

P WOMEN AND POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT

2005

Women's Political Empowerment Day Celebrations

Panchayats and Child Rights
Birth Registration as the First Right to Identity

Edited by

Bidyut Mohanty

Nasreen Faiyaz

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Institute of Social Sciences



Plan International (India)



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WOMEN AND POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT 2005
Women's Political Empowerment Day Celebrations
Panchayats and Child Rights: Birth Registration as the First Right to Identity

Edited by Bidyut Mohanty and Nasreen Faiyaz
Institute of Social Sciences, New Delhi
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About this Publication

This publication documents the proceedings of the Eleventh Women's Political Empowerment Day Celebrations - 2005 on the theme 'Panchayats and Child Rights: Birth Registration as the First Right to Identity'.

The papers, speeches and outcome of panel discussions, group discussions and the background paper along with select presentations of the programme are included in this volume. There are also translations from regional languages. We have not attempted to edit the essential flavour of regional language expressions into English. Most of the speakers have sent in their speeches as approved by them.

Information that flows from the different presentations is validated by the fact that it comes from persons who are experts in their respective fields of work.

The document has the potential of providing a substantive knowledge base for any advocacy action plan, which activists and researchers may want to undertake on child rights and birth registration in India.

Included in this publication are the proceedings of six major regional conferences which the Institute of Social Sciences organised in the states of Uttaranchal, Rajasthan, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and Tamil Nadu. They give an insight into the different state-level experiences on the issue of child rights and birth registration process and the critical role the panchayats could play in this area.

Acknowledgement: The editors acknowledge the help of Ms. Jayashree Ahuja and Ms. Pushpa Kumari who were responsible in transcribing and translating the text of the speeches. Mr. P. Nandakumar, Mr. Joshy Jose, Mr. N. Sunil and Mr. Sanjai Sharma assisted in typing various drafts of the manuscript without showing any fatigue. At the state level, transcriptions and translations were done by different professionals. Finally all the state coordinators deserve a special mention for making regional events a success.



Summary of the Proceedings

The Institute of Social Sciences (ISS) has been celebrating 24 April every year as Women's Political Empowerment Day since 1994. It was on this day that the 73rd Constitutional Amendment became Part IX of the Constitution of India in 1993, making panchayati raj institutions the third tier of governance and ensuring not less than 33 per cent reservation for women in local bodies. On this occasion the Institute has also been presenting the Outstanding Women Panchayat Leaders Award to elected women representatives every year.

This year, the Eleventh Women's Political Empowerment Day was observed by more than 600 elected women representatives (EWRs), from 320 gram panchayats in 18 states, panchayat *sakhis* (women friends of EWRs), and representatives of panchayat standing committees, members of self-help groups, NGO partners and academicians at the Constitution Club, New Delhi. The theme of this year's celebrations was 'Panchayats and Child Rights: Birth Registration as the First Right to Identity'. As a follow up action six state level conventions covering all six zones of the country were also held.

The programme covering three days from 23 to 25 April was sponsored by Plan International (India). The celebrations took off with an ice-breaking session and this was followed by the screening of two films — *Swaraaj: The Little Republic* and *Aatmajaa*. The first, a national award-winning tale of four strong-willed panchayat women who fought against patriarchal and vested interests for their basic rights, and the second, a moving story highlighting the heinous practice of female foeticide.

The Speakers

As in the previous years, the event this year saw many outstanding presentations from eminent persons. Dr. Girija Vyas, Chairperson, the National Commission for Women (NCW), inaugurated the Conference. The celebrations ended with an address by Mr. Mani Shankar Aiyar, Union Minister for Panchayati Raj.

Welcoming delegates and guests, Dr. George Mathew, Director, ISS, explained the significance of these annual celebrations and the importance of the theme chosen for 2005.

Elaborating on the theme, Mr. Bruno Oudmayer, Director, Plan International (India), highlighted the positive and negative elements of empowerment. He also informed the audience that Plan International, in association with UNICEF, is working on a 'global campaign' on birth registration.

UNICEF Country Representative for India, Mr. Cecilio Adorna, reaffirmed the importance of child rights in general and of birth registrations in particular. He hoped that the presence of one million elected women representatives would ensure universal registration of births in rural areas.

In her Inaugural speech, Dr. Girija Vyas, Chairperson, National Commission for Women, talked about the five pillars of women's empowerment: education, drinking water, health, sanitation and employment.

Mr. P.K. Hota, Secretary, Health and Family Welfare, GoI, highlighted the importance of panchayats in preparing, implementing and monitoring health plans as per the objectives of the new National Rural Health Mission.

Mr. Jayant K. Banthia, former Registrar General and Census Commissioner, and Mr. K. Narayanan Unni, Deputy Registrar General of India, spoke on the need to universalise registration of vital statistics in the country and the role elected women representatives could play in ensuring birth registration as a fundamental right of every child.

Dr. Shirin Rai, Professor, University of Warwick, U.K. felt that women's political empowerment does not mean imposing one's will on others, but it is about realising one's inner potential and making meaningful contributions towards the socio-political milieu.

Dr. Zarina Rahman Khan, head of delegation from Bangladesh, spoke on the status of women members of Union Parishads, (Bangladeshi counterparts in panchayats).

Swami Agnivesh criticised the social shackles which continue to exercise a disempowering effect on women even when they get elected to panchayats. He was convinced that women's empowerment will become a reality only when women start rejecting regressive social customs.

Ms. Rita Sarin, Country Director, Hunger Project, informed the participants, that the organisation she represents has been trying to strengthen panchayati raj institutions (PRIs) in general and elected women representatives in particular.

Dr. Tulsi Patel, Professor, Delhi School of Economics; Ms. Pamela Philipose, Indian Express; Ms. Naseem Khan, Action India; Dr. Ratna Sudarshan, Director, Institute of Social Studies Trust; Dr. Vijayalaxmi Nanda, Delhi University; Mr. P.M. Nair, Inspector General of Police, CRPF (Ops.); Ms. Anita Rampal, Central Institute of Education; and Prof. B.S. Baviskar, Senior Fellow, ISS chaired the different sessions.

In his Valedictory address, Mr. Mani Shankar Aiyar underlined the late Rajiv Gandhi's five-point agenda to empower women and observed that the former prime minister had genuinely believed that reservation for women would reach 50 per cent on its own momentum. Dr. Surina Rajan, Project Manager, Child Labour Project, International Labour Organisation (ILO) talked about the commitment of ILO in eliminating fully the incidence of child labour in India and elsewhere in the world.

The Issues

The interactive sessions came up with a wide range of issues on social development. Participants touched upon micro planning and child rights, female foeticide, child trafficking, child labour, fundamental right to education and of course 'birth registration' the theme of the Women's Political Empowerment Day Celebrations for 2005.

Taking off from the need to register child births, the panchayat members were perceptive enough to link the birth registration issue with questions around abandoned children, and other categories of children like refugee children, children of single mothers, trafficked children, etc. While the national convention highlighted the macro picture, the state level conventions focussed on regional specificities. The delegates from northern Indian states for example showed concerns for the female foeticide, child marriage and cultural constraints in registering the births. On the other hand those from the eastern and southern states highlighted the issues of trafficking, migration and child labour and the need for birth registration.

The Highlights

This year the highlights of the Women's Empowerment Day Celebrations was the presence of 30 women delegates from Bangladesh Union Parishads. We also had for the first time elected women representatives from the Union Territory of Dadar and Nagar Haveli. The spontaneous cultural programme performed by the women panchayat representatives was a highlight and a pleasant surprise, as it endorsed the belief of the ISS that the WPEDC had gained in popularity and was increasingly seen by women panchayat members as their own programme.

Awards

Three elected women representatives—Ms. Maina Devi, Uttaranchal; Ms. Subaida Mohammed, Kerala and Ms. Vijayabai Prabhakar Patil, Maharashtra—were honoured with the Outstanding Women Panchayat Leader Awards for 2005.



THREE OUTSTANDING PANCHAYAT WOMEN LEADERS RECEIVED AWARDS FOR THEIR EXEMPLARY WORK

1. Maina Devi

Maina Devi, elected as Gram Pradhan of Dhulkot Panchayat in Dehradun district of Uttaranchal for a second term, has shown an amazing passion for democratic norms.

She has undertaken many developmental activities, including housing schemes for the poor, electrification of every household in her panchayat and provision of drinking water. She has also provided a primary school building, playground and road. She has ensured employment for at least one person in every family by making arrangements for training in sewing and sericulture. She has made extra efforts to ensure that the widows in her panchayat receive their pensions on time.

Maina Devi has successfully mobilised resources for village projects through voluntary contributions of people and also sought assistance of the MLA Local Area Development Funds. As a member of Panchayat Sangathan, a collective body of panchayat pradhans who share their views and experiences, she has made commendable efforts at networking with other panchayats.

Maina Devi has displayed a remarkable ability for settling disputes through consensus, thus preventing costly litigations. She has also campaigned against distillation of illicit liquor, prevented encroachment of public land, mobilised people against child marriage, organised immunisation programmes and ensured that all children upto 14 years of age in her village attend school.

This award is presented to Maina Devi for her commitment to social causes and her outstanding contribution to the development of her village.

2. Subaida Mohammed

Subaida Mohammed, Member of Vatanappally Gram Panchayat, Thrissur District, Kerala, epitomises the best in leadership qualities. As President of the panchayat, she implemented several poverty alleviation schemes. She has succeeded in providing land to 300 families for building houses, sanitation facilities to 500 families and free electrical connections to another 600 houses. Moreover, she has been instrumental in getting many houses repaired.

Subaida has made provision for vocational training to many people below the poverty line under the Kudumbasree scheme. She helped form 100 self-help groups to enable women to earn through craftwork and other ancillary activities. She even lent a helping hand to fishermen by giving them improved tools to work with. Subaida's contribution to education has been equally

noteworthy. Her support to weaker students through extra coaching and free meals has yielded the desired results. It is because of her efforts that Vatanappally Government High School is the highest ranked school in the area today. Upliftment of the girl child has been a top priority for her – she encourages them to attend school and, whenever possible, helps set up anganwadis by providing financial assistance.

Subaida has maintained communal harmony and peace by successfully defusing potential conflicts. She arranged shelter for panic-stricken people during the tsunami warning. With the support of the community, she was able to rehabilitate 20 families who had lost their houses to fire.

Subaida has always ensured optimum use of the tax money allotted to her panchayat for developmental activities. It came as no surprise that her panchayat won second prize in the Best Panchayat category in 2001.

This award is conferred on Subaida Mohammed in recognition of her excellent services to her panchayat and for her exemplary leadership qualities.

3. Vijayabai Prabhakar Patil

Vijayabai Prabhakar Patil, Sarpanch of Wadgaon Budruk Panchayat in Jalgaon district of Maharashtra, has done commendable work in a short span of time. She has contributed to the socio-economic upliftment of the people in her panchayat. In order to ensure the economic development of her panchayat, Vijayabai has made optimum use of government schemes on self-employment, vocational training, loans to the needy, land for the homeless and wastewater management. The construction of a shopping complex, multi-purpose hall, cremation ground, drains and community toilets, as well as concretisation of the village road, are some of her other significant achievements.

Vijayabai's works in the social sector are equally laudable. She has made special efforts to create awareness among women about widow remarriage, dowry prohibition, child marriage and female foeticide. Her campaign against the evils of alcoholism and consumption of gutka has also borne fruit. Her active engagement with projects related to social forestry, non-conventional energy and water harvesting is invaluable.

That Vijayabai has won numerous prizes and awards speaks volumes of her commitment to transforming her panchayat through innovative schemes and sheer hard work. Her panchayat won the first prize of Rs 25,000 at the taluka level and Rs 5 lakh at the district level for village cleanliness. The utilisation of wastewater won her another award of Rs 30,000.

This award is given to Vijayabai Prabhakar Patil in recognition of her excellent services to the community and for her panchayat leadership in various fields.



INAUGURAL SESSION
24 April 2005, New Delhi

Women in Governance 50:50

Dr. George Mathew, Director, Institute of Social Sciences

While welcoming the participants to the Women's Empowerment Day Celebrations for 2005, Dr. George Mathew said that India is indeed a land many languages and apart from the 22 languages in official use, the country has no less than 325 spoken languages and another 1652 dialects that are actively in use! He said that participants who have come to the Conference, are actually representing that many diverse cultures and peoples of this country. Quoting these interesting facts, he attempted to link the participants beyond the barriers of language and region. Dr. Mathew recalled the history of the women's movement both during the freedom struggle and which continued after Independence and which ultimately led to the historic passage of the 73rd Amendment.

It was not as if somebody gave this quota from above, women fought for it, so 24 April 1993, was a historic day indeed. Dr. Mathew said that in the beginning stages it was like a 'silent revolution' in the country. It was only in the last eleven/twelve years that significant changes could be seen in women's political empowerment.

Dr. Mathew said that this success was not enough and that one critical issue remained unfulfilled; the demand for women's reservation in State Assemblies and in Parliament. When achieved, this will transform significantly gender equality in India. Women's demand should be for power sharing on an equal basis, 50:50 participation in political governance. It was this demand that ISS specially flagged off at the WPEDC 2004, in order to promote the right balance in society. Women in Governance 50:50 was to be the next goal of the women's movement, specially for all those women who were already in panchayats.

Dr. Mathew next explained that every year, ISS has been focusing on different themes; this year 'child rights' have been taken up linking these directly to the need for birth registration, as the first right to a child's identity. He acknowledged the support and facilitation of Plan International (India), in enabling ISS to hold the current WPEDC-2005 event.

The WPEDC 2005, had more than 600 elected women representatives of panchayats from 18 states. Elected women representatives from Dadar and Nagar Haveli participated for the first time. In a special parallel event, around 65 women representatives who were participating in the Celebrations, took advantage of the occasion, to meet and discuss the formation of a national level association/network of women in panchayats.

Another highlight of the WPEDC 2005, was the participation of 30 women delegates from Bangladesh Union Parishads, Dr. Mathew extended a special welcome to them all.

Welcome greetings were also expressed for two distinguished guests, Mr. Bruno Oudmayer, Plan International and to Mr. Cecilio Adorna, UNICEF representative in India.

Women's Empowerment: Good news and bad news!

Mr. Bruno Oudmayer, Director, Plan International (India)

Expressing his happiness to be in the midst of so many distinguished guests, men and women, Mr. Bruno Oudmayer said that on the issue of 'women's empowerment' there is both good news and bad news! The good news, he said is that India has extremely progressive laws and women's political empowerment is clearly on the agenda as one of them. He agreed that the question whether women's reservation quota should stay at 33 per cent or whether an equitable 50-50 formula was better, could well be debated. The good news is that women in India do have political representation in local governance.

Turning to the 'bad news', he believed it lay in the fact that the implementation of these in reality is often far behind and many elected women are represented by their husbands or male members.

Mr. Oudmayer jocularly narrated how on a recent visit to Rajasthan he was invited for lunch to the sarpanch's house. However, he could not meet the sarpanch as it was thought 'good enough' that he had met the husband of the sarpanch!

He appreciated that a lot had been achieved in the past 11 years, but much remains to be done to make women's political empowerment a reality in India.

On the theme of the WPEDC-2005, he was pleased that "Child Rights and Birth Registration" had been given due attention. He expressed appreciation that the issue of female foeticide was also on the agenda of the Conference. Proof of birth registration was a critical need, as this would ensure that the child existed and therefore was entitled to full access of his rights as a child.

Speaking about Plan International, Mr. Oudmayer shared that 'birth registration' was in fact a worldwide campaign which Plan International was promoting. He concluded on the note that the issue had received timely attention of national governments, the UNICEF and NGO partners.

Ten Million Children go unregistered in India each year

Mr. Cecilio Adorna, Country Representative, UNICEF India,

Cecilio Adorna greeted the participants from different panchayats in India. He stated that he was only too familiar with the rural scene, and found it easy to link his own life experiences with the experiences of the different panchayat members who had come from rural areas. He said that 27 years of his life were spent in a village in the Philippines with a population of 3000 people. Nothing happens in a village without the leadership of the panchayats and without the involvement of women in local governance. He congratulated the Institute of Social Sciences for being able to facilitate the convergence of the 600 women representatives who were going to deliberate on issues of governance in the next two days.

Expressing satisfaction that ISS, UNICEF and Plan International had come together at this conference, as they all worked on the issue of birth registration. He said, around 10 million children in India, go without birth registration annually and this was a huge problem and it required a national campaign to bridge the gap. Quoting the Registrar General of Census, he informed participants that around 20 million child births take place every year and these need to be registered. It is a legal formality.

Referring to Ms. Rigoberta Menchu-Tum, of Guatemala, the Nobel Peace prize winner 1992, he said this was an extraordinary woman who made 'birth registration' a vigorous campaign in Latin America. Her reasoning was, that hundreds of children go missing in the civil conflicts and no one knows of their existence, as these children were not registered by the State. Chances are that many of these children were trafficked, prostituted, denied access to their rights, never went to school and could never realise their dignity and worth as citizens.

