possible for furtherance of their own interests. Rather it is seen that women are able to counterbalance the unsettling effects of the clash between the confusing value-systems of modernity confronting tradition on the one hand, and on the other while the youth engage in issues that rupture both self, tribe and the state, their mothers, exhibit Amazonian strength to reconstruct and to heal, by extending familial ties into the wider society. The women's work reflects 'communitarianism' the familial space is extended into the wider society and the same norms are sought to be applied in both. The trajectory of the family is replicated in the society, allowing 'motherhood' and its attendant bonds to be reflected in the wider community or in the public space.

So, how do specific contexts shape and mould identity of the women and inform their activism? What are their gains and areas of defeat, what methods do they apply in the public space are some of the questions addressed.

The Method adopted: Primary sources mainly of the NMA's documents; periodic press releases, speeches of noted personnel speaking from the forum of the association and their appeals placed before the government have been perused. Documents of other organizations along with which the NMA has collaborated have been used. Above all, telephonic interviews of some members of the NMA Executive body, such as the President and the General Secretary as well as of ordinary members were also done.

## **6. Interface between Research and Action: A case study of Tamilnadu in the context of Tsunami**

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This paper is an endeavour to focus on how research unearths the implications of gender inequalities and discriminations during and after disasters. Research in this sense becomes a powerful tool of advocacy for changes at the policy and programmatic levels. Programmes which remain rooted in gender research do pave the way for far reaching changes in gender roles and relations at all phases of disaster response.

Catastrophic natural hazards like tsunami provide unique opportunities to look at the consequences of the pre-disaster gender vulnerabilities. For example, disaster like tsunami occurs in nature but its impacts are shaped by the social world in which it occurs. For example, women died more than men, women became poorer relative to men, women's loss were not assessed and documented, women's specific needs, including reproductive health needs, did not attract the attention in the initial phases, there were adverse consequences of male dominated relief distribution and needs assessments. The entire gamut of gender based disadvantages and its long term consequences on women and gender relations needed wider research so that intervention at all phases of recovery could be well directed towards mainstreaming women's gender interests in the recovery process.

The present paper which elucidates the gendered issues of tsunami is based on a field based study which was supported by Oxfam and carried out by a team of independent researchers. The purpose was to generate a body of knowledge by articulating issues through participatory research process. This was done to have effective interface between research and practice; to bring in corrective steps to engender policies which would further the gender equity in both disaster recovery and development processes. Apart from articulating issues, the research also focuses on the best practices of the NGOs in the direction of gender mainstreaming: the concrete outcome of research guiding the practice.

This paper brings in several case stories, from a gender lens, of major gender issues which were unpacked through field-based studies and the best practices which challenged the entrenched existing institutional norms at the community, market and state and family levels. The issues range from higher mortality rate of women relative to men and its far reaching effect on the status of girls, absence of women specific clothing and sanitary needs to that of their home based occupations in the loss assessments and recovery processes. The issues also bring forth how the aid remains skewed in favour of men for the simple reason of women's pre-disaster weaker social, political and economic status relative to men, thus reinforcing the existing gender inequalities.

## **7. Methodology of Feminist Research: Study Women in 'Motion' Bidi Tobacco Workers and Devdasis in Nipani**

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I was to study Bidi Tobacco Women Workers Union at Nipani, which had organized almost 4000 workers in 60 tobacco pounding factories and was subject of various journalistic articles in the newspapers. Also, the area was in the news for dedication of young girls to Goddess Renuka, who then would become 'Devdasi' a sacred prostitute. Initially I did not show much interest in the cultural aspect of this phenomenon, even though some of the workers were Devdasis, since it was not my topic of research. I was to study a very vibrant movement of strong force of bidi tobacco pounding workers. I was visiting the place for two successive years and documenting every step in the process of struggle.

Being very close to the action, I could see the paradox of 'Devdasi', as a category, being called as 'bad' woman by the mainstream society, and as a 'victim' by the reformers fighting

to rescue them from this practice. During watching the action critically I realized that both the sides had not made efforts to explore the 'self image' of the women who were part of the cult of 'Devdasi'. While both the parties were sticking to their assumptions cultural anthropologist had tried to explain the phenomenon as a legacy, which can be traced back to the period of Mother Goddess, which was another less known facet of the phenomenon.

Two years of constant association with many Devdasis who were part of the bidi tobacco workers' struggle inspired me to do small research on Devdasis in the rural area around Nipani, which could make a critique of the ongoing reform efforts from the feminist perspective, and suggest alternative demands based on the assumption that they have an agency of their own.

The main feminist principle, which got reinforced from this experience, is that we must study, document women/deprived people when there is an action and vibrant efforts towards change, which arouses the actors' reflexivity and contributes to their agency. In absence of the action, agency of the deprived community remains disguised and unraveled.

## **8. Safety and the City: Women and Public Spaces in Delhi**

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Cities and growing urbanisation have become the hallmark of our times. There has been an attempt to change the image of Delhi into that of a global city (or a "world-class city"). In this paper we argue that besides infrastructure, the quality of a city has to be judged by what it offers to its citizens and foremost among that must be the right to live, move around and work with dignity and safety. Delhi falls very short on delivering this, especially to the more vulnerable and marginalised populations. We address this issue from the perspective of women's access and right to public spaces. We locate our work within the debates on the nature of violence against women and the sociology of contemporary urban spaces.

In order to understand the gendered nature of access of public spaces and its effect on women's mobility and access to the city, JAGORI conducted over 25 safety audits in Delhi over a period of a year. The safety audit is a tool that has been used in several cities around the world to map public spaces by delineating factors that determine safety or "unsafety" for women. These audits, along with the findings from a survey of 500 women across the city and several group discussions, provide the data with which we explore the ways in which public spaces are viewed and accessed differently by men and women. Through these, we interrogate the gendered nature of public spaces and how this influences women's rights, mobility and their participation in social, economic and political processes that define urban life.

In line with Jagori's philosophy of translating research into action, so that real change may be made, we launched the Safe Delhi Campaign to sensitize the people of the city about the issue of sexual harassment of women in public spaces. The Campaign aims at making visible the issue of violence and harassment in public places-as a serious problem, not just a trivial matter of "eve teasing". Second, it seeks to highlight lack of safety as more than just "women's issues", but as a consequence of dominant models of urbanisation, a reflection of the culture of the city, and violation of women's rights. Finally, we aim to reach out to and involve diverse groups of citizens in recognizing and addressing the issues of public safety of women.

The Campaign has reached out to the "ordinary citizen" to sensitize and involve by speaking with citizens' groups, students and teachers, resident associations, police officials and corporate bodies to develop strategies and take specific actions on safety of women. An important partnership initiated under the Safe Delhi Campaign has been to work with the

conductors and bus drivers of Delhi Transport Corporation to sensitize them about the issues of women's safety in buses and to enlist their participation in making this space safer for women passengers.