He outrightly questioned India's credibility to support so many international causes but why has the country not been able to give its children dignity and universal human rights as citizens.

Wishing the Conference success in these deliberations he was sure that women in panchayats had a critical role to play in the birth registration process and that next year there will not be just 3 women panchayat members who will be eligible for these awards, but outstanding awards will have to be given to hundreds of panchayat women who will qualify for it, through their contribution of 100 per cent birth registration in their areas.

Let us go to the villages .

Dr. Girija Vyas, Chairperson, The National Commission for Women
In her Inaugural address, Dr. Girija Vyas endorsed the statement of Mr. Oudmayer's that on the question of women's empowerment- 'there is both good news and bad news'. She said, there was however, a good reason to feel encouraged as the positive point here is, that we are at least on the right path to women's empowerment. She gave a clarion call and said, "Let us go to the villages" for it is here that almost 75 per cent of our women live and they are not even aware of their basic rights.

She made a fervent appeal that women should not be treated as objects, but be valued as persons with dignity. Referring to Mahatma Gandhi, she recalled how as far back as 1922, he declared that freedom would be useless, if it did not give women equal status in the political life of the 'independent nation'. Linking this thought with what Rajiv Gandhi would often say, she recalled that he was emphatic that 'having two women in panchayats was not enough'. It was therefore, inevitable that Rajiv Gandhi decided that to begin with, 33 per cent reservation for women in panchayats should be ensured. Dr. Vyas said the manner in which the Women's Reservation Bill (for 33 per cent seats in Parliament and State Assembly), has been constantly stalled speaks of the mentality of the male dominated society in which we have to still fight for an equal status in the political decision making process.

Citing the observations made by Mr. Oudmayer and Mr. Adorna, that 30 to 40 per cent women in local governance are ruled by their male members by proxy, she said there was hope here, as the situation ten years back was worse, almost 70 per cent of male members could be seen executing panchayat jobs for their wives ! She said it would take another 3 to 4 years to further reduce this percentage and women would then be 100 per cent visible and active in handling the works of the panchayats.

Referring to her home state, Dr.Vyas was quick to observe that Rajasthan was indeed a state full of contradictions. She said, if we remove women from its history, Rajasthan would be zero, given this historical importance of women in Rajasthan, their present low status speaks poorly for their past honour and dignity.

Coming back to the issue of women's empowerment, she asked the PRI women to keep in mind the five pillars which are crucial for women's empowerment-these she said are i) education ii) health iii) drinking water iv) sanitation and v) employment. Along with these, she said there are certain other basic requirements which are of equal importance. Foremost

among these is the registration of all births. Panchayat women, she said cannot ignore burning issues like dowry, female foeticide and domestic violence. Even though laws exist to address, these concerns but the knowledge of these laws must also reach the village level.

Reposing immense faith in the leadership qualities of women in panchayati raj institutions, she narrated how on a late night, a panchayat woman braved the odds against her husband and waited to hand over important land documents to her in a village in Rajasthan, since she feared her husband was going to sell panchayat lands to rich landlords. This was indeed an extraordinary sense of public responsibility, and the woman was risking this effort under pressure to preserve the panchayat land for the village community.

Touching upon women's solidarity, she recalled another very moving incident which took place during her election campaign. It appears that even as she was about to hold the mike and appeal to the public to cast their votes in her favour, one woman snatched the mike from her hands and asked "why do you come and ask for our votes? We have all decided to vote for our caste, we are all women and we have only one caste which is that we are 'women' – so we will vote for you !".

In conclusion, she appealed that she be given just 10 years to prove that women in India were no less than those anywhere else in the world and that they will be on the frontlines of world politics in another decade's time.

Vote of Thanks

Dr. Bidyut Mohanty, National Coordinator, Women's Political Empowerment Day Celebrations (WPEDC), ISS, delivered the vote of thanks on behalf of the Institute of Social Sciences. She acknowledged the presence of political leaders, the delegates from Bangladesh, NGO partners, press and media persons and academics. She assured that there will be no more panchayat-patis or sarpanch-patis after a gap of ten years. Substantiating that ISS has been conducting micro-studies in various parts of the country to find out whether women are getting empowered or not? Over the years the situation appears to have changed drastically. Studies from Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Bihar and Orissa are enough to show that the incidence of sarpanch-pati is declining and women members of panchayats are acting directly as agents of change and this she concluded, is a good development.



PLENARY SESSION I
Panchayats and Child Rights: An Overview

Speaker: Jayant K. Banthia, Former Registrar General, Census of India, Government of India.

Mr. Banthia spoke on the issue of Panchayats and Child Rights. At the outset, he defined child rights as those given, first by parents to a child within the family and second those rights which the State guarantees to all its citizens. In order to be able to access these rights one must have proof of one's existence, so he emphasised, it is necessary that all children be registered as a first step. If this is not done, there will be legal, political and other civic hurdles that will prevent the child from enjoying his rights as a citizen. Referring to the remarks of the Bangladesh delegates, he said, it was good to hear that in their country, birth registration is done on a large scale.

Pointing out to the different schemes that the Government of India has for pregnant mothers, he said, the process of registration begins much earlier, as even pregnant mothers are supposed to register themselves, so that the unborn child and the mother can access health services. However, he clarified that there was a difference in the two registrations, birth registration is a legal process and the other is only mandatory.

Prior to British rule, there was no system of birth registration in India. Birth certificate was not required for any of the activities such as school admissions, marriage, divorce etc. However, that was the situation prior to Independence. After Independence, due to the rights given to the people of this country, such as political rights, citizenship rights, voting rights, registration of births is a legal requirement now. Initially different provinces had different rules and procedures. Since 1969, there is a unified process of registration of births and deaths in the country. Registering birth and deaths has become legally mandatory.

But if you ask how many people have got birth certificates, I think it will be less than 100 crore people. Millions of Indian citizens remain without proper birth certificates.

Problems arise when child has to be admitted to school. Three to five years back it was different to get birth certificates from the village officials. This was so because beyond one year of child birth, certificates

were not being issued and parents had to go through the tedium of running to their *tehsils* or municipalities. But now he informed, birth registration is best done within 21 days; one need not wait for the naming ceremony of the child to be performed, the name can be added on to the certificate later within one year. Panchayats have been informed of these rules.

Quantifying the scale of births that need to be registered each year, Mr. Banthia said, if the population of a village is 1000, on an average 25 to 30 births take place in a year, which is to say not more than 2 to 3 births every month, registering these births should therefore not be too difficult. Elaborating further he said, almost 72,000 births take place everyday in the country, so approximately every year we have 2 crores and seventy lakh children who need to be registered. So if the country has one lakh gram panchayats (GP), then on an average per year these many GPs need to register 2 crore births.

To ease the pressure of registration work and to provide birth certificates to those who missed getting one earlier, the Government of India has been issuing these certificates for the last two years. This is a major Government initiative for providing birth certificates to all children below the age of 10 years; around 3 crore children have benefited from this initiative and it is assumed that the out of a child population of 22-23 crores (as of now), the Government has been able to benefit 12-13 crore of children with birth certificates.

On the question of those who are in migration, the rule, he said, was natural births and deaths are supposed to be registered in the place where they occur.

Referring to the age of marriage, he appealed to the elected representatives to ensure that no child marriages takes place and that girls not to be married till they reach 18 years and boys only on completion of 21 years. Voting rights are also accessible only on the production of proof of birth certificates.

He regretted that there is an element of carelessness among parents regarding girls and their birth registration is often not done only because it is assumed that they do not have property rights and proof of parentage is therefore not necessary for them.

Mr. Banthia concluded his address on a strong note emphasising that it was not correct to refuse the girl child her identity by not registering her birth, as it in effect violates her basic human rights.

The floor was opened to the participants and in the interactive session Mr. Banthia answered the several questions that came up for clarification.

Rashmi, Panchayat Member, Karnataka, suggested that death and birth certificates should be given by Gram panchayats.

Mr. Banthia agreed and said a resolution should be passed by all gram panchayats to build up pressure on the Karnataka State government to delegate the job of birth registration to the panchayats.

He informed that different states have different departments handling birth registration. In Punjab and Haryana earlier police stations were doing birth registration, now in Punjab it is given to panchayats, and to the Health Department in Haryana. In Tamil Nadu and Karnataka birth registration work is good. Sikkim excels all other states. (See Annex 1).

A woman sarpanch from Maharashtra informed that in her state, 3 months after birth, registration is done at panchayat level itself.

Responding to this, Mr. Banthia shared how in some villages in Udaipur district (Rajasthan), panchayat sends greetings upon the birth of a child and also a reminder to parents to register the birth of their child!



Working Groups

Group I Micro Planning and Child Rights

Chairperson: Dr. Ratna Sudarshan, Director, ISST, New Delhi

Rapporteur: Mr. Rafi Ahmad, Research Officer, ISS

Passionate plea for the girl-child

The Group discussions were highly animated and touched upon a wide range of issues. Group started with a general discussion on what constitutes 'Child Rights'—the right to survival, to full development, to protection from harmful influences, abuse and exploitation and to full participation in family, cultural and social life.

- An elderly woman's passionate intervention, on how one could talk of child rights when the girl child is being killed in the womb itself, was strong. Participants agreed that the people's mindset has to be set right in order to protect the girl child from foeticide, give her the right survival, and then focus on 'child rights' as available after birth. Panchayats to play a critical role in stopping infanticide and female foeticide.
- Participants critically reviewed the mid-day meal programme of the Government which was introduced in order to improve children's nutritional intake and also encourage school attendance. Some of them felt that mid-day meal should be done away with at the earliest: it has only meant that students come to school just in time to queue up for the meals and once this was over they would go home. Instead of giving education, schools are just giving some food.
- Some sarpanches felt that instead a scheme to provide school uniforms would be better, as parents find it more difficult to pay for uniforms than they do to providing meals to their children.
- Many women elected representatives were of the opinion that the quality of education is poor in government schools.
- Another important point that emerged was that children/youth are not allowed to speak out their minds freely and therefore an element of suppression exists because elders do not allow for this free space. Suggestion was made that a *kishor* and *kishori manch* be created to give a common meeting ground for young children to interact and voice their thoughts and aspirations.

- In some villages in Maharashtra women's groups have adopted children below the poverty line.
- A sarpanch from Gujarat claimed that their panchayat has the distinction of having been able to curb problem of child labour.
- Kulabati, a pradhan from Osmanabad district, Maharashtra spoke about her work in creating awareness among people on the importance of pulse polio, hygiene, sanitation and first aid measures.
- A member of the Bangladesh delegation, Momina shared how they are able to campaign for birth registration in their villages. She informed that there is a standing committee, which not only monitors quality of education but also looks into the reasons of why students drop out of school.

Group II Female Foeticide

Chairperson: Dr. Vijayalaxmi Nanda, Delhi University

Rapporteur: Ms. Usha Gopinath, Research Officer, ISS

No gender discrimination in Himachal!

The discussion started with a general introduction on the prevailing situation of sex ratio among the general population and in the age group of 0-6 years in different states in India. Concern was shown on the overall decline in sex ratio of some of the states where it is very low. Situation in Bangladesh was slightly different. Here there is 95 per cent birth registration. Females are given adequate health care facilities. Some of the highlights of the discussions are:

- Sex ratio in rural Gurgaon is higher than the districts of Hissar and Sirsa, where the situation continues to be bad even today.
- The group arrived at a conclusion that female foeticide is a gross violation of human rights.
- Opinion was that the challenge of protecting the girl child needs to be taken up.
- Dowry was cited as one of the main reasons that lead to female foeticide. Since the family is not ready to bear the cost they prefer not to have female child and resort to female foeticide and infanticide.

In Himachal Pradesh there is no gender discrimination. Boys and girls are treated equally in terms of access to education, health and other facilities, though exceptions do exist where girls are discriminated.

Thus, what emerged from this discussion was that lack of awareness and education, economic and social insecurity, appalling social customs like dowry, unhealthy surroundings in which a girl child is brought up, etc., are factors which force the family to terminate the female foetus or commit female infanticide.

Some suggestions emerged:

- Awareness be created in the gram panchayat about laws which protect child rights.
- Female foeticide can be curbed by changing the attitude of the society towards the girl child.
- Women should fight for their rights.
- Doctors who are involved in the heinous crime of female foeticide should be punished.
- Panchayats should maintain records of all the births and marriages that take place in the gram panchayat.
- Ultrasound centres should be strictly regulated. Stringent punishment should be given to defaulters.
- Household work which women do should be recognised in the society as contributing to household income. This will boost the self-esteem of women.
- Increase employment opportunities, access to education, health etc., for women.
- Two-child norm implemented in a few states, goes against women in panchayats and affects adversely the sex-ratio in society.
- National level campaigns against female foeticide should be taken up.
- Males should accept the girl child on par with the male child.

Group III Child Trafficking and Early Marriage

Chairperson: Mr. P.M. Nair, I.G. Police (Ops.), CRPF, Jammu

Rapporteur: Dr. Bhagwan Behera, Research Officer, ISS

Some cultural practices promote trafficking

The group recognised that trafficking of girl children and early marriages are serious problems. Although child marriage is abolished by law, still some sections of our society practice it. Trafficking is a serious issue and the general public, elected representatives at the grassroot level politics, law enforcement agencies and concerned NGOs have an important role to play in rescuing child victims. Punishment to offenders must be stringent.

Action–research study carried out by the Institute of Social Sciences, and the National Human Rights Commission found that 80 per cent of the girls in brothels reach there before the age of 18 years. Minor girls are most vulnerable in the human trafficking trade. The study has also shown that on an average, 44,000 girls are trafficked per year and 11,000 of them do not come back home. The participants said that there are many causes that lead to cases of missing girls and it is the duty of the victim's parents, near and dear ones and the village representative to inform the police.

He cited the example of Nellore district of Andhra Pradesh, where five girls were missing for a period of 4 months. After four months, a girl among them made a call to her public pay phone and informed that she was in Mumbai. The mother of the girl requested the village sarpanch to rescue her girl. The village sarpanch along with Police Inspector- Mr. Srinivasan and an NGO activist of the area rescued the five girls from the Mumbai brothel.

Participants were asked what will be their response if there was an attempt to rape in their presence. Some participants said they will inform the police and some participants said they will call more people to overpower the offender. On the question of there being no alternative available to them - participants were silent. The example of Aman Devi was given, a man was attempting to rape a 16 year old girl. As there was no option available, she threw a stone which hit the head of the offender and he died. The case was registered in the court. Participants felt she had done no wrong and she did not deserve any punishment. Mr. Nair informed the group that under Article 100 of the Cr.P.C., if such cases arise, where no alternative is available, a person can risk attack on the offender for saving another person.

Mr. Nair also informed there is a law which enables the sarpanches to enter into the brothel and rescue the victims. The Tamil Nadu government is a step ahead by granting power to the panchayat members for rescuing girls from any brothel.

Ms. Mamta Devi, representative of Sampradaya, an NGO, Muzaffarnagar, U.P., talked about the trafficking of girls. She said once they were successful in rescuing 18 girls in the age group of 10-12 years, once these girls reached home, their parents did not accept them because of adverse socio economic conditions. She said there should be some procedure for their rehabilitation or else they will go back to the brothel.

Due to adverse sex ratio, there is the trend of one woman marrying two men which also leads to physical exploitation of women. This also leads to the growth in trafficking and social exploitation in the name of marriage.

In some communities of Rajasthan, there is a public ceremony after girls reach puberty. The parents sell their girl to the person who gives highest money. The girl is at his mercy and the general tendency is that after exploiting her, he resells her to another person and exploitation continues further.

The group discussed the Devadasi system in Karnataka where a girl is gifted in the name of god for the enjoyment of temple priests. In a study conducted by the ISS, it was found that 60 per cent prostitutes in

Baina Beach, Goa, are from Karnataka, but after a few years it was less than 10 per cent because the *Devadasi* system was abolished by the Karnataka government.

To stop trafficking in girl children and early marriage, following suggestions were made:

To make public aware; to find out the offender; under law, the general public can attack the offender if crime happens in front of him; there should be a citizens charter containing the rights and duties of the citizens; and there should be a sign board in every village indicating duties of the public if a crime occurs in front of them.

Group IV Child Labour and Right to Education

Chairperson: Dr. Chanda Rani Akhouri, EKATRA, Delhi

Rapporteur: Dr. Sangeeta Dhal, Delhi University

Students in rural areas work for animal census!

Participants from different states reflected regional nuances and state specific problems related to child education. The discussion began by asserting that there is a need to first create a conducive environment in which children can study. Educational camps should be held in every village so that children are motivated and inspired to go to school.

In Karnataka, children between the age of 8-14 years were engaged in child labour. The girl child was employed in home based cottage industries.