## 9. Understanding Muslim Women's Citizenship in Gujarat

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Key Words: Peace, Gender and Muslim Women's Rights

### **Background:**

ANANDI – Area Networking and Development Initiatives is a voluntary organisation that works with women from marginalised and vulnerable communities of Gujarat since 1995. The Founder Directors have a strong feminist background and have adopted a self –reflexive approach to their community based strategies. Creating women leaders from the communities to negotiate for their rights and provide skills to tackle poverty and ensure sustainable livelihoods have been the major focus of ANANDI's work.

- Out of the rural context in which the organisation worked prior to 2002 the experience was that
- in rural Gujarat Muslims largely among the well off.
- Not part of the mobilisation where deprivation of basic needs is the basis
- 2002 created conditions where in the general all Muslims become "marginalized and targeted". Interaction during relief and rehabilitation brought face to face contact with rural Muslim women and their issues.

Post 2002:

Initial focus of action for the organisation was once again deprivation that emerged out of looting and burning of assets essential for income generation and habitation. Mobilisation of Muslim women was initiated to ensure entitlements, and to reestablishing livelihoods.

Within a year or two patriarchy within the community tries to regain its hold and the women who were allowed to go out to seek "benefits" from NGOs were being reigned in. On the other hand women who got the opportunity to step out and "see the world" gain knowledge about laws, women's rights were beginning to challenge the patriarchy within family, community and the state.

Political atmosphere in Gujarat - 2002 had exposed the deeply entrenched communal mindset that was consolidated in different ways by the political party in power and their Hindutva politics. It is breakdown of values and democracy where the state machinery which was involved in fomenting communal violence rather than curbing it. Further more the action has been justified in various ways by the fundamentalist forces among the larger polity.

Therefore there was a need to look at how do Muslim women look at citizenship; whether the means of mobilisation should be different for these women; what is the role of peace building with a women's focus.

### **Conclusion:**

- There is a lot of research on the sexual nature of violence on women during conflicts, but how do the women who have suffered this live after the intense conflict period ends is a matter of exploration and can give pointers to practioners. Again there is literature on the role of women in peace building – but what is the role when there is denial of conflict after the carnage?
- It is out of such explorations through formal research and informal explorations that a need emerges

- To establish meaning of citizenship for Muslim women in Gujarat in various spheres
- To bring in debate and discussions on communal conflict as being crucial in the development debate much the same way as gender was a couple of decades ago.
- To reduce the time frame of research and feeding into the practice

## **10. Dynamics of Contraceptive Use Among Scheduled Caste Women in Uttar Pradesh**

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Scheduled Caste (SC) population constitute about one fifth of the total population of Uttar Pradesh. SC population has experienced a relatively higher annual growth rate of 2.70 percent compared to 2.13 percent by the general population of the state for the period of 1981-1991. The National Population Policy (2000) indicated that, one of its immediate objectives is to address the issue of unmet need for contraception for bringing down the total fertility rates to replacement levels by the year 2010.

As per the NFHS II (1998-99) estimates, the current use of contraception among SC women in the reproductive ages was found to be 24.8 percent, of which 58.5 percent females are sterilized, 23 percent use traditional methods and the rest 14 percent uses modern spacing methods. A comparative picture of contraceptive between SC women and the women in the state as a whole indicate that, the former groups of women are in a slightly advantageous position than the latter group. Conversely, the TFR among SC women was found to be higher (4.44 children per women) than the state average (3.99). Only a detailed examination can show a better understanding of the various dimensions of their contraceptive use pattern. Stating this, the objective of this paper is to assess the dynamics of contraceptive use among SC women in Uttar Pradesh.

### **Data, Methods and Results**

The study is based on Reproductive and Child Health Survey Round-II (2001-02) Phase-I conducted in Uttar Pradesh. Information on SC women (form women's questionnaire) which has been analyzed with the help of statistical tools such as percentages, cross tabulation and logistic regression.

The Logistic regression analysis shows that urban women in SC category are currently using and expressed the willingness to use more contraceptives in the future than their rural counterparts. It was also found that women with better educational status, those who receive advises from ANM/Health workers and those who have higher knowledge about the use of contraception are likely to use more contraceptives in the future, though some of them have never used it. One significant finding emerges from this study is that; there is a positive relationship between knowledge of the traditional methods of contraception and the level of education and standard of living. In the general context, it is expected to have inverse relationship.

Significant differentials can be observed in the use of contraceptives among women by number of living son compared to number of daughters, i.e. women with female children tend to use more contraceptives than women with male children, indicating the preference for at least a male child by the end her reproductive span. Very negligible percentages of women (currently non users) were informed about the contraceptives methods by health workers. It could be due to the fact that health workers inform women only about female sterilization methods rather than informing the utility of other temporary methods of contraception.

## **11. A Method in Madness: Theatre as a Source and Expression of Difference and Collectivity**



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Theatre is usually left to be studied as art and culture. Academics deem it flippant and short-lived. The role of 'performativity' in gender studies has been emphasized by Judith Butler as a source of agency. This paper would highlight how theatre has been able to accommodate collectivism and difference almost simultaneously, thereby paving a new way to 'stage' bodies as engendered and empowered.

The paper would dwell on three such expressions of how disenfranchised populace of a system can 'upstage' their point of view. Those are the dalit women's **Tappattam**, the transgender group **Kannadi** performing their lives and our recent play *Kaala Kanavu* performing the feminist history of Tamilnadu. Though at first glance it might seem as 'mainstreaming' and therefore 'homogenising', these efforts manage to retain the edginess of existence and the will to survive. I would equate these ventures to Mahasweta Devi's Draupadi's refusal to clothe her self or Manipuri women's struggle against the military by walking naked or fasting for years. It is a conscious move to 'make us see differently'.

Sakthi cultural group in Dindugal has been performing the dalit drum dance Tappattam for over twenty years now. Consisting primarily of dalit, school drop-out girls in and around that area, the group has taken up Tappattam as their clarion call. It is a simultaneous assertion of dalit identity while also reminding us of the fact that the group is entering a forbidden territory.

Kannadi group was formed to demand citizenship rights of the transgender people in the state. Their first play *Manasin Azhaippu* highlighted the demands of voter I.D., work avenues and decent housing. Their second play was based on their lives and exposing the hetero-normative homophobia in each family. The site of violence being the family was also what the group wished for. The dilemma of critiquing and desiring at the same time could not have been more poignantly presented except in a form such as this.

V. Geetha's play *Kaala Kanavu* is a docu-drama of feminist voices in Tamilnadu from late 19<sup>th</sup> century to mid- 20<sup>th</sup> century. The performance of the play denounces any conscious attempt at 'staging'. It creates a space that is close and intimate for a group to gather and the play itself is a discussion of sorts.

The way these three theatrical experiences sought to wrestle with caste, sexuality and historiography are new directions to be borne in mind in our research and activism. By choosing exclusive territories it underlines the differences at work. In the case of dalit and transgender it is more explicitly. Feminist historiography on the other hand poses a much more subtle and more complex an issue. It attempts to engage with collective struggles of the region, while emphasizing the gender perspective in the same. Also, given the context of India viz- a viz states, especially Tamilnadu, the play also brings out the different histories of the region as significant. Thus theatre provides us a way to address differences collectively and there lie the strength and challenge of feminist researches.

## **12. Voices from the underground - VAMP Stigma Index**

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Sexuality and sexual relationships have come under tremendous public scrutiny in the age of HIV/AIDS. The epidemic has pushed societies to acknowledge and confront the complex world inhabited by people who are in monogamous relationships within and outside marriage, and people who are in multiple sex partnerships within, as well as outside of a commercial context. Sexuality minorities, sex workers and now, increasingly, people living with HIV—especially women and orphans—are being pushed to the margins by a society that has

condemned their very existence. This marginalization has led to a total denial of the right to lead a life free of discrimination, inequality and violence.

Discrimination against sex workers in India is as much an issue as the discrimination faced by other marginalized groups along lines of class, caste, race or religion. Stigmatization, which has its roots in the standards set by patriarchal morality, is experienced as the major factor that prevents women from accessing their rights. The *randi* [whore] stigma pushes women-in-prostitution outside the rights framework, effectively cutting them off from privileges and rights supposedly accorded to all citizens irrespective of what they do for a living. The result of this stigma is the denial of basic rights for both sex workers and their families. Some of the rights denied to women due to discrimination are: freedom from physical and mental abuse; the right to education and information; health care, housing; social security and welfare services.

The present paper is based on the VAMP Stigma Index developed by the members of VAMP, the collective of women in prostitution and sex work in Sangli. The stigma index was prepared over a period of time by the women of VAMP which evolved out of their everyday life experiences. The index discusses at length the different kinds of stigma that women in prostitution face both in their personal lives and relationships, and in their experience with societal and state violence, abuse and harassment, and accessing health and other government services.

The index reflects the data from an ongoing nationwide study on five thousand sex workers, compiled by CASAM (Center for Advocacy on Stigma and Marginalization), a project of SANGRAM. The data comes from a detailed questionnaire, developed by CASAM with significant input from VAMP members, which inquires about women's family history, work history, sexual history, experience with abuse and relationship with the state. All the questions were constructed by women in prostitution and sex work and evolved out of their every day life experiences.

The paper will try to bring out the various forms of stigma and marginalization that woman in prostitution experience in their day to day life which in turn prevents women in sex work from accessing their rights.

### **13. Participatory Action Research as Problem Solving Research**

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Exploring action and research are the potential source of knowledge production. Problem solving research methods are the thrust areas of action research to bring positive changes in socio-cultural and economic state of the human society. Particularly the documentation of women's oppression is a necessity but not the solution to the problem itself. Therefore action-oriented research should be built into interaction with the respective social system and the nature of the women's problem. It is understood that women's issues/problems are the most sensitive areas of concern world over and these should be tackled very cordially and scientifically. The objectivity lying behind the tenderness of the above issues is also phenomenal and to be studied and solved with regard to the positivism principle of the culture and the people concerned. This advocates for participatory research.

Participatory approach is an attempt to break away from unidirectional control of the professional researcher. Therefore, participatory approach is solving in response to and for the fulfillment of the needy at the less powerful, weaker segments of a social setting and is part of their growth into consciousness.

Thus participatory action research should be modeled with different modules to study the culture specific problems or the concern areas for the ongoing status of women. Because unless until the research is action-oriented and cannot be treated as per the "cultural

relativism", the inherent causes of the problematic situations and status of women is far beyond the social medicine and community health.

As part of the social medicine and community health, Participatory action research is the means to achieve the goal of the above nature and to prevail Gender equity, which is the requirement of the time for the better survival quality of human existence on this earth.

So, increased emphasis is now being placed on need-oriented development, self-reliance and autonomous-technological capacity. United Nations Economic and social council resolution (1929) defines popular participation as the voluntary and democratic involvement of the people in.

- Contributing to the development effort
- Sharing equitably in the benefits derived from;
- Decision making in respect of setting goals, formulating policies, planning and implementing social and economic programmes.

Government in many developing countries used popular participation to promote national development through strong interest and even greater favour to promote participation at grassroots level particularly in rural and tribal areas. The under privileged, whether landless laborers, or urban slum dwellers or women, are primarily unorganized. In a large measure, their state of poverty, exploitation and helplessness are related to this non-organization.

The six principles underlying participatory action research are to channelize and standardize the policies and programmes of development. Therefore action research should be equipped with each possibility of incorporating the situation of the people particularly women, the inherent causes underlying their current status/situations and the positive background for the acceptance of govt. policies and programmes.

Thus participatory action research should be the base of and the incentive for the eradication of women's oppression, to stabilize the human existence and facilitating justified human rights.

#### **14. Stree Gauki – A Female's Force within a People's Movement**

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##### **Introduction**

61 years of India's Freedom and yet we continue to struggle for the freedom of the oppressed caused by caste class gender, region and ethnic communities. Then there is the denial of basic human rights to most of the people comprising as citizens of the nation. Then there are struggles for identity and dignity, and sustainable livelihood for the masses, on the one hand and on the other human exclusion of women at home community and wider society is rampant.

Our field base, for the study began with our work with Thakars – Schedules tribes, Mahadev Koli and later with primitive tribes called the Katkaris and Agris. Then there were the other backward class and the Marathas operating in remote hamlets of Karjat Tahsil, Raigad district of Maharashtra and Pune. With this our work began for fighting against money lending systems whose draconian attacks into the tribal homes, grabbing for their demands, was inhuman and unforgivable. Struggle for a Patta for the toilers, men and women, continue to till date. Simultaneously the sexual molestation of these women by the forest officials, money lenders, private contractors and those from the upper caste communities continue till date but the women who is the producer of the cultivated fields, is unnoticed. She is not considered a producer, a farmer a forest owner at the home level too. She is thrown out of the house even after the birth of four children. The entire community considers "She has not met the expectations of the husband and should now follow the difficult tracts."

## **Initial Formation of Peoples Organisation**

Jagrut Kashtkaru Sanghatana right to the toilers, Bombay Agriculture Land Holdings Act – have insured registration of non-regularized tenants whose name should be given to the Patta. Aggressive campaigns have led to demands for the inclusion of the name of the women/wife too along with men, as she labors equally. This led to severe resistance across all communities but the strength of the people's organization meant that women 'representation' began within the organization. This has broken the ironical dualism where a man consider the provision of the female gender in the coterie as an important ally to get a patta and not so a strong colleague of the wider people's movement.

## **Formation of Stree Gauki**

The formation of the Stree Gauki became the first natural step for the organization and women were projected as the nurturer, and developer of land, food and natural resources thus the fight for acceptance of women as farmers, while continuing to retain the leadership in JKS for joint ownership of property. From here they began taking up right to rations, drinking water, monitoring Adivasi Children's Hostels, availing Government loans of the widows, participation and protection of reserve constituency of local self governance processes, Violence against women girls, and such other rights of those deprived in the villages. Women had to fight at every step within the people's organization. Many a time's women considered giving up but the support encouragement and propagation made it possible for them to grow into a force within the movement of JKS.