Parents are faced with the problem of choice between government as against private schools. In the government schools it was shared that the school teacher hardly ever comes to take classes and there is no creativity. The methods of teaching are very mundane and monotonous. The other discouraging factor is that schools are at far off distances and transport system is neither regular nor reliable.

Some interesting inputs from different states

- In Haryana, performance of government schools was good, due to strict vigilance.
- Mid day meal schemes was doing well in Tamil Nadu and Kerala. It requires close monitoring for nutritional quality and quantity.
- In Maharashtra, 70 per cent of the members of the *village education committee* are women. Some teachers who are not trained show no interest in courses meant to upgrade their teaching skill.
- In hill areas, as in Himachal Pradesh, educating children was difficult due to absence of reliable transport and proper roads. Poor people cannot afford private transport. Schools are at far off distances, transport is poor and not reliable.

- In rural Rajasthan, students are found rarely in their classes, as they are put on odd jobs like collecting animal census, distribution of mid-day meals, cooking chores etc.
- Introduction of mid-day meals in drought prone areas of Karnataka has brought back students to the schools during the lean period.
- Free education is hardly 'free' since parents may be paying Rs.150 as school tuition fee per month, but the private tuitions which have become a compulsory part of school education, cost much more and are heavily taxing.
- In Orissa, especially in poverty stricken tribal belt, children between the age 10-12 years are sent out as child labour to Maharashtra and Jammu and Kashmir.
- In rural areas, children and parents face problems in accessing quality education: there is lack of a conducive environment for poor children in rural areas.
- Lack of motivation for children
- Tribal children's education needs to simultaneously address alternative sources of incomes for tribal parents, who are faced with depleting incomes from forest and minor produce.
- Financial assistance in terms of books and items meant for poor students should reach them.
- Bangladesh delegates shared similar concerns: that despite motivation by the government, parents are reluctant to send children to government aided schools.

Linking up the right to education with the issue of birth registration, the group came up with state specific needs and demands like these:

- In Kerala it appears registration of births is very good and in some districts it is 99 per cent. Hospitals inform the panchayat of child births in some areas.
- In Orissa in some areas, fear existed that if people registered child births they may be deprived of benefits from BPL status.
- Some NGOs in Rajasthan give a monetary incentive of Rs.50 to parents to encourage the registration of child birth.
- Participants felt that emphasis on birth registration was good, as it was a means of accessing facilities that the State gives to its citizens.
- Participants were informed that for female headed families, name of mother is good enough for registration of the child's birth, fathers name is not a must.
- Migrant populations should register child birth at the place where child is born.

Group V Universal Birth Registration

Chairperson: Mr. K. Narayan Unni, Deputy Registrar General of India

Rapporteurs: Ms. Pushpa Kumari, Delhi University and Dr. Rushda Siddiqui, Research Officer, ISS

Universal birth registration gaining momentum

The speaker discussed the different dimensions of birth registration and the problems related to it. He also suggested solutions to different problems related to the birth registration process.

Emphasising the importance of birth registration Mr. Unni highlighted the fact that birth registration provides the first identity to an individual. Any welfare measure or policy of the government will not be able to deliver benefits, in the absence of authentic information and data of its population. Birth registration is important as it generates genuine census and contributes to good governance of the country.

There are few important issues related to birth and death registration process-

- The most important feature is with whom does the responsibility of registration lie. The answer is, in India, the legal responsibility of issuing certificate lies with either panchayats or the government officer appointed as the registrar. The births and deaths have to be informed to the concerned authority. However, abandoned children are to be reported by the *mukhiya* or chief of the village. Different states have delegated the responsibility to different authorities (See Annex 1).
- The Government of India chose to delegate this responsibility to panchayats as the local self government is most suited to execute this job. Orders are issued only by the Central and State governments, but the implementation is through panchayats. Panchayats as local institutions can act as potential agents for social change, empowering the people on the ground. In West Bengal, the panchayat pradhans have been assigned the task of registration, and they have done this successfully.
- The second important point is when should births and deaths be registered?
The answer is it should be done immediately following the event of either a birth or death. In case of failure to do so within 21 days the birth can be registered till child is 15 years old, with a late fee of Rs.5. The registration of a birth is valid even when the child has not undergone customary /religious naming ceremony.
- Third important point is that the registration process is absolutely free of cost. Getting birth certificate after registration is our right.

- There have been cases in the state of Rajasthan and Kerala where administration has fined families which have failed to register the birth of the child. As far as the legacy of the birth registration is concerned, the history goes back to 1872, when there was a rule established by the Britishers, for birth and death registrations. The penalty for not registering the same was Rs.50 then.
- In some of the states like Gujarat, Kerala, West Bengal, Orissa and Himachal Pradesh, the birth registration process has been going on successfully. On the other hand we have states like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh which have not been able to perform well on this front due to (a) lack of efficiency on part of the State government and (b) lack of awareness programmes among the people.
- The speaker suggested that the birth certificate should be made mandatory for the admission of a child in schools. This will compel people to get the birth of their children registered.

There have been different campaigns for advocating birth registration. In a campaigning process in Madhya Pradesh lakhs of birth certificates were issued. Similarly, in another campaign in Punjab, 50 lakh certificates were issued. In the first phase of registration those children were registered who were born in that territory. In the second phase those children were registered who were born elsewhere. All the target children below 10 years of age were registered and issued certificates.

Mr. Unni also addressed the queries of participants from different parts of India as well from Bangladesh. Participants from different regions shared their experiences of the birth registration process having been made part of the panchayat administration.

A panchayat member from Karnataka also the head of an *anganwadi* for several years, said, that there are problems with birth and death registration process. In urban areas certificates are issued easily, but scene is quite disappointing in the rural areas.

One member from Uttaranchal complained that even if they give information about the birth to the panchayat office, the latter does not issue a certificate.

The panchayat leader from Himachal Pradesh said that the rule of birth and death registration by the panchayats, has reached them only recently, since then they have been working to make it a success.

One of the members of panchayat team from Punjab asked what should be done when a child is born of illegitimate relations and such a birth goes unregistered. Mr. Unni replied that we have to persuade people to get the birth registered under all circumstances. Death registration is as important as birth registration. In cases of death by accident in another

state (away from native place) the certificate will be issued where death takes place. Reason for the death is not important for registering death.

The panchayat team from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar said that many people are unaware of the process, of registration confusion exists over the responsibility of the birth registration duty.

It was interesting to hear the grassroots experiences of delegates from Bangladesh. They said that there have been major efforts by the Government of Bangladesh in past 10 years, to implement the rules regarding birth and death registration. In Bangladesh, the Union Parishad was the body which was assigned this task, but now it has been left to the village policemen or the chaukidars. The demand from schools for birth certificates has forced parents to take birth registration seriously. The elected government bodies have not done well. There has been laxity on part of the Governmental machinery.

Now this work has been transferred to the women members of the Union Parishad (panchayat equivalent in Bangladesh), and there is visible improvement in this job. Union Parishad has decided recently that those members, who are successful on this work front, will be awarded by the Parishad.

Participants widely agreed that birth and death registration is a very serious issue. By not registering births, we are actually denying an identity to the child. Mr. Unni concluded the session on a hopeful note, that the universal birth registration process is sure to succeed, and it will gain momentum if the government as well as civil society groups shoulder the responsibility together.



PLENARY SESSION - II
**Women's Participation in Local Government:
Challenges Ahead**

Chairperson: Dr. Syeda Hameed, Member, Planning Commission, India.

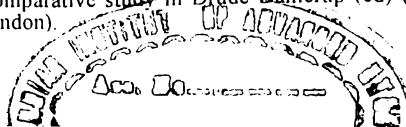
Speaker: Dr. Shirin Rai, Professor of Warwick University, UK.

Women's movement should address redistribution of resources

Dr. Shirin Rai said that a comparative study of quotas for women in the South Asian region addresses several important issues of the gendered nature of political participation and representation. Our study* suggests that quotas for women in representative bodies at the local level came about as a result of many different factors – an internal debate about the ways in which marginalised groups can be compensated for historical exclusions from public life; external pressures from global social institutions such as the UN and the women's movement and the interaction of national women's groups with these; the changes in the nature of state politics as well as the shifting position of party and factional groups within national politics.

If quotas are to address the issue of women's empowerment, then the above linkages will have to be addressed. Otherwise, like I have argued elsewhere, empowerment itself becomes a hollow concept. Empowerment has become the *mantra* of development practitioners and theorists — the unquestioned 'good' aspired to by such diverse and contradictory institutions as the World Bank, and the most radical non-government organisations. Initially the term was most commonly associated with alternative approaches to development, with their concern for local, grassroots community-based movements and initiatives. It drew its inspiration from people centered approaches to education and the growing disenchantment with mainstream, top-down approaches to development. More recently, empowerment has been adopted by mainstream development agencies as well, albeit more to improve productivity within the status quo than to foster social transformation. Empowerment has thus become a

* Shirin Rai, Farzana Bari, Nazmunessa Mahtab and Bidyut Mohanty 'South Asia: Gender quotas and politics of empowerment - a comparative study' in: ~~Drude Dahlerup~~ (ed) (2006) *Women, Quotas and Politics* (Routledge, London).



'motherhood' term, comfortable and unquestionable, something very different institutions and practices seem to be able to agree on. Yet this very agreement raises important questions. Why is empowerment so adaptable, so acceptable to such disparate bedfellows? What can empowerment mean if it is the watchword of such different and often conflicting development approaches and institutions? How can such a fluid, poorly defined term address issues of women's empowerment in a still largely male dominated world?

Interpreting Empowerment

First, we believe empowerment must be analysed in global and national as well as local terms. Even the smallest, most seemingly marginalised and impoverished communities are affected by global and national forces. Global production and new technologies are both marginalising some and enhancing the power of others. Moreover, this is a highly gendered process. To ignore the multi-level, interrelated character of struggles over power, even in poor, marginalised communities is we believe, to misunderstand empowerment in our increasingly interconnected global/local world. Second, understanding and facilitating women's empowerment requires a more nuanced analysis of power. Empowerment is not simply the ability to exert *power over* people and resources. Drawing on Foucault's writings, we argue that empowerment involves the exercise rather than possession of power. This approach cautions us that empowerment cannot transcend power relations; it is enmeshed in relations of power at all levels of society. At the same time, such an analysis allows us to open up development praxis to scrutiny by feminist theory in order to explore issues of structure and agency. We are reminded that empowerment includes both individual conscientisation (*power within*) as well as collective action, which can lead to politicised *power with* others to bring about change. Finally, we believe empowerment is both a process and an outcome. It is a process in that it is fluid, often unpredictable and requires attention to the specificities of struggles over time and place. Empowerment can also be seen as an outcome that can be measured against expected accomplishments. However, in agreement with Naila Kabeer (1999) we caution against a too sanguine assumption that empowerment can be measured and declared a success (or failure) by how much it does or does not achieve measurable goals.

Quota and Empowerment

What issues do quotas raise about empowerment? In terms of the politics of representation, quotas address the historical inequality, which kept women out the public sphere. Both participation and representation have

historically been hotly contested concepts. The politics of representation has reflected a wide variety of views towards quotas. From the justice argument to the empowerment argument, quotas have been seen as important elements of addressing women's historical exclusion from political institutions and processes. As it is clear from the case study of South Asia presented here, the outcome of quota regimes is equally complex. On the one hand, we see quota-based representation in local government reflecting the gender regimes of inequality and worry about the co-option of women into state machinery without any significant shifts in their status or indeed the status of local government institutions. On the other, however, we do see some clear indications that participation made available through quotas does impact upon familial and institutional relations even though this impact is rather fragile and will need further nurturing in order to be consolidated. Quotas in this sense are a start, which have the potential to kick-start other processes of empowerment of women.

Quota politics is also the politics of citizenship. As we have seen above, the constitutional debates in the three countries (India, Pakistan and Bangladesh) reflected the nature of particular citizenships which meant that women's citizenship was formalised through equality provisions without necessarily providing the entitlements that were critical to operationalising these. Women's movements had to struggle for making political rights real and these struggles point to the dynamic and unfolding nature of citizenship debates and rights. While the early struggles demanded universal political rights, current movements have insisted upon mainstreaming a gendered perspective in political institutions, as well as upon the importance of entitlements for citizenship which include both socio-economic justice, as well as a discursive shift from the earlier national citizenship rights to the demands for universal human rights. The introduction of quotas is the result of these struggles and a response to the limitations of the equality discourse when not backed up by social and political commitment to its implementation.

Through a multi-layered analysis of the quota debate in South Asia, we become conscious of several issues. First, as economic restructuring of national economies under pressures from international economic institutions bites along lines of class, gender and race, debates about the socio-economic entitlements to citizenship are increasing in importance (Fraser, 1997, Coole, 1997, Hoskyns and Rai, 1998). In particular we find feminist theorists and policy analysts pointing out the importance of distinguishing between socio-economic and political bases of citizenship (Yuval-Davis and Pnina, 1999; Lister, 1997). It is in these debates on citizenship that feminists have also encountered yet again the issue of differences among

women - the realisation that if socio-economic contexts are important for women's citizenship to be actualised, then there needs to be an acknowledgement that not all women share the same economic and social space. Citizenship debates are important if we are to assess whether quotas open up the space for the recognition of women's under-representation in politics, but also whether by making possible women's participation in politics they empower women. Local government quotas can work to empower women only when this wider context is taken into account. Second, empowerment is not the possession but the exercise of power – not simply power over, but power to. In the context of local governance in South Asia, “individual empowerment, whether it is gaining skills, developing consciousness, or making decisions, takes place within the structural constraints of institutions and discursive practices.”(Parpart, Rai and Staudt 2003:x.) Third, measuring empowerment can be problematic. How will we measure the empowering effect of being elected the ‘sarpanch’, or meeting other women in an institutional setting? It is the issue of keeping in view both the process and outcome of policies that Nancy Fraser has addressed in her work on ‘politics of recognition’ v. ‘politics of redistribution’ (NLR 212, July-August, 1997).

Fraser suggests that identity politics allows for recognition of inequalities within society but not necessarily to a ‘politics of redistribution’. Redistribution of resources, which underpin exclusion of presence and of voice cannot she argues, be addressed simply through the politics of recognition. As we have seen above, issues of caste, class and religion continue to divide women and are reflected in the nature of local politics. Iris Marion Young, however, takes issue with this interpretation of identity based recognition. She argues that in the very process of arguing for the recognition of hitherto excluded or marginalised groups, there takes place a redistribution of discursive power (1997). The politics of recognition and redistribution therefore unfold simultaneously. However, as Anne Phillips has argued in the context of political systems, the shift from the politics of ‘ideas’ (by which she means ideas organised within the structures of political parties) to the politics of presence (by which she means representation of identities in politics) is problematic. She argues instead that, it is “in the relationship between ideas and presence that we can best hope to find a fairer system of representation, not in a false opposition between one or the other” (1995:25). In this sense, quotas have the potential to bring together the politics of ideas and that of presence. However, where both Young and Phillips fail to address the point made by Fraser, is the relationship between structural inequalities of a socio-economic system and its impact on the politics of recognition as well as

representation. Hoskyns and Rai have argued that “[the] feminist challenge is limited by a current lack of focus on the importance of redistributive policies that are rooted in the structural inequalities of capitalist production and exchange”(1998:362). It is our conclusion, that if quotas are to fulfil their potential for addressing women’s exclusion from political life, women’s struggles need to focus on the issue of redistribution of resources, if power relations in society are to be fundamentally changed (See Annex II).

Syeda Hameed thanked Dr. Shirin Rai for her presentation and opened the floor and made it an interactive session with grassroots women expressing their thoughts. We record these interventions as they also profile the kind of work that each woman representative is able to do despite odds.

Shailaja, G.P. President, Karnataka: Besides being the president of panchayat, I am working in an NGO for women’s rights and women’s empowerment. We have 33 per cent reservation, but I got elected to the panchayat in the open competition by contesting against three male candidates. I would like to say few things about birth registration and other issues. We should not discriminate between men and women. If a lady doctor diagnoses through ultrasound that the foetus in the womb is a girl, she should inform the panchayat member to stop aborting the female child. If we are in touch with local representatives, we can stop such activities. In my opinion, being a lady, the lady doctor also should not take this wrong step. I hope National Commission for Women and Planning Commission would take some steps in this regard.

P. Sharda, ZP Member, Karnataka: In the beginning when I went to the school in my area there was a problem for students to get higher education admission. We have a single high school of 300 students. After my constant negotiation for almost 3 years with my elder officers and senior political leaders and others I managed to build an additional high school for girls in 2003. But hostel facility was limited for 100 students only. And it is very difficult for girls to study in rural areas if there are no hostels for them to stay in. So I request all the delegates present here to please give financial independence and higher education to all girls and fight for their development.

Ratnamala, Panchayat Samiti Member, Kathihar, Bihar: I would like to ask, if there is reservation for the post of chairperson in other places why not in Bihar? When we got elected we were told that there is reservation for members but not for chairperson. How can we think about women’s empowerment? I am working along with NGOs in my

block, but I feel, I can work more easily, had there has been a woman chairperson in my block.

Maina Devi, Pradhan, Dhulkot GP, Dehradun, Uttarakhand: Panchayat members are paid honorarium in Uttar Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh, however, it is not the case in Uttarakhand. Why is it so? I hope it will be implemented in all those states where it is not implemented so far. It will greatly help in empowering the women.

Hamida, Ward Member, Udaipur, Rajasthan: Since yesterday discussions are held on the topic of women's rights and whether women are getting those rights or not? To some extent women are getting benefited by the schemes aimed at empowering them. But to further their courage and awareness, women panchayat members/sarpanches require guidance from time to time.

Second, the issue of honorarium- It is true that there is no uniformity in all the states in paying honorarium to panchayat members, even in states where it is implemented, in most cases it is not reaching the members of panchayat. There is a need to ponder over the reason for this situation and its impact on women's empowerment.

Bharati, Swayam Shiksha Prayog (SSP), Maharashtra: My first question is, when there is 33 per cent reservation for women in panchayats, why there is only 10 per cent provision in the budget provided to panchayat for women related issues. This is very less, the amount has to be increased.

Also, there are women's committees in every village, but they are not very strong. The decisions taken in the women's committee should be given priority in the village gram sabhas, but it does not happen in reality.

Third, if the elected women panchayat members get involved with local SHGs, then it will help in women's empowerment.

Kamala Devi, Sarpanch, Rajasthan: We talk about women's empowerment, but even today most of the women sarpanches/panchayat members are illiterate, so how to empower them? There should be some training programme at panchayat level to educate women about their rights in right earnest.

Gita, Panchayat Member, Ajaygarh, Madhya Pradesh: We conduct a meeting of doctors in Ajaygarh, there is no arrangement for nurses here. Around 1000 members gathered for the meeting and rally. What should be done to solve the problems related to child delivery in Ajaygarh?

Pratima Singh, Pawan Foundation, Pratapgarh, Jaunpur, U.P. It is not clear whether to elect women having more than two kids. In my opinion this may lead to increase in abortions in the long run.



Left to Right: Cecilio Adorna, Country Representative UNICEF, George Mathew, Director ISS, Maina Devi, Vijayabai Prabhakar Patil, two awardees of Outstanding Women Panchayat Leaders (OWPL), Girija Vyas, Chairperson, NCW, Bruno Oudmayer, Director, Plan International (India), Subaida Mohammed, the third OWPL awardee and Bidyut Mohanty, Gender Unit of ISS, New Delhi, share a moment of glory.

बाएँ से दाएँ : सेसिलियो एडोरना, राष्ट्रीय प्रतिनिधि यूनीसेफ, जॉर्ज मैथ्यू, निदेशक, आइएसएस, दो पुरस्कृत विशिष्ट महिला पंचायत प्रतिनिधि मैना देवी, विजयाबाई प्रभाकर पाटिल, गिरिजा व्यास, अध्यक्ष, एनसीडब्ल्यू, ब्रूनो ओडमेयर, निदेशक, प्लान इंटरनेशनल (इंडिया), सुबैदा मुहम्मद, तीसरी पुरस्कृत विशिष्ट महिला पंचायत प्रतिनिधि और बिद्युत महांति, महिला विभाग, आइएसएस, नई दिल्ली, गौरव के क्षणों में।



Girija Vyas in conversation with Bruno Oudmayer, Plan International (India).

गिरिजा व्यास सभा में ब्रूनो ओडमेयर, निदेशक, प्लान इंटरनेशनल (इंडिया) के साथ बातचीत करते हुए।



Left to Right: B.S. Baviskar, ISS, New Delhi, Pawan Surana, Chairperson, Rajasthan State Commission for Women seen with at the Jaipur State level Convention.

बाएँ से दाएँ : जयपुर में राज्य स्तर की सभा में राजस्थान राज्य महिला आयोग के अध्यक्ष पवन सुराना, वी.एस.बाविस्कर (आइएसएस, नई दिल्ली) के साथ।



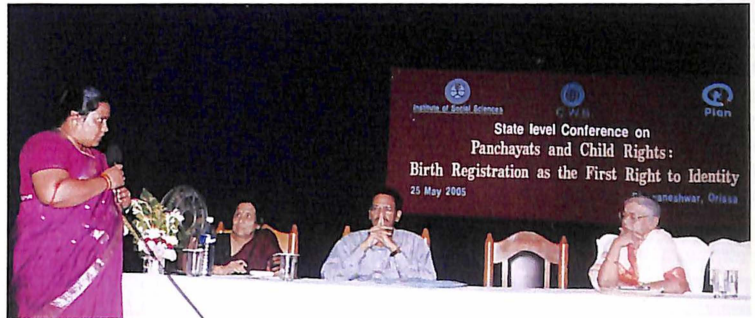
Elected women representatives flagging off the demand for fifty:fifty share in local governance at ISS WPEDC 2005 at Jaipur.

जयपुर में महिला राजनीतिक सशक्तीकरण दिवस समारोह 2005 में निर्वाचित महिला प्रतिनिधि स्थानीय सरकारें में 50 प्रतिशत हिस्से की माँग करती हुईं।



Left to Right: Ms. Namita Panda, Chairperson, Orissa State Commission for Women, Damodar Rout, Hon'ble Minister for Panchayati Raj, Rameshwar Thakur, Hon'ble Governor of Orissa, Swapneswar Baya, Secretary-cum-Commissioner, P R Dept, Orissa, K.K. Patnaik, ISS, Bhubaneswar.

बाएँ से दाएँ : नमिता पांडा, उड़ीसा राज्य महिला आयोग की अध्यक्ष, पंचायती राज के माननीय मंत्री दामोदर राउत, उड़ीसा के माननीय राज्यपाल रामेश्वर ठाकुर, स्वप्नेश्वर बाया, सचिव व आयुक्त पंचायती राज विभाग, उड़ीसा, के.के.पटनायक, आइएसएस, भुवनेश्वर।



Sabita Mohapatra, President, Zila Parishad asking probing questions to the resource persons at the ISS Orissa Convention of WPEDC 2005. Seated on the dias: L to R- Bidyut Mohanty, N.P. Das, Director Dept. of P.R., Saraswati Swain, Director NIHARD.

उड़ीसा में महिला राजनीतिक सशक्तीकरण दिवस 2005 के अवसर पर आइएसएस के वक्ता से आवश्यक प्रश्न पूछते हुए जिला पंचायत अध्यक्ष, सविता महापात्र। मंच पर बाएँ से दाएँ - विद्युत महांति, एन.पी.दास, निदेशक पंचायती राज, सरस्वती स्वेन, निदेशक एनआइएचएआरडी



Child representative of working children's organisation 'Bhim Sangha', speaking on 'Child Rights and Panchayats'. Seated on dias, G. Prakasham, Director of Economics and Statistics and Registrar of Births and Deaths and Mr. Manu Kulkarni, Senior Fellow, ISS.

कामगार बच्चों की संस्था 'भीम संघ' के प्रतिनिधि 'बाल अधिकार और पंचायतों' के विषय पर बोलते हुए। मंच पर विराजमान, जी.प्रकाशम, निदेशक इकॉनोमिक्स एंड स्टैटिक्स और रजिस्ट्रार, जन्म एवं मृत्यु और मनु कुलकर्णी वरिष्ठ फेलो, आइएसएस।



U.R. Anantha Murthy, Chairman, ISS, shares a lighter moment with elected women representatives in Bangalore. यू.आर. अनंत मूर्ति, अध्यक्ष, आइएसएस, बंगलूर में निर्वाचित महिला प्रतिनिधियों के साथ वातचीत करते हुए।

Anbumani Ramadoss, Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, shares a light moment with Malan, a noted journalist in Tamil Nadu while Era Sezhian, Senior Fellow, ISS is seen addressing the Convention at Chennai.

चैन्नई में डॉ. अंबुमणि रामदास, भारत सरकार के केंद्रीय स्वास्थ्य और परिवार कल्याण मंत्री, तमिलनाडु के प्रसिद्ध पत्रकार से बातचीत करते हुए, आइएसएस के वरिष्ठ फेलो इरा सेझियन सभा को संबोधित करते हुए।



G. Vinod, Hon'ble Minister for Labour, Government of Andhra Pradesh addressing the meeting while the delegates listen attentively.

आंध्र प्रदेश के माननीय श्रम मंत्री जी.विनोद, बैठक को संबोधित करते हुए और प्रतिनिधि ध्यानपूर्वक उनकी बात सुनते हुए।



Sarvati Devi, Sarpanch, Rodewal Gram panchayat, Nimrana Block, Alwar, Rajasthan: Like MPs and MLAs, panchayat presidents also should get funds either directly or through the schemes to develop our respective areas, so that we can spend that fund more freely on those things which are required for that area.

Panchayat representative, Karnataka: In Karnataka women get the chance to come out from their house and they can share their needs, ideas, form groups of SHGs and through *anganwadi* our government is assisting us. So the same scheme if other states follow it will be a good idea for their own development.

Under 73rd Amendment, reservation was provided for women, but even today, the condition of backward and lower caste people is still the same. The feudal lords suppress lower castes. If a sarpanch belongs to lower caste, they do not give due respect to him/her. Sarpanch has to sit outside the panchayat office. I request that training be provide to elected panchayat members belonging to lower and backward castes, so that they can conduct their duties properly.



PANEL DISCUSSION
National Rural Health Mission and Panchayats

Chairperson: Dr. Zarina Rahman Khan, Activist, Bangladesh
Speakers: Mr. Prasanna Kumar Hota, Swami Agnivesh, Ms. Rita Sarin

Dr. Zarina Rahman Khan, activist, Bangladesh greeted the participants and said the first panel discussion was on a very important topic which is health service delivery as envisaged by linking the Rural Health Mission to the Panchayats. Services, she said are the most essential things that the people need at the local level. People who voted for you, who placed you where you are today. The most essential services in the rural areas being health, education, social welfare, services to women for fighting violence in the family.

**Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA)
in the Rural Health Mission**

*Mr. Prasanna Kumar Hota, Secretary, Department of Health,
Government of India*

Mr. Hota opened his speech with a clear message to panchayats - that the Rural Health Mission, initiated by the Government of India will be of no significance, without their co-operation and participation. There is an urgent need he said, for increasing the health services, to keep pace with the growth in population. There is progress in issues such as education, housing and drinking water etc. In the health sector the progress in delivery of services is far less than what it should have been. From my experience, I feel that it is very easy to show results by working in other government departments. I almost solved all the priority tasks in other departments, however, in the Health department I have a feeling that I may perhaps get defeated in reaching my goals. But if you co-operate I will not be defeated, because, Government alone cannot maintain good health of its people. Health is a special issue, which touches everybody's life. We are only the facilitators who can bring the different health services to the people in your villages. It is not a public distribution system, where one loads the rice onto the truck and delivers it at the ration shop. Health cannot be achieved in that manner.

For the last 50 years we have tried to follow various models in order to provide health services to people, but none of these models have achieved full success. There are around 6 lakh doctors in the country; out of which only 1.5 lakhs doctors are in the Government service. Remaining 4.5 lakhs doctors are working in the private sector. Then how can the Government provide health services. Today, both the Departments of the Health are under my charge; Rs.10,000 crores have been spent on health services alone, which is like a drop in the ocean. Whereas, a huge amount roughly around Rs.4 lakh crores is spent by people from all over the country on health related expenditures. This includes the amount spent by you people also. It has been observed that about 70 to 80 per cent of the money spent on health is coming from people. Only 20 per cent is spent by the Central government, which is very less. Instead of Rs.10,000 crores, the Government should spend around Rs.50,000 crores. Even then, no major improvement may take place. Just think if we are spending so much, what will happen to those private doctors? Functioning of Government hospitals in many states with the exception of a few states like Tamilnadu, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala is not at all satisfactory. In some states like Bihar, U.P. they are almost defunct, in certain other states like Haryana, Orissa, they are semi-functional.

So the first thing to be done is to allocate the amount spent by the Government to the panchayats to be kept under your control. Hospitals in your area will be given to you for maintenance and management. Health Ministry will only be a facilitator. In every village panchayat, there will be a lady who will be responsible for creating awareness on health related issues, she will be designated as 'ASHA'. Panchayats instead of the Government will be selecting 'ASHA' for every village and the salary will be given by panchayats from the funds allocated by the Government.

It is a matter of shame for us as in our country, even now, many women die during the child birth or soon after giving birth to a child. As a nation, we are fighting to get the membership of UN Security Council, but what good it will do when in Uttar Pradesh, one of the largest states of the country, around 700 hundred women for every one lakh deliveries are dying during child birth. In Kerala, the rate of women's mortality during child birth is around 20 for every one lakh child births. There are huge differences between states like Kerala and Uttar Pradesh.

The reason for this high rate of mortality of women during child birth is that most of the deliveries happen at home; even today women hesitate to go to hospitals and nursing homes for child delivery. We have started a new scheme called Mothers Protection Scheme (Janani Suraksha Yojana) (*See Annex III*) under the Rural Health Mission, in which Rs.1200 will

be provided to every pregnant women belonging to the poor class. This money will be given to panchayats to spend on providing iron tablets, timely check-ups, and for giving tetanus injections etc., and also to bear the expenses at the time of delivery. Although we are trying to increase the amount from Rs.1200/-, for the time being it will remain at that amount. You must have heard of a not so successful scheme called Maternity Benefit Scheme (MBS) where Rs.500/- was given to pregnant women. Even that money will be kept with panchayats to be used in case of need. There are many more schemes planned under this Rural Health Mission, such as sanitary and latrines in every house. Mothers rather than fathers are bothered about the health of their children. So I request the women to come forward to improve the health of the women. SHGs have the responsibility of supervising the work of ASHA, and distribution of medicines etc.

Mr. Hota dispelled all doubts that the government would use coercive means where family planning was concerned. India is a secular nation. No body can get things done by force. ASHA will be responsible for providing contraceptives and will also educate teenage and adolescent girls about sex and related issues. HIV/AIDS will be explained.

In case Auxiliary Nurse Midwife (ANM) is not attending the sub-centre regularly, you can remove her from the duty and appoint another one. ASHA, and anganwadis, should also be under your responsibility. If PHC is not functioning properly then it is your responsibility to make it functional. Along with responsibilities and rights you have certain duties also. If a door in a Primary Health Centre (PHC) is broken, then instead of waiting for Government to send money to repair the door, panchayat has to get it repaired immediately.

Mr. Hota said that government was hoping to get a revolution by giving more powers to panchayats and increasing their capacity for health delivery services.

As mentioned earlier, however hard the Government is working, it is not possible to increase the budget from 10,000 crores to one lakh crore overnight. This being the reality we have to think about health insurance. Today even poorest of the poor would also not like to die due to illness without availing medical facilities. He sells his land, and other resources and goes to hospital for treatment. In the process, he becomes poorer and remains in debt for his entire life. So the way Ms. Nalini Abraham, Plan International (India), has started health insurance by collecting Rs.20 from each person in the tribal area of Orissa, you should collect money and keep it for health emergency purposes and make it functional through panchayats.

Dr. Khan thanked Mr. Hota for giving the finer details of the NRHM and for indicating that there is need to build capacity of panchayats for delivering health services; at present they do not have administrative power, manpower nor the necessary finances. Mr. Hota has been very generous and has offered the services of the Health Department; at the same time he said that local representatives have also to be prepare themselves, build awareness, around health issues and upgrade capacity to take on the delivery of health services through the NRHM.

Religious leaders promoting discrimination against women

Swami Agnivesh, Convenor, Bandhua Mukti Morcha, Delhi

It is heartening to see women from all over India and from Bangladesh have gathered here to fight for the freedom of women. They have come to say that men are ruling over us for the past thousands of years, now it is our turn to rule. Unless women develop power from within, no amount of help in the form of financial aid or awareness about Government laws and rules will help their cause.

For the past thousands of years, the caretakers of religion have gradually suppressed and weakened women. First of all they have closed the avenues for women's education. These caretakers instilled the feeling among women on issues related to health and physiology of their bodies that they are weak and impure. The Adi Shankaracharya once even said that women are gates to hell. Tulsi Das had written that the way animals have to be whipped to get the work done, similarly women too should be beaten in order to get work done by them. Men think they have a right to abuse women. Religious leaders are responsible for promoting such wrong notions regarding women.

Health of the women cannot be ensured until the mentality is reformed and women feel that they also have equal right to good health.

Another point held against women is that they are impure because they menstruate from the onset of puberty, but this is only a natural phenomenon, the way adolescent boys develop beard and moustache, a girl's body undergoes certain physiological changes. There is nothing impure in this natural phenomenon. It is related to the health and body of women. But religious preachers say it is a sign of impurity!