## **15. Dilemmas in the Research Process**

### ***Nandita Gandhi, gandhinandita@yahoo.com***

For the women's movement, research has been a tool as well as a form of action to reveal the many facets of women's lives, issues and stories. As activists we have often taken up small and big researches or surveys to highlight our insights and concerns. So what might start off as an observation or an experience of a few gets consolidated and formalised through the research process. However in bringing in the elements of feminism into the research process, there have been many a dilemmas which we continue to deal with.

In 1991, the government announced, what was then called, the New Economic Reforms, which ushered in structural adjustment and liberalisation policies. We were seeing the effects of the rapidly changing labour market on women but we found that most studies were at the macro level based on secondary data sources. The stories of Sunanda, the underpaid assembly line worker, Gauri, retrenched and on dharna, Bharati skipping jobs in the diamond polishing units, and daughters of dismissed mill workers needed to be told and had to find a resonance in economic policy making. We undertook a study of 360 women workers belonging to 94 units in the plastic processing industry and 73 units in the diamond processing and jewellery manufacturing industry. Our study covered three areas of the lives of women workers: the adjustments made within their households; the impact of restructuring within their workplace; and their struggles and negotiations with unions and employers. With a backdrop of the changing trends, we could explore the impact of restructuring policies and the twists and forms of patriarchies in their lives

Research studies are often written down as if they were a linear instead of a zigzag, overlapping process of formulations, indecisions, planning and negotiations. In this paper we would like to raise some our dilemmas and concerns that we faced as we attempted to integrate our feminism with the research process. Women's activists have often leaned towards oral testimonies, women's voices and personal narratives. Underscoring this method

was the belief that women's experiences and perceptions help us understand their realities. Is a woman's viewpoint more objective than that of others in society?

Another feminist research dilemma has been the selection of the quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection. The qualitative approach has been labeled as a 'soft' data collecting tool compared to the quantitative one. Which is more appropriate for a feminist study? Field work, more than anything else, brings out the aspect of power and representation for the researcher and the researched. We were middle class, educated, women looking for information from working class women that would go into the making of papers and books. Our work would not only represent them but in no way contribute directly to a change in their situation. How were we to handle our frustration and discomfort?

## **16. Negotiating a Feminist Practice of Citizenship: A reflexive look at some ongoing action research projects**

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The paper provides a perspective on the multiplicity of *action research* being undertaken by feminist organisations and movements in India addressing issues of women's rights and citizenship. It explores two ongoing programmes of action research, one comprising of individual projects on the theme of Decentralisation and Women's Rights and the second exploring women's rights in the context of conflict or mass violence of political nature. The analysis of these two reveals an example of investigation, which incorporates two core tenets of feminist research, that is, an integration of the perspectives of the researched and an action orientation. In addition to this, the two programmes reflect the belief in collaborative knowledge production among women's rights practitioners who strive for gender justice through changes in political practice and public policy.

Simultaneously, the paper also brings out the differences among the individual projects. In the first programme while some projects revisit the feminist debates about the extent of women's empowerment through political participation at the local levels, others make no theoretical claims. While the former explore the connectivity between the state and the civil society at the local level as women's identities are recast, the latter address the simple question of how participation of elected women's representatives working within the larger patriarchal, social political contexts affect themselves and the development agenda and oriented towards 'producing knowledge for action' which would potentially have a better outreach. By highlighting the differences and convergences in the two kinds of projects, the paper brings out many broader issues about women's empowerment and the critical role of progressive feminist agenda in the present times.

In the second programme of research undertaken within a climate of conflict and where communities and activists are already subject to heightened political challenges, the paper reflects how feminist action research helps to build relationships with victims, allows to arrive at certain moral truths, explore women's agency in their narratives and in the process allows a new way of seeing. The paper delineates the process by which the extremely humble narratives actually establish their claim to be taken seriously against established grand narratives and truths of the time, result in breaking the silence surrounding their victimisation and begin to articulate their rights to truth and justice and reclaim citizenship rights.

Through a deep analysis of these research works, the paper argues that outcomes for gender transformation hinge very crucially on whether the practitioners of action research follow a tradition that has roots in gender justice movements or employ action research as a 'development tool' for varying political agendas and problem solving. The paper demonstrates that action research rooted in movements for justice in essence reflects insights on the relation between power and knowledge, including the social power to determine what

is accepted as valid or useful knowledge. Since for much feminist action research it is not possible to separate thought from action and knowledge from practice, this research is not separated from the historical movement for justice and often reflects researchers' active engagement with political struggles. The paper concludes that the insights coming out these works challenge the artificial boundaries of academic research and make a claim why action research should be any less legitimate or insightful than research conducted without explicit political agenda of transformation. The paper shows the ease with which some of the researchers in these programmes straddle the worlds of academic and beyond.

## 17. Building Knowledge into Action: Campaigning Against Domestic Violence

**Rukmini Datta and Bishakha Datta, *Point of View, Mumbai, pointofviewmumbai@gmail.com***

Research of all kinds – formal, academic, quantitative, qualitative, feminist, participatory, action – has played a critical role in bringing domestic violence into the public and policy domains in India. Quantitative studies have shown that domestic violence is not sporadic, but pervasive, affecting more than 40% of Indian women (ICRW, INCLEN). National surveys have indicated that not only does domestic violence exist on a larger scale than had ever been imagined; it is also accepted and normalized, with 56% of women justifying physical violence (NFHS). Community-based research has further unpacked this violence to show when, why and how it occurs (Visaria, Jejeebhoy) and what forms it takes – physical, emotional, psychological, economic etc.

Action research has revealed other dimensions of the problem. Data drawn from 69 police stations in the city of Mumbai offered a tentative profile of women facing domestic violence (TISS, Special Cell), while a decade's analysis of the use of Section 498A showed that many women are reluctant to approach the law for redress against domestic violence. Testimonials have provided emotional accounts of what numbers and data can never capture – the experience of living and coping with violence on a day to day basis.

Where domestic violence is concerned, the divide between academic and action research is somewhat blurred, since *all* research, regardless of its nature, has contributed to making this invisible and 'private' form of violence visible and public – an issue deserving action. If formal research has provided *information* on domestic violence, first-person accounts have provided an *emotional* account of violence. Change does not necessarily come about because of information alone – but because of the power of information and emotion. We feel impelled to act not only when we *know* of something, but also when we *feel strongly* about it.

Locating itself in these twin understandings that the lines of research can blur and that information cannot be privileged over emotion, this paper explores a domestic violence campaign that Point of View piloted in parts of Mumbai in 2007. The campaign was designed to inform people on the street, especially women, about the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005, a law that addresses many of the concerns of existing legal options in the context of domestic violence. Through a presentation that is partly visual, we demonstrate how we used a variety of methodologies to spring from research to action to develop this media campaign. Anecdotal accounts, Qualitative research, Focus group discussions, Media research, Visual imagery.