I once questioned the Shankaracharya as to which scripture advocates the observance of *sati*. He said it is written in the holy scriptures that a widow should not be remarried, She should lead a life of a saint. I said to him that according to my religion, a man should also be burnt along with his dead wife. He should be a '*sata*'. For God both men and women are equal. A widower also has no right to get remarried, he should be an

ascetic. We have to get rid of such discrimination against women from our society. We have to strengthen the equal status for women.

The situation of women is same in all religions and in all poor countries such as Nepal, Bangladesh etc. Even in China the poorest of the poor households have a latrine on their own premises. Even after 57 years of independence, our sisters in villages are not provided with a latrine in their house premises, just because this task is not on the priority list of our Government. Government is busy in constructing big hotels and offices. Whatever funds are allocated to you as sarpanch of a panchayat or president of a zilla parishad, utilise these in constructing toilets for women.

I would like to tell one thing to Mr. Hota, that the Government allocates a budget of only Rs. 4 lakh crores for health of the entire country, which is next to nothing if seen against the requirement of this sector. At the same time they give permission to sell liquor in villages which is a major cause for low health and in debtedness of the village households. Most of the women in villages are facing difficulties in running their households as their husbands just take away by force whatever little money saved by them and spend it on liquor. You have to appeal to the Union Government for prohibition to be implemented. Gandhi once said that to get real freedom, we have to get rid of alcohol along with British rule out of the country.

Another disturbing fact is the rising incidence of female foeticide, prevalent in states like Haryana, Punjab and Delhi. Female foetus are killed in the womb itself. Even educated people are indulging in this type of crimes. We have to stop the practice of female foeticide.

Swami Agnivesh concluded his speech by asking women to go back to their villages and break liquor bottles and protest against sale of liquor in rural areas.

Roads and buildings not a priority

Ms. Rita Sarin, Country Director, The Hunger Project, New Delhi

This is a welcome to our friends from Bangladesh, and other states of India and all women who have gathered here and also to those women who could not come here, due to their busy schedule in their villages.

The issue for today's discussion is what are the initiatives to be taken to provide health services in villages. One of the best points explained by Mr. Hota is regarding "ASHA" - the village health worker, who will be chosen by and accountable to the panchayat members. There are 10 lakh elected women representatives, who will be given the responsibility of looking after the health of village women and children. Under the Hunger Project, till date we have trained 30,000 women elected members. Out of

these 30,000 at least 10,000 women say that constructing roads and buildings is not the priority of their panchayats, instead they are for setting up of schools, for providing health to the villagers and to remove hunger and poverty. They want to work for improving the status of women in the house. That is the revolution brought in by these panchayats. Issues raised by Swami Agnivesh are very pertinent. During my stay in a village for five years, very often it was observed that whenever a son falls sick, parents used to collect all their savings and take their son to a hospital in a nearby city for treatment, however when a daughter would fall sick, they just tie a black thread on to her thumb and sit back in the hope that this was enough to cure her.

In the training we provide to the elected women representatives, instead of speaking about the Panchayat Raj Act and how to get the work done by BDO etc., we emphasise on creating awareness among women about themselves, their status, their identity in the society, since people think that women are illiterate, ignorant, they got elected to the panchayat, but they cannot do anything. This thinking needs to be dispelled. Five years back when we initiated these training programmes we met the people responsible for bringing the 33 per cent reservation for women in panchayat raj institutions and asked them why did they provide reservation for women and what would they expect from women. Even they did not have a clear idea on it. They brought in the reservation because it was the dream of Rajiv Gandhi, as a result they were under pressure to provide reservation to women. They never expected that elected women representatives would bring in such a big revolution. If today they are hesitating to provide reservation for women in the Parliament and State Assemblies, it is because they are scared of a similar revolution brought in by women. Addressing the women panchayat members Ms. Sarin said, it was a great opportunity given them to work on issues such as health, drinking water, education eradicating hunger etc. Mr. Hota has explained very aptly that Government is doing their best to provide health to all. The new Health mission has two very important points which you all have to understand clearly. First, that some funds will be allocated to each panchayat, and second that ASHA will be appointed by the panchayats. However, panchayat women have to be given proper training on how to implement the scheme in the village, what will be the funds allocated to panchayats for providing health services and what are the matters that will be covered under this scheme. Whenever this will take place, it will be a revolutionary step forward. It will strengthen your position and will give you a bigger responsibility. With proper training and information you will be able to handle this responsibility. I will conclude my talk by saying that the future is yours.

Bangladesh Union Parishads activate village standing committees

Dr. Zarina Rahman Khan: The issue that we are discussing on local government initiatives in trying to help local government bodies to regain their status of power and their resources which have been taken away from them by the Central government.

The Union Parishads (UP) in Bangladesh are very weak from the point of view of power, authority and resources. And the services that we have to provide to the people particularly the rural poor, the local government bodies do not have the right to provide the services, these are all provided by the Central government.

Health is very important, as you have heard today. And the Government department that provides the health services does not provide it effectively. So the Union Parishad is unable to look after the health needs of the people. So what we have done in Bangladesh through our project is to form an association of local government and a network of women members of the local government. And there were women policy groups within that association. The delegates who have been lucky to come here today to your programme are members of the women's policy group.

What the local government and Union Parishad is trying to do in Bangladesh now, is to activate the standing committees. I am sure the panchayats also have standing committees, which can be formed by members of the panchayats as well as some people from the community. The standing committees of the UPs are now monitoring the health, education, agriculture and social welfare services of the government departments. And they are reporting to the central government officials about the problems they have. This is the way the local government bodies are now trying to ensure some effective local government and services in the local areas. If there will be more opportunities in the future, we will talk more about what is happening in local government areas of Bangladesh. She thanked ISS for giving the opportunity to chair the session.



VALEDICTORY SESSION
Panchayats and Child Rights: Some Issues

Chairperson: George Mathew, Director, Institute of Social Sciences

Speakers: Mr. Mani Shankar Aiyar

Hon'ble Minister for Panchayati Raj, Government of India.

Dr. Surina Rajan, Project Manager, INDUS Child Labour Project, International Labour Organisation (ILO).

Women are 50 per cent of our population, only logical to give them 50 per cent of all things!

Mr. Mani Shankar Aiyar: It gives me great pleasure to be amongst you, because our biggest success after attaining independence is that we made this country the biggest democracy in the world. We feel very proud to be able to bring in women in such large numbers into the democratic process.

The job which, we are still not able to accomplish in Delhi and in the capitals of various states, could be accomplished in villages, and districts. Around 10 lakh women have been engaged in running the country. This has happened for the first time in history that women in such large numbers are involved in taking decisions in matters pertaining to the country. Nowhere in the world you get to see such a unique situation. This is a big achievement. When we look back around 15-16 years, there were so many objections raised when Shri. Rajiv Gandhi, the then prime minister, said that women should get one third reservation in local governance. Nobody could even imagine that it would be possible. Today, together we could prove that not only it was possible but also the country is benefiting by this. Late Rajivji used to say, that when women are fifty per cent of the total population then it is only logical they get 50 per cent share of all the things. He was confident that once 33 per cent reservation was made compulsory for women then it will grow up to 50 per cent on its own.

Today the extensive studies carried out in Karnataka state reveal that, instead of 33 per cent around 45 to 46 per cent of members contesting for general elections are women. Among the total elected women representatives while 33 per cent are coming through reservation, at least half of the 33 per cent, that is around 15-16 per cent women are getting

elected in general category by contesting against male candidates. It was the forethought of Shri. Rajiv Gandhi that once 33 per cent reservation was provided to women then the remaining 17 per cent women would come forward through their own hard work and through example.

Recently, at a function I saw a girl from Bihar, who was practically illiterate and got elected to the panchayat from a reserved seat. Although she was illiterate, she was a capable leader and exhibited her leadership qualities through her performance as a panchayat member. So second time, she got elected from an unreserved seat because people had so much faith and confidence in her leadership. The reason why I am narrating this incident is to indicate that it is totally baseless to say that since a person is a woman and an illiterate so she is not eligible to occupy a panchayat seat. We hope in a few years time at least 50 per cent of seats will be occupied by women. Slowly a day may come when men may need the provision of reservations.

The second issue which Rajivji used to take up was of the mother who plays a major role in preserving and passing on cultural heritage from one generation to another. Child gets its first education from the mother. Mother has 80-90 per cent contribution in instilling right values in her children, rest of the 10-20 per cent, the child learns from the society; we may lose some of our invaluable virtues and values while adapting modern ways of life, hence it becomes all the more important to give respect to the mother in the house. This will also change the mindset that the male gender has a superior and dominating position over the female gender.

The third point which Rajivji used to emphasise was related to economic development. How does economic development happen? When we save a little bit of our daily earnings, and invest that savings somewhere, then there will be more income from that investment and it will improve the economic levels. Shri Rajiv Gandhi used to say that in India, in every village and in every family most of the time leaving certain exceptions, it is the women, who tends to save a little bit from the households daily earnings. Men tend to spend all their earnings on liquor. The maternal instincts of women make them save a little bit of their income for the welfare of the family. If we can utilise this capability of women in government functioning, then it will automatically help in increasing the savings as well as investment.

Mr. Aiyar said Rajivji also believed that there is a difference between women and men in their outlook and approach towards social problems. For instance, whenever I visit the people in my constituency, the villagers ask for increasing the bus service from village to the city. Men however

want increased bus services in the evening, so that they can go to watch a movie, whereas women want to have more number of trips in the morning, so that children can go to school. Both of them want improved bus service, but there is a difference in their reason for wanting this facility. There is a need to combine the outlook of both men and women. It is necessary to come back to village after watching the movie and also necessary to see to that children reach school in time. We have to understand the outlook of both men and women, then only we can improve the situation in the real sense.

Rajiv Gandhi used to say that it is very important for women to come forward as it will help in better contribution to the development of the country. Women's role in the government will influence the future generations to become responsible citizens of the country.

We are aware that to give justice to women, women have to be given certain rights and we have to see to that those rights are protected. However, if we stop at that level we will be doing only partial social justice. Children are a major part of our society. So if you can agitate for your rights then why not for the rights of children? Nature has given the custody of children to you. Until the time the child comes into the world it is your responsibility to look after it. What I mean to say is unless the parents register the birth of the child, the child will not get a certificate indicating his date of birth and place of birth, which he can use it for school admissions, for jobs or even for getting married. This can be done in panchayats and women can take the lead.

Because, registering the births and deaths is legally mandatory now. Then we can proudly say that among the 30 lakh elected representatives of the panchayats, 10 lakhs are responsible women citizens of India.

Child labour perpetuates poverty

Dr. Surina Rajan said, panchayats are an important institution to evolve the policies and programmes of the individual villages, which in turn shape the future of the people. As panchayat members, you are the representatives of the grassroots level masses who have shown faith in you and you have therefore the onerous duty of ensuring that each and every scheme of the government is administered well and serves the people. Today, international organisations like the ILO, the national government and the district administrations – all are looking towards you, as representatives in institutions of local governance – who comprehend realities better, and therefore have the capacity to find solutions which are local and sustainable.

Elimination of child labour is of critical importance for India, (which is destined to be a global power), not only because it is the right thing to do,

but also to relieve the weight and limitation child labour puts on the full development of the country's potential.

As we speak, some 250 million children worldwide waste their childhood, mortgage their future, risk their lives and ruin their health because of child labour – around 12 million of them in India. At too young an age, they work long hours, often every day of the week, in mines, in agriculture, in construction and in fisheries and car repair garages and in homes.

What is child labour?

Children in almost all societies work in one way or another, although the types of work they do and the forms and conditions of their involvement vary among societies. You will agree, it is normal for girls and boys to participate in certain types of light work, within a family or during school holidays.

The appeal for elimination of child labour should not be misunderstood as an appeal to prohibit all work carried out by children, but rather only those kinds of work that could be detrimental to their well-being.

In essence child labour can be assessed on the basis of the following three important determinant factors:

The age at which the child is made to work; no work if under 12; light work for 13-14 and no hazardous work for 15-17 years old; the time (number of hours) children have to devote to work rather than to education; leisure or rest; and the type of economic activity and the potential effect on children's health and safety.

The rationale for seeing child labour as a problem comes from three distinct perspectives: The first is rooted in the respect for children's universal rights; the second, relates to the adverse effect of inappropriate work on children's health and mental development; and the third relates to the adverse effects of child labour on economic development, particularly for the long term development of human capital.

As panchayat members, you may ask what is your role in respect of child rights and exactly what rights are we talking about. We are here talking about four basic rights – you have talked about identity, at length in the conference – so I will move beyond that and include the right to survive; to have a happy and healthy childhood; to education (an opportunity to learn which in turn will enable them in realising their creative potential) to grow into responsible adults, socially aware and economically independent and with the capacity to make decisions which affect their lives.

The issue now is who is responsible for these rights. Our answer will immediately be: adults in the immediate family; neighbourhood/community;

public representatives/society in the community. It is in this latter category that all of you panchayat members would fall, in fact you would be the most important persons who constantly shape the lives and destiny of our children.

Before proceeding further, let us understand the adverse effects of child labour on economic development, especially the cost implications of child labour.

The cost of child labour on society

The cost of child labour is not only a cost to the individual child concerned, though that indeed is of great significance in terms of lost opportunities and in terms of the costs to the health and well being of the child. But it is also a cost to society at large. It is now well documented that poverty is the single greatest force that generates the flow of children into the workplace. It forces children to work for their own survival and for the survival of their families.

It is also well established that child labour perpetuates poverty. A child that enters the work force at an early age will, (if she or he survives to adulthood) never reach their full potential. The lack of access to education, the lack of opportunity of learning economically viable skills, the lack of access to basic health care and a nurturing environment which so often accompanies early employment, not to mention stunted growth, psychological and physical damage that comes with the worst forms of child labour, will prevent these millions of children from contributing to the country's full development, and from breaking out of the cycle of poverty.

Research indicates that families send their children to work as a survival strategy.

Employers are known to prefer child labour, not so much for the 'nimble fingers' argument which is widely talked about but for the simple reason that children are cheaper than adult labour and because children, unlike adults cannot question the treatment meted out to them. Children do not demand their labour rights.

Also contributing to this cycle of poverty is the fact that child labour contributes to unemployment of adults and depresses adult wage level. This in turn results in lower income in the family, which in turn result in families sending their children into labour as a means of survival.

In short: child labour is a losing proposition no matter how you look at it. The child loses, the family loses and the country loses in terms of lost childhood, in terms of lost opportunities for a brighter future and in terms of the lost future productive labour.

Not only is investment in the elimination and prevention of child labour the right thing to do, but it is a wise investment if we look into the cost benefit analysis of eradicating child labour.

The cost benefits of eradicating child labour

Over the last three years, the ILO's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) has undertaken research to develop a model for eliminating child labour. It is the first integrated analysis of the economic costs and benefits of eliminating child labour ever conducted world wide.

The model consists of supplying sufficient schools, teachers and quality education to all children over a twenty year period. It introduces income transfer programme to cover cost of child labour extends special support to children in worst forms of child labour, budgets for running costs of the scheme.

The ILO-IPEC study concludes that child labour – which involves one in every six children in the world – can be eliminated and replaced by universal education within 20 years at an estimated cost of USD 60 billion. It points out, however, that the benefits of eliminating child labour within the next two decades will amount to an estimated USD 5.1 trillion for both developing and transitional economies, where most child labourers are found.

As can be seen, the global benefits of the elimination of child labour and the redirection of these children to education greatly exceed the costs.

The ILO-IPEC report highlights that if child labour elimination programme was added to social expenditures in general, encompassing both health and education, the increase would be 4.4 per cent during the first decade and 11 per cent during the second decade. These are not impossible increases over current spending, particularly when potential economic growth is taken into account. These would nonetheless be difficult to finance all the same.

The challenge is no doubt daunting, namely to improve the plight of some 250 million children now caught up in child labour and to prevent them from becoming the poor, unemployed and unprotected of tomorrow. But as the report shows it is achievable – and closer home – in this country, in your State and in your village it can surely be achieved.

Conclusion

Dr.Rajan concluded by saying that panchayat members, had the responsibility and authority to ensure that children in their villages enjoy all child rights. Among the large number of functions which you have

been asked to discharge, you concentrate on health and education, you can make a substantial difference to the quality of life a child leads and the expected future that the child can dream of.

She suggested that panchayats need to: Assess the functioning of village schools; check to see whether all children in the 6-14 years age group are school going; organise one meeting in your panchayat for child welfare; ensure sincere implementation of all government schemes meant for children; devote one meeting of the panchayat every 6 months to the agenda of child welfare; disseminate child related schemes to the village worker; examine implementation of these schemes; discuss within panchayats for non-attendance in school, plan measures to remove these stumbling blocks.

She called upon panchayats to shoulder this great responsibility of raising children who do not waste their childhood in raising resources for survival and later grow into adults who are again struggling to survive and in all probability put their children to work for meager incomes, thus promoting the same vicious circle which forces children into labour markets.

Vote of Thanks

Dr. Mohanty expressed gratitude to Mr. Mani Shankar Aiyar for recalling the five-sutri programme of late Rajiv Gandhiji leading to empowerment of elected women representatives and thanked him for encouraging women in panchayats by his words and presence.

She also thanked Dr. Surina Rajan for giving the ILO perspectives on the need to eliminate child labour.



STATE CONVENTIONS

1. Uttarakhand

Dehradun, 16 May 2005

Ms. Bharati Mahapatra, ISS, welcomed the participants and explained the objective of the state level Convention organised by ISS, to enable a larger participation of panchayat representatives, mainly women panchayat members, local NGOs, social activists and officials of different departments of the State government of Uttarakhand in ensuring child rights.

Registration of child births is not always a priority in rural areas and it was the aim of this Convention to sensitise and build awareness around this critical issues. With a few exceptions, in most states in India, the panchayats have been saddled with the task of child birth registration. Hence the need to educate panchayat members on the importance of birth registration.

Welcome Address

Dr. A. N. Roy, Head, International Studies Department, ISS, welcomed the eminent gathering of experts from different sector and the panchayat representatives who came from far off districts of Uttarakhand. He highlighted the fact that the rights based approach to development offered a powerful tool for accessing entitlements as a right.

In the list of different categories of rights – child rights are most important as children cannot always articulate their state of deprivation and their cause needs to be taken up by adults. Birth registration thus gives the child its first right, it establishes its identity as a citizen. Thereby giving the child a legal recognition. Dr. Roy emphasized that the vast task of registration of births will not be possible without the involvement of panchayats, specially the elected women members in panchayats. Concluding his welcome address, he once again emphasized that panchayats are an indispensable part of any development activity in rural India and their direct involvement is a must in any activity that promotes the welfare of the village.

Mr. N.C. Uppretti, Director, Panchayat Raj Department, Uttarakhand, said that the greatest achievement of the present Convention was that panchayat women from the most remote areas of Uttarakhand had come to participate. Focusing on the theme, he appealed to all the panchayat representatives to ensure both birth and death registrations in their areas. Speaking on the 73rd and 74th Constitutional amendments, he said these had

changed the previous equations in panchayats by bringing a larger number of women in local level administration. In days to come, panchayats were going to play a critical role in formulating policies and therefore, it was important for elected members to be both aware and educated on local issues and concerns.

Dr. Solmon Prakash, Consultant Voluntary Sector, expressed satisfaction that awareness on the importance of birth registration was being taken up with a view to educating panchayat representatives. He further informed that it was a matter of pride for the people of Uttaranchal that the present Governor of the State has been personally initiating many programmes to address health issues of newborn babies. Children were being provided surgery, especially those born with cut lips (hare lips). Around twenty thousand children had been provided with free medical checkups. He concluded by saying that this was not enough and much more needs to be done to ensure the child its full range of rights as a child.

Mr. Arvind Mishra, Director, State Resource Centre, Uttaranchal, who spoke on child rights as mentioned in the UN Charter. Even at the UN level, birth registration is considered as the most important step in establishing a child's identity.

Mr. Mishra stated that the concept of child rights can be explained at two levels; rights before birth and rights which follow after birth. In the first category, the most worrying aspect is the problem of female foeticide. In the second category, the most crucial issue is birth registration. He said, the recent data tells us that the sex ratio is declining sharply. This continuous dip in the number of girl children is due several reasons, but primarily due to our societal values which have an inherent male preference in their psyche. Girl child is seen as an economic burden in the family and having the problem nipped at its initial stages has lead to increase in female foeticide cases in India

He also spoke of three important provisions that have emerged from 73rd and 74th Constitutional amendments, impacting local governance at panchayat level; (a) States to have independent election commissions for local self government (b) State financial commissions to be formed (c) Elections in panchayats to be held every 5 years with 33 per cent reservation for women. In conclusion, he explained the few basic rules that govern the child birth registration process.

Dr. Santosh Singh, ISS, intervened here to speak on the different policies and provisions of the Government which speak of and are meant to protect child rights. She spoke of the different provisions of the Fundamental rights as enshrined in our Constitution, The Directive Principles and the Five year Plans of the Governments of India which focus on the Child.

Dr. I.S. Pal, Advisor to the Health and Welfare Department, Government of Uttaranchal discussed the significance of birth registration, problem of female foeticide along with the importance of health and hygiene in rural life of Uttaranchal. He appreciated the move of Government of Uttaranchal to establish ASHA as required by the NRHM. Women social workers who will be responsible for creating awareness and carrying out health related activities in the village.

Mr. Debabrata Roy, Rural Development Institute, Dehradun, discussed different problems specific to girl child and the measures by which we can rectify them. He believed that we cannot tackle all problems related to the girl child, so some crucial problems have to be prioritised. We can plan and workout our task by motivating cooperation among all.

Working Groups

Group I Micro Planning, Child Rights and Right to Education

Chairperson. Ms.Malati Singh

The discussion was initiated by the chairperson Ms Malati Singh. In this group all matters related to micro planning and child rights were discussed. The participants from the field said that the main problems in this regard are that panchayats have limited budget. Even if there are plans and policies, they fail to be implemented due to lack of cooperation among the officials and also between the people and officials. Micro plans at the village level have the aim of addressing the needs of every member of the village.

Voices from the field

Panchayat members responded to the theme of the group discussion and articulated the problems they faced on the ground.

These are:

- Schools in many villages are located very far from the main land
- Girls suffer the most, as their education gets disrupted because parents hesitate to send out girls to far off places where security is poor
- Basic amenities including drinking water are lacking in schools
- Teachers are not regular, a few teachers are invariably always absent
- Suggestion was made to appoint local teachers in hill areas
- Mid-day meal schemes appeared to have failed
- Women members in panchayats complained that they face hostile reactions from male member if they initiate any new activity
- Male panchayat members do talk of gender equality but in reality they resent women panchayat members taking a lead role in the administration.

Group II Female Foeticide and Universal Birth Registration

Chairperson: Dr. Santosh Singh said that we cannot hold either men or women responsible for foeticide but we are collectively responsible for such brutal acts. It is tragic that even the educated urban masses indulge in such practices; rather our data tells us that it is more prevalent in cities. People must be warned that they should not play with the balance of sex in nature. It is very worrying to see the declining female sex ratio. She said it is high time that we should openly come out against such malpractices. We must realise our responsibilities. However, panchayat representatives have far greater role and responsibilities; it is they who have to provide leadership to the village community in this regard.

Voices from the field

- Many participants said that till a few years back they were not aware of ultrasound techniques in the hill areas
- Ultrasound is a money making machine and doctors are known to even misguide parents on the sex of the foetus, so that money can be made through termination of the pregnancies
- On taking a second opinion a couple was shocked to know that their male foetus was falsely declared as female by the doctor so that he could make money out of doing abortion
- Women are tortured, treated inhumanly for giving birth to girl child
- On the issue birth registration, parents have a tendency not to get their girls registered, whereas they register boys on time

Group III : Child Trafficking, Child Labour and Early Marriage

Chairperson : Dr. Paramita Majumdar

Discussions on the theme assigned to this group opened with Dr. Mazumdar asking as to how many of the participants were married after the age of 18 years, very few hands went up!

Participants in the group formed a mock panchayat and hosted a play in which they tried to show what measures are to be taken if a child is found missing in a village.

In the interactive session that followed, panchayat representatives felt that:

- Most cases of trafficking go unnoticed in rural areas
- Many girls are sold both within and outside the country
- They were surprised how in many North-eastern states there is no record of missing girls/women, despite the alarming rate at which the female population is missing in this region
- Problems faced by women activists were highlighted. Local goons and uneducated persons harass social activists and oppose any move towards social reform

- Suggestion was put forth to organise counseling for couples for gender sensitization, specially since medically people need to know as to who of the two parents is responsible for the sex of the unborn child
- What chemistry determines the sex of a child etc., so that girls are not tortured for (supposedly being responsible) for giving birth to female child and suggestion was made that reservation quota for 'women in panchayats' should be increased to 50 percent. More women to come to mainstream politics.

This session was followed by the presentation of group reports and discussions with Dr.A.N. Roy as chair.

Valedictory Session

Chairperson: Mr. U.R.Bhangerwal

Director, Emmanuel Social Action (ESA), Dehradun

Speaker: Brig K.G. Behl, President Consumer Forum, Dehradun

Mr. Behl, discussed the problem of AIDS as the most dangerous threat in present times for the people of the hill areas of Uttaranchal, since people are migrating to other regions and are becoming increasingly vulnerable to such diseases. But unfortunately there is a complete lack of awareness on this subject in rural areas. There are many diseases mother and child during pregnancy which can be cured by medicines. But lack of medical facility disallows it. Health and hygiene is another very important aspect which has to be dealt with utmost care in these hill tracts. Brig.Behl said that women do not have to hold back rather should come forward to demand their rights. They should have their own opinion and must make decisions affecting their lives.

Mr. U. R. Bhangerwal, requested all the female panchayat representatives to carry on their duties with diligence and responsibility. He congratulated them for their performance, reminding that they had to work harder in the future. Vast responsibilities lie on the shoulders of the women representatives. They have to prove themselves and lead the society towards betterment.

The Uttaranchal State Convention came to an end with Dr.Santosh Singh taking the stage and once again asking the participants to voice women's empowerment slogan - *Nari shakti amar rahe ! Hum sab ak hai!* "*panchayat raj, humara raj!*"



2. Rajasthan

Jaipur, 26 May 2005,

Dr. Santosh Singh introduced the theme of child rights and birth registration and shared that every year Institute of Social Sciences organises 'Women's Empowerment day Celebrations' from 24 to 25 April in New Delhi.

Welcome Address

Prof. B.S. Baviskar, Senior Fellow, ISS

Prof. Baviskar, welcomed Dr. Pawan Surana, Chairperson, Rajasthan State Commission for Women as Chief Guest and all the participants of the convention. He examined the status of women's empowerment and said that it would still take a long time for women to be fully empowered. Women continued to face discrimination, opposition and caste and gender based violence in society.

In panchayats, women are not being appreciated for their initiatives and women belonging to lower caste are often made to sit on the floor, even if they are the president (sarpanch) of the panchayat. Higher caste panchayat members sit on chairs. An incidence from Madhya Pradesh was cited; Gundiya Bai, a *dalit* woman sarpanch was prevented from hoisting the national flag on Independence day by upper caste panchayat members. The reason was that upper caste members felt that the flag would be polluted by her touch.

Prof Baviskar concluded his address by emphasising the importance of birth registration as this gave the child not only an identity but also a legal status as a citizen of the country.

Dr. Pawan Surana, Chairperson, Rajasthan State Commission for Women, expressed happiness at being able to meet elected women representatives in such large numbers at once place. The theme of the Convention, she said was an important one, but before going deep into the topic, she wished to place a few points for the consideration of the women members of the panchayat.

The first of these is an incident which occurred in Gokunda tehsil of Udaipur district. Omli, the sarpanch of the village was declared a 'witch', she was humiliated and tortured by the village community, made to pay a fine of Rs.20,000.00 and her family was forced to feed the entire village as

a punishment. Upon investigation into the real cause behind all this happenings, it was found that actually this was a conspiracy against her by the vice-president of the panchayat. The objective was that by accusing her of being a witch, and thereby the vice president would damage her popularity in the village. It appeared that Omli had been able to get the construction of a road sanctioned for her village, this made the vice president jealous of her achievement and he wanted to get the upper hand in the panchayat.

She related another instance of how on the day of voting in a certain village, some goons abducted in broad daylight a woman sarpanch, beat her up badly and prevented her from voting. She was however, rescued by the police and finally did cast her vote. Dr. Surana cautioned women and said, the objective of all such incidents is to push women back into suppressive and submissive positions in society and women need to take care here.

On the issue of birth registration, she appealed to the elected women representatives to understand it is of utmost importance that children have birth certificates. To substantiate her point, she narrated how she once forced the police to register a case of kidnapping of a minor girl, only because the parents could produce her birth certificate which proved that the girl was a minor. Medical examinations being conducted to prove the age of a girl child do not always yield the right results and so are not reliable.

Ending her address in the Inaugural session, Dr. Surana once again asked women members in panchayats to ensure that not only should births be officially registered but the same should be done for marriages. Voices should be raised against child marriages and people's awareness on concerns around the child should be taken up at village level.

Voices from the field

- Plight of widows, who are often thrown out of their matrimonial homes in order to prevent them from laying claims to their deceased husband's property
- suggestion was made to open non formal education centres for non literate panchayat members
- Micro credit schemes to be started to facilitate enhancement of women's incomes.
- State Commission for Women was asked to intervene in this regard and women were asked to enroll in Sarva Sikha Abhiyan programmes.

The Inaugural session ended with a vote of thanks by Dr. Paramita Majumdar of ISS.

Special Session

Chairperson: Prof B.S. Baviskar

Speakers: Dr.S.C. Mathur

Director, State Institute of Health and Family Welfare, Jaipur

Dr. Narendra Gupta of Prayas, Chittorgarh, NRHM.

Dr. S.C. Mathur, thanked the Institute of Social Sciences for giving him the opportunity of speaking to so many sisters from different panchayats in Rajasthan. He shared that at the Institute where he works, his area of specialisation is public health.

He informed the panchayat members that the NRHM was launched by the Prime Minister on 30 May 2005, and that in Rajasthan, it is was due for launch very soon. The main objective of this new Health Mission was to bring about fundamental changes in the health services provided in rural areas with the active involvement of panchayats in the delivery of these improved health services. Dr. Mathur explained in detail NRHM with a view to highlighting the role of panchayats and how they can make the mission a success.

The first point of importance, he said, is that the sub-centre which is the last unit of implementation of the health services will be located in the village. Village will be in charge of it and each sub centre will take care of four to five neighbouring villages, catering to a minimum population of 5000 persons. A woman health worker, will be appointed by the village to take care of delivery of health services; one such worker will be appointed for a population of 1000 persons. She will be called ASHA and will be a woman from the village. Second point of relevance to panchayats is that every village will form Sanitation and Health Committees. The Committee will comprise panchayat members, village health workers, NGO representatives etc. The Committee will meet periodically to discuss issues like clean air, pollution, drinking water, sanitation, water borne diseases etc., The Committee will also be assessing efficiency of existing health facilities. Based on the their recommendations, strategic planning will be done for the village sanitation programmes.

Dr. Mathur informed the panchayat members that the Union government will provide special funds amounting to 2.5 per cent of their total budget to all district administrations who will be implementing the NRHM. It was to be hoped that the political differences of State and Central government would not come in the way of resource allocation and effective implementation of the NRHM.

In Rajasthan, he informed, the elected representation there will be 40,000 ASHA workers, and the country is expecting to achieve 100 per cent births to take place in health centres latest by 2008.

Dr. Narendra Gupta, appreciated the efforts of ISS in coming all the way to Rajasthan to hold programmes for panchayat members. He began by analysing government investments in health and said, that in India budgetary spending on medical and health services is less than 1 per cent of the total budget. To be precise it is only 0.9 per cent of the total budget. Even in this 0.9 per cent, major amount is spent on running and maintaining big hospitals in major cities and district headquarters. As a result, enough funds are not available to provide primary health services in villages. According to World Health Organisation (WHO) in order to provide minimum and essential health services to all its citizens, a country has to have at least 5 per cent of its budget allocated to health sector. Even by that standard 0.9 per cent is very low.

Highlighting the NRHM, he said the most significant aspect of the mission is the emphasis on total involvement of the village administration in this new initiative, through various committees. As mentioned by Dr. Mathur, the objective of NRHM is to better the relationship between providers of health services and the community. As of today he said, this link is very weak.

Committees at ward level will be headed by the panchayat member of that ward. Other members of the committee will be selected from the different streets and localities of that ward. Efforts will be made to have enough representation from all sections of the community including women, backward caste, Scheduled Castes etc.

As mentioned by Dr. Mathur, the objective of NRHM is to better the relationship between providers of health services and the community. As of today this link is very weak. The aim of the NRHM is to create demand among villagers to seek for quality health services and to make quality health services a fundamental right of every citizen of this country. This was mentioned very clearly in the documents of NRHM. Health is a very serious and burning problem in the country. Unless we all take it with same seriousness only then can we find a proper solution to it. Hence I request you to acquire as much acknowledge as possible and take keen interest in the activities of the Mission.

Voices from the field

- Problems related to prohibition were expressed as a major health concern. Liquor policy had an adverse impact on family and community health and home economics. Panchayat members were asked to motivate and organise themselves to put pressure on local

administration and fight for a ban on liquor vending.

- Lack of Employment opportunities was a major problem in rural areas.

The Plenary session concluded with a vote of thanks from Ms. Bharati Mahapatra of ISS. Participants were organized into three groups for further discussions.