After a rigorous creative exercise, a positive, upbeat and forward-looking campaign was designed informing women about the law. The response to this campaign has been overwhelming.

As part of this presentation, we refer to and draw on other media campaigns around the world and in India in the context of violence against women and ask a broader question: what is it that has the power to create change?

## **18. “Feminist”, “Participatory” and “Action Research”: how can the voices be heard?: A Case Study on Assisted Reproductive Technologies and Women**

***Sarojini, Sama Resource Group for Women and Health, sama\_womenshealth@vsnl.net***

Reproductive potential of women has been subject to State intervention for a long time. The women's movement has fought long and hard battles against the States controversial population policies especially against harmful contraceptives such as Depo-Provera and Norplant etc. Reproduction has been a significant site for contestations relating to the relationship between the State and the body. Thus the State's policies and programmatic interventions have dealt with curbing women's fertility with its varied fertility control measures but have been silent on the issue of infertility and the advancement of reproductive technologies. It is interesting to note that initially research and promotion of ARTs was undertaken in Indian as a government, but it soon fed into the private health sector and has flourished since then.

From 2004 to 2006, Sama Resource Group for Women and Health conducted a qualitative study on the implications — medical, social and ethical — of ARTs on the lives of women in the Indian context. Since the society is guided by pro-natalist ideologies, it is self-evident that these technologies far from enhancing women's choices will place women under further medical domination. In this respect, technological reproduction has made medicalised access to the female body acceptable and medicalised abuse that a woman would endure anything to become pregnant. In this context the research was guided by the premise that the proliferation of ARTs in a patriarchal, social scenario make women doubly disadvantaged; they suffer both the burdens of the prevailing patriarchal hegemony, which restricts the role of women to child bearers and those that are created by the 'medicalisation of everyday life'.

The fundamental aim of our study is therefore to bring these issues in the arena of public debate, thereby raising awareness about ARTs and their numerous implications and potential drawbacks. This is necessary in order to enable a truly informed use of reproductive technologies. The study undertook a descriptive qualitative study documenting the different subjectivities and experiences of women undergoing various techniques. Since motherhood is central to the social construction of womanhood, childlessness is a social crisis that cheats women of their fundamental identity. Childlessness is highly stigmatized and forms the basis of multiple exclusions from social and political life. Here we paid attention to women's experiences of childlessness viewed within the family and kin groups, intra-household relations, relations with the spouse, and the effects of medical and other alternative treatments. Most importantly, the class and caste variations of women and how they cope with the issue of infertility and childlessness and the kinds of treatment sought was delved into. The paper will give a detailed account of the findings using this approach, which will facilitate further advocacy on the issue through women's voices.

## **19. Of Erasures and Appropriations: Action and Research during and following the Campaign against Sex Determination & Sex Pre-Selection**

***Sandhya Gokhale, Forum Against Oppression of Women, Mumbai, faowindia@yahoo.co.in***

Feminists engaging in campaigns and action have always through their politics extended or added to existing knowledge. Such research and theoretical contributions of feminists have linked the women's movement to Women's Studies. However, when campaigns have run their

course, such efforts have opened up avenues for mainstream academia, where these issues then become topics for further research.

This paper will address the way a campaign initiated by feminist health activists against sex-selective abortions and/ or hazardous contraceptives, documenting the issues, processes and outcomes of the campaign, transforms itself into a project that then is heralded by male academics and researchers. There are shifts and erasures of not just the issues that generated knowledge about women's bodies and rights that feminists raised, but also the language of the struggles. For instance, what was consciously spoken of as 'sex-selective abortions' by feminists later became 'female foeticide' completely dismantling the language, history, and agency of women who were at the centre of the struggle, and feminists who addressed these issues. It needs to be noted that such cooption, erasures and appropriations often extend beyond the academia and even become part of state dynamics vis-à-vis movements for abortion rights, and other issues that are part of feminist politics. Numerous examples could be cited regarding the patriarchal appropriation of the agency of feminist politics. This paper will try to place the experience of the feminist campaign against sex-selective abortion within this context.

It is true that movements (from the margins) have only as much role as raising an issue for public debate and consciousness, pushing for social and legal regulation and policy which become the core of action. Subsequently, issues may come into the domain of research, academia, and theorization within institutions. The expectation then is to be accountable to the history and politics of action, especially that of struggle and memory. While failures may lie with those who did not sufficiently document or place them within the conventions of mainstream documentation, but the onus is also on those who deliberately ignore or erase histories, thus aligning once again with patriarchy's project of 'invisibilising' women's knowledge and struggle.

## **20. Interface between Research and Action**

***Santosh Birwatkar, Family Welfare Agecny, Mumbia, ssb420@gmail.com***

The Family Welfare Agency is a voluntary social work organization in the B.D.D. Chawls, N.M.Joshi Marg, in central Mumbia. The social workers of FWA use mainly case work services that is, helping individuals and families by means of a one-to-one relationship and through community resources.

Initially the perspective of FWA was only helping individuals with their problems of social functioning. FWA began its program for different age group people for reaching out to the community. From this program developed different age group like children group, school drop out children, Adolescents, married women and elderly group.

A study of the babies placed in for adoption by the FWA was conducted in 1979 by Ms. H. Billimoria, a committee Member of FWA. The study explored the experiences of the adoptive parents and attitudes of other significant members towards adoption.

The profile of the B.D.D. Chawls community has changed through the years. The gender based and age based groups of the FWA have attained a degree of self-reliance, except the groups of the aged. Over the years, the agency has helped individuals and families regarding a wide range of needs/problems.

In 1979 FWA started a program for elderly by identifying the need of the aged and start appropriate services.



In 1985 Ms. Sharma conducted a study of the aged with reference to their psycho-social needs. This study had made some recommendations for future action. Research scholar of the Ph.D. program of TISS did field practicum in the decentralization of day care center of elderly. The agency's decentralization plan regarding the PEE tallied fairly and squarely with the research scholar's design for her action-cum-research project.

While working we realized that what the agency was doing was no more than the tip of the iceberg. There was need to develop the services for elderly at the city level and the concept of 'Networking' emerged. This was the result of reflection by the practioners at the agency and professional committee member.

To initiate networking project it was necessary to develop scientific understanding about the organizations working in the field of elderly and situations working in the field.

Initiation of two major researches are presented in the following pages.

- Study of Networking or organizations working for the care of the elderly in Mumbai.
- Study of 'Situational analysis of older person in Mumbai'. Twelve thousand senior people from different wards to participate in this research.

While working in a networking project we observed that leadership of senior citizen do not emerge and less participation of women senior citizen. As we discussed with senior citizen origination we found talented senior citizens but they were not utilizing their talent .For that FWA started a study Talent search among senior citizen and a study why was there less participation of women senior citizen in senior citizen program.