Working Groups

Group I Micro Planning, Child Rights and Right to Education

Chairperson: Dr. Kanchan Mathur, Fellow, Institute of Development Studies (IDS), Jaipur

Rapporteur: Mr. Yadu Raj Sharma

A brief background to the topic of child rights was given first. These rights were first ensured to children by the United Nations. Leaving out a few countries, in all around 192 nations have ratified the UN Convention on Child Rights (CRC). India too has ratified the Convention. This means in any approved courts of a given country cases can be filed for the protection of child rights. It is mandatory for the Government of India to submit regular reports on the conditions of child rights in the country. Since 1992, lot of work has been done in India on child rights and reports are sent to UN on a regular basis.

All rights pertaining to children can be broadly classified as right to live and survive; right to equal participation; right to development; and right to security and care. Right to survival was the first point discussed by the group. Role of panchayats in ensuring the right to survival to children was discussed. How micro planning at panchayat level can ensure child rights. Panchayats can participate in vaccination, nutrition programmes and *anganwadi* maintenance and functioning. Panchayats have formal right to interfere in the functioning of *anganwadis* and schools of the villages.

Concept of development of a village was to be seen not merely by the road construction, digging of wells etc, it should be more holistic and view the total welfare of the village as people with good health, nutrition, education etc.

Concern was expressed that the emergency fund of Rs.5000 usually deposited by district administration for use by panchayats was not being utilized. Discussions also focused on right to quality education; which will promote personality development of the child.

Group II Female Foeticide and Universal Birth Registration.

Chairperson: Dr. D.K. Jain, Chief Registrar, Directorate of Census, Rajasthan

Rapporteur: Mr. Devender Joshi

Dr. Jain highlighted the importance of birth registration by explaining that the female population per 1000 males is less in Jaipur but in areas like Dungarpur and Banswada, the female population is comparatively higher. Unless all births are registered we can not find out the reasons for such difference in sex ratio. Another point raised by him was that traditionally communities maintain a record called *vansavali* where family trees, births/deaths in the families are recorded. Similarly birth/death registration is a legalised record from government side. Birth registration has equal or more significance than *vansavali* so everybody has to understand that registering births/deaths is a must. He informed that there are three types of forms to be used for three different purposes.

- Pink form to be filled in within 21 days of the child birth giving details like name of the mother and father of the child, sex of the child etc., if possible name of the child.
- Blue form to be filled in case of death of a child. This form helps in finding out the reasons for child death and government can devise suitable strategies to prevent/reduce these deaths.
- Yellow form has to be filled in case of death of an adult family member. This will help in deciding the ownership rights of property and land, in opening bank accounts and solving property disputes.

Explaining the other advantages of birth registration, Dr. Jain mentioned that birth registration provides proof of age which will help in proving the age of the girl at marriage in case there is any complaint of child marriage. By any reason if the child birth is not registered within 21 days, then up to 30 days one can register the child birth by paying two rupees and submitting an affidavit in the Block Development Office (BDO).

He also informed that the Government has taken the initiative of visiting every household and registering births/deaths and also issuing birth certificates for children upto 10 years and age or below. Emphasis has been given to create awareness among villagers about the importance of birth registration.

Group III Child trafficking, Child labour and early Marriage

Chairperson: Dr. Narendra Gupta, Prayas, Chittorgarh

The group comprised delegates from districts like Tonk, Sirohi, Malpura etc. In addition to the topic assigned, the discussion also focused on education.

Issues such as ratios on number of schools per child, teachers to students, distances on at which schools exist in rural areas; dropout of girl child, etc. were discussed. Child labour law (1986) and the subsequent amendments made thereafter to protect children from child labour and their right to security were also discussed. Regarding child trafficking in the context of Rajasthan participants expressed grave concern on how certain communities were pushing their children into sex work which invariably lead to trafficking. It was also felt that there is a lack of institutional support to rehabilitate rescued children. Non-availability of employment opportunities in these areas where child trafficking is flourishing. Suggestions were made to make education more meaningful and skill oriented for children. Equality in accessing educational opportunities should be ensured. Panchayat members regretted that less privileged children did not get opportunity for quality education.

Special Session

Panchayats and Child Rights

Dr. Paramita Majumdar, in her introductory remarks to this session informed the participants of the age related discrepancies that existed in the Indian law and how these need to be examined in the context of child rights. This she pointed out has caused some confusion on definition of the age of the child. The Indian Penal Code defines that any child below the age of seven years is considered a child and any crime committed by that child is not treated as a crime. As per Army of India recruitment policy 16 years is defined as the minimum eligible age for getting recruited into the Army. Article 21 of the Indian Constitution defines that upto 14 years of age, an individual is considered as a child. As far as the voting rights and minimum eligible age for marriage is concerned; child becomes an adult. So a child here is defined as being below 18 years.

Although there are some variations in the definitions of a child, all agree that child rights have to be protected. Indian government has started making serious effort to protect child rights since 1974. The Government has formulated various policies like the National Policy on Education in 1986, to provide the right to education, National Policy on Child Labour in 1987, to protect the right of care and protection. In the year 1993, it has formulated the National Policy on Nutrition, to take care of the right to live and survive and now in the year 2005, it has come up with the National Rural Health Mission.

The Indian Government has around 120 schemes to protect all the rights of children such as right to education, protection, equal participation and right to survival etc. Panchayat members have to be fully aware of all these schemes then only they will be able to disburse their duties efficiently in protecting the child rights and reducing the mortality rate of children below five years, mortality rate of mothers during the child birth, child trafficking etc.

Trafficking of children is on the rise due to increased global tourism, and children are also trafficked to facilitate drug trafficking. So panchayat members have to be fully aware of the dangers and they have to take proper measures to stop the children in their villages from falling prey to traffickers and also to drug addiction.

Ms. Suchi Sharma, Additional Director (Child) Department of Women and Child Development, Government of Rajasthan congratulated ISS for being able to mobilize and involve so many elected representative of Rajasthan in their programme. She recalled Mahatma Gandhi's famous quote that 'if a woman is educated whole family gets educated'. Ms. Sharma laid emphasis on the child's health and linked it to mother's health during pregnancy. Health care of mothers would ensure the child's right to be born healthy. She said in spite of government's effort the birth registration is yet to take off in Rajasthan.

Dr. Paramita Majumdar closed the session with vote of thanks.

Valedictory Session

Chairperson Prof. B.S. Baviskar

Speaker: Dr. Satish Kumar, State representative of UNICEF.

Dr. Kumar congratulated ISS for organizing such a useful programme for the elected representatives of Rajasthan. He said, in most of the cases in Rajasthan, the functioning of PRIs is not satisfactory. There is no marked improvement in health programmes such as vaccination and nutrition programmes. If we take the case of Kerala, there is a marked improvement. The reason being the PRIs in Kerala are very active and aware. They regularly supervise the functioning of *anganwadis*, whereas in Rajasthan PRIs have no involvement in the management and maintenance of *anganwadis* and they do not supervise the work of either the *anganwadi* worker or female health worker. With commitment and will power even PRIs of Rajasthan can achieve what PRIs of Kerala have done.

Panchayats have an unlimited power in the development of their village and they can play a major role in improving the situation. As pointed out in previous sessions, development means improvement in the health of pregnant women and children, reduction in the rate of women dying during child birth,

increase in the life span and education; all these are indicators of development in real terms. Besides, if a woman acquires the decision making power related to the health and education of the family and children, then that is a sure indicator of development.

He said information in itself was not effective unless, it was effectively utilised. In Rajasthan, there are only 921 females per 1000 males as per the 2001 census. If we take the case of girls of up to six years of age, which could be the number is still less due to continuous foeticide of female child. It is only 909 girls per every 1000 boys as per the 2001 census. In comparison to male population, there is continuous decline in the female population in the last several years. You get this kind of information only when you register the births/deaths of the child, compile it and analyse the information. Accordingly you can devise strategies to counter the situation. That's why it is very important to register the birth of the child and establish its first identity (*see Annex III*). India, he informed, is committed to achieve 100 per cent birth registration by the year 2010, and plans to issue birth certificate to all children by then. There are many advantages in having the proof of age in getting school admissions, preparing ration cards, settling property disputes. In Rajasthan only 60 per cent births get registered.

Rajasthan has one of the highest rate of maternal mortality during child birth. It is 607 deaths per 10,00,000 child births. It is second to only Uttar Pradesh. In Uttar Pradesh the rate is 700 deaths/ 10,00,000 child births. On the other hand, the national average of the rate is 437 as per the National Population Policy 2000, Government of India. There is a Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act (MTPA) in India which states that the termination of pregnancy has to happen only in health centres or hospitals under the supervision of health professionals. But due to various social and economic reasons women do not go to health centres. So mere enactment of law does not ensure its implementation unless there is an awareness about the Act and its implications etc., both in the society and among the health professionals responsible for providing such health services. Another important issue which Dr. Kumar focussed on the issue of safe and clean drinking water and having toilets in the premises of every household. Toilets in the house premises are very essential for the safety, security and privacy of women and children. He requested all participants to gain knowledge and awareness about all these issues and then share this information with others in the community.

Vote of Thanks

Dr. Santosh Singh gave the vote of thanks and asked the delegates to once again wave their flags reaffirm and that '*Panchayati Raj is our Raj; Long live Women power*'.



3. Karnataka

Bangalore, 30 May 2005

Dr. U.R. Anantha Murthy, eminent Kannada writer and Jnanapith awardee and Chairperson presided over the Inaugural session. Dr. George Mathew, the Director, ISS, Mr. Meenakshi Sundaram, Retd. IAS Officer, Ms. Susheelamma, Director, Sumangali Sevashram, Ms. Manjula, President, all women gram panchayat of Gopalapura, Mandya District and Mr. G. Prakasham, Director of Economics and Statistics and Registrar of Births and Deaths were some of the the guests who graced the celebrations.

Dr. K. Subha, Regional Co-coordinator, ISS, welcomed the guests and all the participants of the convention.

Dr. Mathew, gave a brief introduction of the programme, citing at the outset that West Bengal was the first state in India to introduce panchayat raj in 1978. Seven years later, in 1985, the panchayat raj system of local governance was introduced in Karnataka, under this State Act, 25 per cent of seats were reserved for women. Mr. Nazeer Sab, who was the Panchayati Raj Minister in Mr. Ramakrishna Hegde's Ministry, was apprehensive that there might not be enough women to contest these many seats in the elections. However, he was surprised when the elections took place in February 1987, the number of women who won the seats was more than 25 per cent. This was a historic event not only in India, but also in the whole world.

Despite many uncertainties, the demand for 33 per cent reservation for women in local governance continued, and finally on 24 April 1993, the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments came into force. This was the first major step which gave women political visibility by ensuring for all times that one million women will be integrated into local decision making processes. To mark this historical entry of women into the panchayati raj system, the Institute of Social Sciences instituted the Women's Political Empowerment Day Celebrations.

In Karnataka, the responsibility of registering the births was given to the municipalities in urban areas and to the Revenue Department in the rural areas. Registration of births should become a part of the family and official culture. Birth registration certificate is a necessity, infact it is the

first identity of the child. Dr. Mathew said since panchayats look after local governance, people should demand that birth registration responsibility rightly should be given to panchayats, and the whole process computerised to ensure that records remain intact and people are not inconvenienced by officials and made to pay for every movement of their files.

Elected representatives were asked to take an oath to prevent cases of female foeticide in their villages and to resolve to make this a part of the national culture of the country.

Mr. Meenakshi Sundaram, said that it was in 1987, that the issue of reservation for women first came up for public discussion.

The law on registration of births and deaths came into force in 1969 itself. However, for fuller and more efficient implementation of the law, powers must be given to panchayats to register the births. Not only the births and deaths but also all marriages should be registered. Mr. Sundaram expressed hope that women will come forward to shoulder all these responsibilities.

Ms. Susheelamma, Director, Sumangali Sevashram, reiterated that birth registrations should be done at the village level. Panchayat members should be educated on this subject. Birth and death certificates are necessary for all. When admitting orphans to orphanages, the death certificates of the parents are essential.

Ms. Manjula, the Chairperson of the All Women Gram Panchayat, Gopalapura, said that all members who were elected unopposed in her gram panchayat were women, promising that her gram panchayat would give priority to birth registration.

Keynote Address

Mr. G. Prakasham, Director of Economics and Statistics and Registrar of Births and Deaths, who delivered the Keynote Address said, children are the assets of the nation. Every child that is born in the country should have the right to blossom. This is the responsibility of the State. The first thing required to fulfill this responsibility is to give a document of recognition to the child when he/she is born, says the first citizen and President of India, Mr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam. The birth registration certificate is an important legal and statistical document. A disturbing fact revealed by Census 2001, is that the sex ratio in all the states, including Karnataka is decreasing. This means that the determination of sex of the foetus and female foeticide are being carried out clandestinely. As a result, the female population is decreasing. This is a matter of deep concern.

This is the right time to make the panchayati raj institutions to get directly involved in collecting statistics about pregnancies within their jurisdiction, in ensuring the safe birth of children and proper medical care

to the mother and in registration of the birth of the new born. He expressed his personal opinion that the Health and Revenue Departments should be revamped so as to make the panchayat institutions their primary units and thus the responsibility of registering births should be handed over to panchayats uniformly all over the country.

Dr. U. R. Anantha Murthy, said, when the birth of a child is registered, it becomes the citizen of this country. This is the first right, which the nation gives to the child. We have witnessed cultural decentralisation in our state even earlier. In the same way there should be administrative decentralisation.

Mr. Vidyasagar gave vote of thanks to the speakers and participants for the Inaugural session. Participants were divided into four groups to discuss thematic issues given to each group.

Special Session I

Rural Health Mission and Panchayats

Chairperson: Dr.B.S.Bhargava, Senior Fellow, Institute of Social Sciences

Speakers: Dr. Devendra Babu of Institute for Social and Economic Change, Dr. N.J.Usha Rao, Director, National Institute for Integrated Development.

Dr. Babu, regretted that human resources in the country had not developed to full potential. The health of human beings should be good and they should get good education. Health, family welfare and child welfare are improving in Karnataka but this is not enough.

However in the sex ratio, we see less number of females compared to males. Death rate among children is high, rate of birth is high, and the rate of mother's death during childbirth is high. From these points of view, the development in Karnataka is not satisfactory. Panchayats have been given the responsibility of health. More powers and finances have to be provided to panchayats for efficient functioning.

Dr. Usha Rao, asked, what are the panchayats doing for women and children? In society, men and women are equal. Is only a boy necessary for glory of the family? Is a girl not necessary? Hence, more care should be taken about the health of the female child without discrimination. Then the health of all children born will be good. It is not enough if nutritious food is given to the pregnant women. Even after 50 years of freedom, we are still in the stage of providing drinking water. Rural women still do not have toilets in their homes.

Dr. B .S .Bhargava, said, in 1987, only 25 per cent women were in administration, now it is 45 per cent. Karnataka has not been included in the National Rural Health Mission as yet, it is expected that very soon

Karnataka will also be included. The role of women in this campaign should be determined. If women do not insist, the Government will not empower them.

Documentary film, “*Ab Desh Chalana Hai*” was shown. Film was on women who so far were running the households were now poised to run the country. The reservation of seats provided for women in the Panchayati Raj Institutions all over the country have given this opportunity to them. Over 10 lakh women members were now ready to take over the reins of administration, this was the message of the film.

Special Session II

Panchayats and Child Rights

Chairperson: Mr. G. Prakasham

Speakers: Dr. Manu Kulkarni, Honorary Senior Fellow, ISS

Ms. Ayyamma, Vice-President of State level Association of Working Children (Bhima Sangha).

Dr. Kulkarni, said that every child has a right to be born. Thereafter it has a right to registration of its birth. It has a right to know who its parents are. It has right to registration of its name and also its caste. The registration of the birth of the child should be done at the place where it is born. It gives the child its nationality. At present the village accountant and revenue officers are the registration officers, Gram Panchayats are not. He advocated that gram panchayats should be given power to register births and all other civil registrations.

Ms. Ayyamma, said that in five districts of Karnataka, there are unions of child workers. Children’s Panchayats have been formed. Representatives of children take their problems to the gram panchayats. We conduct survey of dropouts and we try to send them back to school. In Kundapur the number of working children is getting reduced. In Sirsi we are fighting against female foeticide. We are providing food to children who migrate, fiftysix gram panchayats are encouraging these activities. We are also drawing up programmes and implementing them in a concerted way.

The authority for birth registration should be given to the panchayats. Panchayats should exercise these powers and facilitate village people to register the birth of their children. In Mysore Corporation, the statistics of births are being included in the ‘Bhoomi’ programme.