While working in day care center the social worker observed that elder abuse among women senior citizen are more and there is a feeling of no meaning of life. Subsequently FWA decided that to study of "Widow status in Lower Parle"

## **21. Victims or Survivors- A study on the deserted and widowed women in Sangli district of Maharashtra**

***Seema Kulkarni, Ravi Pomane, Sneha Bhat and Ashwini Bokade, SOPPECOM, Pune, feminism.soppecom@gmail.com***

Deserted women, cast-away women, thrown away women or parityakta- taklelya striya are different terms used interchangeably for women who are thrown out of their marital homes or in some cases who have chosen to step out themselves. Whatever the term, the implication is often degrading. The numbers of such women appear to be increasing thus reflecting the over all status of women in society. Yet we find very little written about them or hardly find a mention of them in the literature on poverty or on social welfare policies. Conceptualisation of women as a unified category camouflages the concerns of social differentiation of women on the one hand and differentiation resulting due to forms of extreme violence on the other. While the women's movement has taken cognizance of this issue at the policy and action level one finds a general lack of concern for the quiet deprivation experienced by widows, deserted and single women.

Construction of and identity of womanhood is determined not only by caste, class and ethnicity but also by marital status. The institution of marriage and the baggage that goes along with it (patrilocal residence, motherhood) have been able to control women and perpetuate exploitation. Status of the husband ultimately determines the status of the

woman. Death of the husband, absence of a husband or desertion often changes the life of the woman drastically.

There is very little available literature on the concept of desertion and single hood. Few studies have been done which have tried to look at the ideology of desertion in the manner that widowhood has been addressed. There is very little analysis of the extent as well as the caste, religion and class dimensions of desertion and whether the manifestations are different.

A study done by SOPPECOM along with Women's studies Unit of Tata Institute of Social Sciences and Stree Mukti Sangharash Chalwal (women's liberation movement) in Sangli district shows the nature of desertion and widowhood through a powerful set of oral narratives combined with a quantitative understanding of the socio-economic profiles of these women.

This paper dwells more on how the study findings were an effective tool for strengthening the agenda of the movement and how this action research study led to new studies on extent and nature of desertion being initiated in other parts of Maharashtra.

## **22. Women's Land Rights- Rhetoric and Reality**

***Sejal Dand, ANANDI, Gujarat, sejalDand@hotmail.com***

Feminist action adopting the empowerment approach is a continuous cycle of sharing, critical reflection & collective action in which there is a specific role for the external facilitator in initial mobilization, critical analysis and strategizing action (Batliwala, 1993). The emergence of women's studies in the 70's came from the active involvement of feminist researchers in largely issues of violence against women.

Feminist researchers have highlighted in the recent times the impact of globalization, liberalization, privatization of community owned natural resources on women's livelihoods. While the market forces has increased commercial cultivation leading to a rural agrarian crises has led to an increasing number of men moving to non-farm work, leaving women to shoulder the major responsibility of agriculture ( 75% of women as compared to 53% of men remain in agriculture). Further commercialization of other natural resources like water, forests are forcing rural communities especially the poor to alter their livelihood strategies Feminist researchers have highlighted the impact of these combined forces on the condition of women without any ownership over the assets like land, water or credit. Even among the large and growing body of de facto female headed households in India estimated to be 35% few have direct access to land in their own rights (Agarwal, 1994, 2003).

The gap in feminist action research continues to be in capturing women's agency in managing livelihoods and the strategies employed by rural poor women in coping with these significant changes in Indian economy and its concurrent impact on gender relations.

This presentation is based on the experience of ANANDI & GWLO, Gujarat in feminist action on Women's land rights in Gujarat. The starting point for concerted movement on Women's land rights began with a study to understand the status of women's agricultural land ownership in Gujarat in 2003. The campaign continues to actively supported, advocate and act realise land rights for rural women individually & collectively over private and public properties.

The concerted action on the ground was initially based on feminist framework for women's land rights which located land as a site of ultimate bastion of patriarchal control in agrarian economies. Women's land rights were advocated to empower women, strengthen their livelihoods, increase food security & reduce vulnerability. Over the course of last five years, the action-research-reflection cycle has made clear the inter-sectionality of caste, ethnicity, region, marital status, family composition, state laws and its mechanisms on women's land rights.

The action-research has highlighted:

- The enthusiasm and hope with which women struggle for land rights,
- Women's agency in negotiating family and community structures
- Significance of capacity building of women on laws and entitlements to land rights
- Strategies used by women and VOs to support women's struggles for land rights
- The role of panchayats, men, local panch and sangathans
- Feminist methods of networking
- Use of innovative tools for feminist action

### **23. But dreams are not Bad...Teaching as Praxis**

***Dr. Shruti Tambe, Department of Sociology, University of Pune, Pune, stambe@unipune.ernet.in; shruti.tambe@gmail.com***

This paper is an attempt to reflexively evaluate involvement in undergraduate teaching as praxis. Drawing on a vast body of feminist action research, pedagogy and critical research, I argue that in the last two decades the milieu wherein education is imparted and engaged with has been continuously reformulated.

While teaching Sociology as praxis to young women who perceive educational opportunities as the only channel of freedom, the choice between 'practical' and 'critical' strategies becomes a difficult one.

Though in the colonial period the radical non-Brahmin tradition reformulated education as an emancipatory space for women, today it has become a contested terrain. On the one hand expansion of women's education is seen as 'empowerment', women's entry in the organized sector and their access to resources is shrinking.

Young women from lower castes and lower class harness the dreams of material and socio-cultural well-being, their reality is tarred by increasing violence within and outside the household. Though the state endorses the 'empowerment' discourse, it means tokenism and adhocism in economic and political matters.

By critically and reflexively using Sociological analyses and insights on caste, family and marriage a critical interventionist dialogue can be opened up. This process is two pronged: on one level, the young women question their ideals and values and on the other there is a redefinition of worldview. Taking a critical look at the experience of teaching undergraduate girl students as praxis, this paper maps the changing contours of educational arena as far as redefinition of caste, class and gender hierarchy is concerned.

With neo-liberal globalization, the women's movement has lost its force and at the same time the space for emancipatory redefinition of educational practices has been shrinking.

### **24. Linking Action to Knowledge towards Sustainable Development- Rethinking Gender in Watershed Development in Maharashtra'**

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In the discipline of development studies and at the development practitioners' level it is well accepted that to achieve sustainable development that we aim for, requires grassroots action with the combination of scientific, economic, social and political knowledge. Action research based knowledge is undergoing rapid change with respect to the complex realities in the development field. Theories are being revisited and reviewed on these lines. This paper attempts to review the role of women in the watershed development activities on the lines of

theoretical concepts of participation and exclusionary citizenship, and focusing on analysing the implications of action towards watershed development from a gender perspective. This paper looks at the typology of participation argued by contemporary feminist scholars like Bina Agarwal, Naila Kabir. The paper also reviews the theories and strategies that might be useful in the efforts to improve the linkages between research-based knowledge and action in the context of watershed development. How women participate in watershed development activities, whether they benefit from such activities, what difference it makes in their life are some of the questions which would help us to learn more about the truth from below. The issues of livelihood for women have acquired attention in the recent discussions on women and natural resource management. The paper includes the discussion on the right to livelihood for women, their access and entitlement to the natural resources. The experience from the ground level can add to the theoretical knowledge on the development of natural resources. It will also take up to critique the policy which very often ignores the very right to livelihood to women who pays high costs for the work but hardly receive any benefit from the watershed development activities.

The paper aims to explore the possibilities of getting the interface between knowledge and action blurred in order to move towards participatory and gender sensitive and rights based approach and ultimately towards sustainable development and use of natural resources.

## **25. Women's' Studies for Clothing, Feminism for Dress? An inquiry into gender and genre**

***Surbhi Tiwari, M.Phil Scholar, Department of Sociology, University of Pune, surbhi1010@yahoo.co.in***

The problem of genre has been a haunting specter for Women's Studies: how is this disciplinary territory mapped, what kind of texts would it generate, what are the signifiers that would mark inevitably the margins of a feminist text? The relation between feminism and Women's Studies, women's texts and feminist discourse has been-- in a sense-- under interpreted (against the paradigm of over interpretation in semiotics). This aura and tension comes alive when it is demanded that Women's studies – from being enframed within the discourse of the feminine must emerge – always to issue feminist statements on everyday matters. (Regarding clothing, dress code and women how do they engage in cooperation and conflict?) In this paper I take hold of one register clothing and chart the tension between a discipline (Women's Studies), discourses (discourse of the women in general) and texts ( bounded utterance and topic) and juxtapose it with real conflicts of clothing.

I pursue this through three case studies. Our first case study would be that of Rukhmabai, who inspite of her otherwise revolutionary persona adhered to the old Hindu tradition of dressing like a married women, even after her separation from her husband and more surprisingly took to the widow's dress when her 'divorced' husband passed away. Thus, through her sartorial choices she became a symbol of the same patriarchy which she otherwise challenged. Second is the case of Bollywood women. For this paper I look at the first wave of Bollywood cinema's actresses and their dressing. And how through them they became not only symbols of modernity but also eroticism. It shall allow us to gauge how a 'conservative society controls/accepts/ rejects this new 'kind' of female agency. And lastly, the more contemporary agency, of Sania Mirza or her 'sexy micro mini' debate.

Simultaneously we shall make a review of media reports on dress controversies and supplement it with surveys and discussions conducted with women and young college students with respect to the various dress code debates that have occurred in the last few years. Therefore interfacing research with practice (of conflict); conflict, which deals with suspending students for wearing tank tops to classrooms, or barring students from writing exams because they dared to come to class with colored palms (mehendi). Then there is the

case of students challenging institutions against the stipulated dress codes-sometimes asserting their right to wear jeans or sometimes the right not to wear it.

Such a study especially for those who believe that questions of agency/representation can't be compartmentalized (but undergoes auto-compartmentalization across the territories we've documented) and one cannot separate the serious from the so-called trivial, such a 'action – research' study holds the mirror to norms pertaining to public eroticism in our times. As a whole then they give us the broader comparative picture and also allows us to fill in the lacuna left by previous studies on dress and women. The attempted division then inaugurates an infilling of a lack.

## **26. Action oriented need based research**

***Swatija Manorama and Anju Jani, FORUM and Marathamoli, swatija@gmail.com***

Being feminist activists over last thirty years meant lot of learning through action and to make this action more meaningful and holistic we have used research and analysis. The nature of research is more in terms of qualitative, open ended interview types with personal involvement in the issue and concerned with outcomes. This kind of research can definitely not be categorized as formal academic research and it leaned more towards change oriented search to make the research more meaningful and focused. The macro level reality of women's subordination has many subtle aspects and to take the localised experiences to an analytical/ theoretical level we considered the process of action research important.

This paper is written to narrate the important actions taken which were followed by the research, evaluation and modified actions. The nature of actions was at group level as group activity.

In 80s the participation in people's science movement along with personal experience while doing academic research in field of applied biology made to think about direction of the developing, progressing trends in life sciences and technology. There was demand from rural activists to get the information about the reproductive technologies in regional languages which would help them to take sides and also take actions. The secondary literature survey gave us a clear cut picture which was not directly applicable to Indian context. And we developed the framework to understand Indian situation and understand the context to disseminate information of reproductive technologies. We shared the framework, with women's health practitioners. The taking into consideration that knowledge which was emerged was given the form of book, '*Prajanan: Niyantaran ki Koshishe and sanvad ke prays*'

In Indian context role of religion determines the legal existence of women as interpreted by the religious personal laws. Suffering of women during the partition of the country has been basis of our nation building. 1984 Sikh riots had happened as a punishment to Sikh community in Delhi after assassination of Indira Gandhi by Sikh youth. The sole fight of Shahabanu and Shahanaz Sheikh in their own way to get justice as individuals and also emphasis given by Shahanaz to challenge Muslim personal law and then Shahabanu being targeted to be responsible for bringing religion in danger and Shahnaaz going ahead to form Muslim women's group. The need was felt to understand the role of religion in women's lives.

Anju and me are working towards addressing the issue of ageing in gender context. We are trying to understand the concerns and needs of elderly women across class and caste and marital status. The need to look at the policy in gender sensitive way we need to understand women as agency after their long drawn struggle from a victim status. The policies which are looking at old age as liability would be more sensitive to take into account the active and positive ageing. The oral narrative form has been used.

## 27. Explorations and Expressions – Girls Speak Out

***Nischint, Yagna and Madhura, Vacha Resource Centre for Women and Girls, Mumbai, vachamail@gmail.com***

The limited scope that girls in India have for self expression is further restricted as they enter the second decade of life. With the exception of mostly urban upper and upper middle class girls, other girls do not really experience the phase of girlhood. On the contrary, from the prevalent orthodox perspectives of femininity, adolescence is seen as a formative period for their impending womanhood. For girls from poor background, their families' poverty and the cramped life that they live in the slums make it even more difficult for them to explore life beyond and to openly express their feelings and perceptions, dreams and desires.

Girls specific programmes and spaces are important and necessary for them to be able to navigate adolescence successfully and productively. This is now also reflected in the objectives of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and of various other plans and schemes.

In order to assist girls in becoming participants in their own development and empowerment VACHA has introduced a number of programmes and activities through which they can acquire confidence and skills and express themselves. This training is preceded or accompanied by visits to various institutions and meetings with individuals for exposure to wider reality and for contextualizing their experience. Girls then make presentations at *basti* and school levels and to the local leadership. Meeting higher levels of bureaucracy and government is also part of this ongoing project.

This paper is based on methodology developed, documentation of lived experiences of girls and their expressions in *Bole Kishori* (Girls Speak Out) and other programmes by Vacha in its work with girls in the 10-15 age groups who study in Municipal schools in Mumbai.

## 28. Self Help Groups (SHGs): An Action Programme and Relevance for Research

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Academicians and policy makers have acknowledged organising women into Self Help Groups (SHGs) globally as a dominating development initiative. After the innovative efforts of making credit accessible to poor by Grameen Bank and Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) in 1970s there have been many initiatives in several developing countries as well. The developments in the last decade at both the international and the national level are very important in this respect. Micro credit summit held in Washington D.C. in 1997 focused on the extension of credit assistance to 100 million of the world's poorest families by 2005. The year 2005 was declared as the International Year of Micro Credit by the United Nations. In India too significant developments took place since 1990s. Two such important initiatives are SHG-bank linkage programme and Swarnajayanti Gram SwarajYojana. (SGSY).

It is significant that the pressure of the forces of liberalization coincided with the focus on the policies to promote SHGs. The state is pursuing the promotion of SHGs in a forceful manner. By doing so it is promoting the linkage of informal sector into market based economy. With the emergence of micro-finance, government is moving away from its role of direct participation in the developmental programmes. It has also had tremendous impact on the mobilization of women for their rights e.g. demand for the redistribution of assets say in terms of land distribution is nowhere on the agenda of the SHGs. The claims regarding the empowerment need to be assessed in this context.

The corporate sector has also started climbing on to the bandwagon of promoting and using the SHG network. Through *Project Shakti* the FMCG giant Hindustan Lever Ltd. (HLL) has already entered the hitherto un-under-tapped rural markets. In doing so, it is claiming to assist the SHGs. SHGs are becoming distribution outlets for a large number of products in

rural areas. However, the development and sustainability of micro enterprises of SHGs has a long way to go.

It is time to take a critical look at the experiences of SHGs in India. The paper proposes to focus on the experiences of SHGs with respect to their most important twin objectives viz alleviation of poverty and empowerment of women. The issue of empowerment will be addressed from the point of view of women's awareness regarding their rights and not merely in terms of acquiring of the skills. It also explores the types of income generating activities initiated by SHGs, the kind of asset creation and the nature of the use of credit. It also focuses on the changing role of the state regarding the developmental programmes in the context of the emergence of SHGs.

## **29. Speaking Tree, Womenspeak: The Asia Court of Women on Crimes against Women related to the Violence of Development**

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In the context of a praxis approach to political intervention perspectives and processes that informs the organisational ethics of Vimochana and the CIEDS Collective from which it has emerged, I would like to reflect upon our experience of organising *Speaking Tree, Womenspeak: The Asia Court of Women on Crimes against Women related to the Violence of Development* held in Bangalore in January 1996. This event we believe was a turning point for us in Vimochana and many other groups in the movement working on issues related to violence against women.

With violence, both physical and ideological against individuals, communities and cultures as the primary concern, the search of the CIEDS Collective since its inception in 1976 has been not only for a just, peaceful and humane society but also a search for those institutions, knowledge paradigms and practices that are not entrenched in an institutionalised and universal notion of rights, justice, equality, development and politics. From this search has also emerged the Courts of Women, initiated by Corinne Kumar that has sought to recover and recreate other paradigms of justice and human rights outside the dominant discourse. Organised through Asian Women's Human Rights Council and El Taller International at the regional and global level, more than 30 Courts have been held in different regions of the world on diverse issues ranging from development to wars, racism and nuclearisation with the central focus of violence against women. Central to the Courts of the Women, apart from the voices of women as survivors of and resisters to different forms of violence, is its feminist methodology that seeks to weave together this subjective and personal voice of the woman with the objective and political context within which she is located; the affective and the aesthetic aspect of our senses with the logical and the rational.

Unfolding therefore at the multilayered realms of the emotional, rational and the intuitive, the process of this particular endeavour, revealed for us the deeper connections between the increasing incidence and forms of violence against women in the personal sphere that we work with like the violence of dowry burnings, wife battering, female infanticide, trafficking, migration, displacement etc and the genocidal development paradigm of growth and progress that we see today as globalisation.

This has subsequently reflected in the ways in which our work has evolved after the organising of the Court, both in terms of initiating new areas of work as also deepening existing ones. As for instance the ways in which we were able to reconceptualise and respond to the issue of prostitution from the lives and experience of women in the *dhandra*, that we had till then seen as a form of patriarchal violence against women; or the ways in which we were able to redefine and respond to the issue of female infanticide and then subsequently sex selective abortions not so much as a problem rooted in *son preference* as much as a

product of a development paradigm that devalued the woman aided and abetted by an over technologised medical system.

### 30. Issues in Working on Gender and Health Equity at the Local Level

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This paper emerged in the course of the review of the Gender and Health Equity (GHE) project (initiated in October 2001). It is intended to improve reproductive health and rights outcomes in 60 villages of Koppal district in Karnataka by raising the **awareness** levels; increasing their **access** to public health services; and by generating **accountability** of the public health service providers (three As).

In 2006, the three As were conceptually approached separately to: a) to theorise on each based on field realities; and b) to feed this theoretical understanding back into the field. This paper reflects upon **critical access issues that arise in the course of project implementation**.

The paper reviews the existing theoretical contributions to domain of access to a) understand the extent to which these play out at the field level; and b) identify what additional elements have arisen in the course of intervention that need to be acknowledged. It refers to the five delays; Meera Chatterjee's five gateways/ barriers in access; Aditi Iyer's expansion on these gateways/barriers by including the social relations approach; Gita Sen and Pirooska Ostlin's framework for the role of gender as a social determinant of health; and Jennifer Prah Ruger's inclusion of health norms and individual agency as influencing variables. It then looks at the equity-access-health rights interface.

An equity approach seeks to equalise opportunities not outcomes.

This paper presents the argument for rethinking access as a multi-layered process with a many variables enmeshing simultaneously. It locates these variables into two basic categories. Category 1 holds the traditionally accepted barriers to access, which have been theorised upon extensively. In the GHE project, these do not emerge as being highly influential individually but when enmeshed with other variables appear influential. Category 2 holds the core key barriers, which emerge as non-negotiables that must be tackled and are therefore highly influential.

The paper reiterates that women are not a monolithic unit grappling with a single set of issues. Further, there is no simple and direct correlation between variables of caste, class and access. It establishes that certain optimal conditions become the non-negotiables for women to assert their health rights. Most of these optimal conditions tend to be located in the larger social determinants of health. It is necessary to generate collective consensus in society regarding the importance of women's access to health care as a basic requirement. This will create a situation whereby women are in a position to exercise agency in this domain. The core contention of this paper is that the right to safe motherhood is exercised by the woman in her individual capacity. Yet unless there is collective consensus on this right, there are multiple barriers inhibiting her from exercising this right as an individual. This closely ties in with Ruger's position that the nature of health norms affects individual's efforts to achieve functioning. As an outcome of this understanding, the GHE project is currently engaged in consolidating information on how individual women's rights are violated because of lack of consensus. Through this, it is developing collective pressure to ensure that this right is not violated. Collective consensus and pressure are being generated at multiple levels: the home, community, village, local leadership and the public health care system.