Working Groups

Group I *Universal Birth Registration, Micro Planning & Child Rights*

Chairperson: Dr. K. N. M. Raju, ISEC

Rapporteur: Ms. B. Bhagya, Member, Madhawara Gram Panchayat

The discussion was on the general preference for sons over daughters among couples. It was felt that there is a son preference in all communities across the world. The son preference is found to be the strongest among the cultures in Japan, China and India. But unlike in China and Japan, Indian society has preference for both male and female children. Indian society being patriarchal, son has specific religious and family duties to perform. At the same time, giving away daughter in marriage is also considered to be the most meritorious '*dana*', called '*kanyadan*'. Therefore, both male and female children are equally preferred in India.

The group also discussed the birth registration as the first child right. Some of the members observed that parents in villages are celebrating first birthday, but are not aware that they should register the birth of the child. This is because of lack of need to produce birth certificate at the time of school admissions. Therefore, the group members felt that teachers should be educated to advise parents to produce birth certificate at the time of admission. The other reasons for unregistered births are that delivery takes place at home and usually woman goes to her natal home for it. In this process, many births are not registered.

Group II *Female Foeticide*

Chairperson: Dr. N. J. Usha Rao, NIIRD, Hyderabad

Rapporteur: Ms. V. Sarojamma, Member, Muthanallur Gram Panchayat.

Ms. Sarojamma, said that their group felt that there should be no discrimination on the grounds of sex and that there should be no determination of sex of the foetus and no female foeticide. The girl child should be given equal love, affection, attention and education so that she will also be as responsible and as intelligent as the male child.

Group III *Child Trafficking and Early Marriage*

Chairperson: Mr. Vasudeva Sharma, Child Rights Trust.

Rapporteur: Ms. Nagaratna, Member, Chandapur Gram Panchayat

Ms. Nagaratna said that the group felt that trafficking means transporting children and women for obtaining benefit or profit. Child marriages are in existence since the parents feel like getting rid of burden.

Group IV Child Labour and Right to Education

Chairperson: Dr. Ramesh Kanabargi, Center for Social Development

Rapporteur: Ms. M. Renuka, Member, Kolar, Gram Panchayat

The group discussed issues related to Child Labour and Right to Education. The members were from rural background and were aware of the problem of child labour and child schooling. Surprisingly, they attributed the problem to the existing poverty and ignorance of parents and also slackness of village level officials.

They were also not aware of the powers that they have been assigned by the State Government. One of the member Ms. Radhamma, Member, Gram Panchayat, Chandapura said in this discussion we came to know that powers has been given to them to see that the teachers take proper classes and that the child has the right to education. She also said that the parents should send the child to school and not to work.

The group was informed about the Constitutional obligations. In post Independence period universalising primary schooling and eliminating child labour have remained two most important national goals which each successive government (irrespective of party affiliation) have been trying fulfil.

Mr. Vasudeva Sharma, said that children of today are citizens of tommorrow. Education to children is nothing but education to the family and the country. He appreciated the efforts of the various groups in discussing these issues.

He further said that till now nobody took the issues concerning children seriously with the result that the issues did not find a prominent place in the election manifestoes of any party. But now the situation is different. In the general elections held in 2004 almost all political parties included the issues of the rights of children in their election manifestoes. Most of the issues relating to the rights of children have to be addressed at the village level and hence gram panchayats will have an important role to play.

The Convention ended with a vote of thanks by Mr. Ishwarachandra Vidyasagar.



4. Andhra Pradesh

Hyderabad, 20 June 2005

The Convention was co-organised by Centre for World Solidarity (CWS), in association with PLAN International and PEACE under the aegis of Institute of Social Sciences, New Delhi. The participants were sarpanches, ward members, Mandal Parishad Territorial Constituencies (MPTCs) and Mandal Praja Parishads (MPPs) from 13 districts of Andhra Pradesh.

Dr. Rukmini Rao, Centre for World Solidarity (CWS), gave the opening remarks, by thanking Mr. G Vinod, Minister of Labour, for accepting the invitation to attend the State- level Convention and share his solidarity in the important commitments of the Convention.

She said, it was necessary that parents have regular access to livelihoods with sufficient incomes, so that children can be given education. On the flip side, there are over a hundred students in a class for a single teacher. The need is for at least five classes in a school and it is humanly not possible for a single teacher to conduct five different classes. In order to address this issue, the Government needs to increase its outlay in schools. The new Government has promised to earmark six per cent of the Gross Domestic Products (GDP) for education, which is yet to be fulfilled. As activists we need to address three different issues i) how do we mainstream child labour into education, ii) what is the commitment of the Government to increase its financial investment in education and iii) what should be the role of community's commitment in meeting this need. Lastly, even though there is infrastructure and systems like various school and mother committees, children still lack quality education. The need of the hour is for panchayats and its communities to integrate with the efforts of the committees to provide education to the children. We should also see this process as a tool for the empowerment of women.

Also, without minimum education it is not possible to access human rights. In order that every child gets her/his right, it is important that s/he be provided basic education and it is our duty to provide the child with this opportunity.

The constant drought situation in the state of Andhra Pradesh is forcing the agriculture labour to migrate to the cities for livelihoods. But the illiterate migrants cannot find alternate livelihoods other than daily wage labour, which is also difficult to get at times. It is only education that provides livelihood opportunities bringing in economic development for individuals and to the country as well. The Constitution provides certain basic rights to improve our economic status and we are gathered here today to know our rights to development.

Mr. G Vinod, Chief Guest, Hon'ble Minister for Labour, Government of Andhra Pradesh. There is a need for creating awareness on child labour. You have done a lot towards this end but more needs to be done. It is the duty of every parent to look after their children. The opportunities for development for the child must be provided right from its birth. And it starts by giving an identity to the newborn by registering its name in the records. This helps in giving the data required to formulate policies for the welfare and development of children.

Child labour is prevalent all over the State but it is particularly severe in districts like Kurnool, Nizamabad, Adilabad and Mahboobnagar. We have initiated action in these districts as well as the rest of the districts to address the issue. I request therefore to the organisers of this Convention and all of you present here to prepare an action plan and we will assist you in meeting your goals, be it child labour, education, health, nutrition or any other issue. The State government will do its best to help in your efforts and my Department in particular will do everything in its capacity to complement and strengthen your efforts.

Dr. Bidyut Mohanty, ISS

Since 1994, after the 73rd Constitutional Amendment was passed ISS and the elected women of the panchayati raj institutions decided to celebrate 24 April as Women's Political Empowerment Day (WPEEDC). It was on this day that law was made ensuring not less than one third of the total seats for women in the panchayats. It is red-letter day in the history of women's movement because that law enables one million women to get elected in each tenure.

The panchayats have been given a set of 29 subjects like food security, industry, child welfare, etc. And since the elected women members were first timers we thought of making them aware of these subjects as well as their responsibilities. We are talking about one million women – and they can become agents of social change and transform the face of the village drastically.

Each ensuing year since 1994, Women's Political Empowerment Day programme has taken up themes touching upon the 29 subjects that come under the jurisdiction of panchayats. Women from all over India come together to discuss these issues and share their own experiences. Last year about 1500 women representatives had come to Delhi. This year also we have conducted Conventions in six states—Uttaranchal, Rajasthan, Orissa, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu in addition to the national convention.

Dr. P Somashekhar Reddy, Director, Health, Government of Andhra Pradesh, explained the finer details regarding the Registration of Births and Deaths Act. He said that the responsibility of administering the rights of the child start from conception itself. Many parents are violating the rights of the child by resorting to female foeticide through abortions. It is a trend that needs to be curtailed as it infringes on rights of the child, especially the girl child, to live. He said that birth (and death) registration helps the Government to acquire reliable data in order to formulate various policies and in delivering the same, effectively. He gave the participants details of the format to register births or deaths. Responsibility of identifying and registering births is given to municipal offices, MROs, village secretaries, *anganwadi* workers of the Women and Child Welfare Department. He shared that a national campaign was launched on 14 November 2003, to create awareness on this issue which resulted in registrations of 6,42,239 births in Andhra Pradesh alone.

Dr. K Tirupataiah, Director, State Institute of Rural Development (SIRD), Hyderabad, instead of delivering a formal speech set the mood for an interactive session. He posed humorous questions and got funny answers, and then went on to make more serious observations!

The session touched upon the responsibility of the panchayat members in registering births, pregnancies, about the need for panchayat members to keep people informed on schemes and policies. Panchayat members were questioned if they were aware of the circular issued by the Panchayat Department for birth registration.

He requested panchayat representatives to ensure, with the co-operation of all concerned, hundred per cent birth registration in their area.

Participants expressed that there is no transparency in the democratic functioning of panchayats. People work according to their whims and fancies. There is a total lack of communication and those who question get a raw deal.

The speaker finally urged panchayat representatives to access their right to information and not remain ignorant on any issue of panchayat administration.

Ms. Sudha Murali, UNICEF, Hyderabad, informed the house about UNICEF's mission for the welfare of children and marginal communities. After India ratified the UN Child Rights Convention, it took up some programmes for the welfare and development of children and one of the programmes was the 'right to birth registration'. In Andhra Pradesh, as compared to the other Southern states, the rate of birth registration is a mere 46 per cent. The reason primarily is because most people are not aware of the need for birth registration and its benefits. The right to birth registration not only gives an identity to the child but also protects it from exploitation. A birth certificate has more importance than say either a ration card or a passport.

Children are an important human resource and it is important that we nurture them right from their infancy and a birth certificate ensures a child's right to opportunities and development.

Mr. G Bapuji, Deputy Director, Census, Government of Andhra Pradesh. Why registration of births and deaths? Mr. Bapuji asked. The practice of census gathering is not only prevalent in our country but in other countries too. Registration of births and deaths is an important aspect of census. The Government of India has initiated a pilot project called Multi Purpose Identity Cards in the Medak district of Andhra Pradesh. This card will be required whether to seek admission in school, get employment or passport and even to acquire a ration card. And if you do not have a birth certificate, you will not be issued this Multi Purpose Identity Card. It is necessary that registration of birth be done and information collected from the grassroots by different government departments be collated for effective implementation of policies and programmes. Panchayat members gathered were requested to take it as their responsibility and focus on the need to register all births and deaths in the state.

Mr. Prabhakar Rao, Deputy Director, Andhra Pradesh State AIDS Control Society (APSACS). HIV/AIDS is closely inter-related to the registration of births and deaths. You may ask how it is possible. HIV/AIDS has affected not just adults but young people and children as well. More than boys it is the young girls who are getting vulnerable to this ailment. The reason being that girls are being married at a very tender age to male partners, who (on account of their migration for livelihoods) could have contracted HIV/AIDS. The young bride is susceptible to transmission and this is revealed only when pre-natal tests are conducted during pregnancy. In our state more than two per cent in nearly twelve districts are reported to be HIV/AIDS positive. In young women HIV/

AIDS positive status is revealed during pre-natal tests and the newborn infant is susceptible to HIV/AIDS through breast-feeding by the mother. There are now medicines available to remedy transmission of HIV/AIDS from mothers to children.

Most of us avoid talking or revealing about this disease, because of the social stigma resulting in its unfettered spread. In order to create awareness on the issue, the State government is launching a month long campaign. As panchayat representatives you must involve in the APSACS programmes to make your village free from this disease.

Mr. Rao warned that HIV/AIDS was spreading faster than all awareness campaigns. Very soon there may not be any communities left in its relentless onslaught. He said there was need to put up a united struggle and arrest this menace to enable our families and communities to survive and be safe from the disease.

Mr. K. K. Patnaik, Regional Coordinator, ISS, Bhubaneswar

We have done tremendous work on the issue of child rights but we have not been able to address the gamut of the problems of children into our policy framework. The issue of child birth registration is critical to the access of child rights. Most of the legal frameworks are unable to address the issues because of some inherent lacunae for lack of an integrated or holistic approach. If the issue of birth certificates is addressed other issues automatically get addressed. But the whole system of the Government delivery mechanisms is bureaucratised and basic essentials fail to reach the people. All powers must be devolved to the gram panchayats. Women panchayat members should particularly be empowered to address issues without depending on panchayat secretary or officials. Women are also central to the issue of birth registration.

Working Groups

Group I Education, Early Marriage, Trafficking, and Child Labour

Resource persons: Ms. Nagamani, Mr. Shiva Reddy

Child Education

- Every child needs minimum education - gap in percentage literacy
- lack of teachers - only one teacher for classes 1 to 5
- Teachers are not regularly attending to duty
- Careless attitude of parents
- Preference for private schools
- Girls belonging to other castes, other than the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes should also be given free bus and hostel facilities

- Inadequate rooms in the schools
- Need for modification of the school syllabus - easy methods should be incorporated; and extra-curricular activities need to be promoted among the children

Role of Panchayats

- Quality of the mid-day meal should be improved
- Elected representatives should take up at the mandal level when there are no teachers in the schools
- Elected representatives should create awareness among the parents and encourage them to send children to schools
- Extra curricular activities along with education should be promoted in the schools
- Panchayats should take requisite measures to make the anganwadis function effectively.

Child Trafficking

- Children are being trafficked in the name of providing employment
- Children are being taken out of the village in the name of providing work in the relatives houses and are being sold away to the brothels.

Role of Panchayats

- A watch should be kept on any new persons entering into the village
- Information should be gathered on those going out of the village
- Create awareness among the parents about trafficking
- Employment opportunities should be generated in the villages
- Panchayats should execute works through manual labour.

Child Labour

- Due to poverty and migration of the parents, children are working as labourers
- Illiteracy of the parents
- Insufficient agriculture labour force in the village
- Compelled children as child labour.

Role of Panchayats

- In every village steps should be taken to eradicate child labour and promote education
- In every ward child labour and the reasons should be identified and all efforts should be made to solve the problem with the help of MRO/MDO and District officials.

Child Marriage

- Girls below the age of 11 years are being married, since parents lack trust on the girl child
- Marriages are being performed among the cousins to avoid dowry
- Unable to postpone marriage of the elder daughter when she has 2 or 3 younger sisters to be married contribute to early marriages for girls
- Lack of educational facilities in the village

Role of Panchayats

- Government should create awareness on the ill effects of child marriages
- Educational facilities, particularly high school, should be increased
- Cases should be registered against those performing child marriages
- Create awareness on family planning
- Discourage marriages among close relatives.

Group II Gram Panchayats and Health Issues

Resource persons: Ms.D.Vijaya Ms.Laxmi, Mr.Raju

- Lack of safe drinking water and sanitation; not paying attention to the problems arising out of polluted water; cleanliness and drainage removal, etc. got lot of prominence
- Lack of awareness on sanitation and provision of latrines
- No awareness camps on health issues
- Family planning not being promoted were also discussed
- Inadequate facilities for maternity and child care high maternal and infant mortality
- No convergence between GPs and health department officials
- No convergence between GPs and ICDS non registration of births and deaths
- Health issues not being on the agenda of the GPs
- No budgetary allocations for health issues were talked about.

Role of Panchayats

- Awareness should be created among the gram panchayats on health issues – (nutrition, breast feeding, pregnancy etc.);
- Formation of health committees health committees and effective functioning
- Work for convergence with ANM, ICDS etc.
- Budgetary allocations should be made for health; health issues should be taken up at mandal level also

- Surveys should be conducted on health issues and registers updated
- Create awareness on utilising the health care facilities provided by government; health centre should be started at village level; attention should be paid to women and child health issues; ANMs should be made accountable to the GPs
- Free medical camps should be organised.

Group III Birth, Death, Marriage Registration & Role of GPs

Resource persons: Dr. Sarah Kamala, Mr.Ramana

Birth registration is necessary for providing an identity for voting, census, marriage, education, government employment:

- To contain infant mortality
- Every person will have correct information about the time and date of his/her birth
- Helps in preventing wrong information being provided by any one
- Any one can get correct information about a person from the registers.

Death registration is necessary because it has legal, social and financial implications after the death of a person.

- Will help in getting financial assistance from govt. and other institutions like the LIC
- Helps in resolving disputes relating to family, property and employment
- Helps in protecting the interest of orphans
- Justice can be ensured in sudden deaths, murders etc.

Illegal marriages and child marriages can be controlled through registration of marriages.

- Will help in recording the number of families migrating from a village
- Will help in getting details on the migrated families – problems they are facing – so that measures can be taken to redress the same
- Government schemes and other welfare schemes can be made available to the migrating families
- Government and non-government organisations can get accurate data on migration and the related issues for taking corrective action
- Details of child labour can be obtained
- Will help in rendering service to single women.

Valedictory Session

Chairperson: Mr. M.V. Sastri, Convenor, Centre for World Solidarity

Speaker: Ms. Anita Rego, CARE, Hyderabad

Until and unless a child lives after birth, the issue of the right to birth certificate is meaningless. Out of every 100 children 66 children die within one year. And out of this nearly 44 per cent children die within one month. Most of the children who die are the ones who are delivered at home and they often die within a week or on the same day. For the child to survive, it does not need high technology. It requires simple and good care facilities like hygienic conditions during the time of delivery and good nutrition afterwards. For instance, a child is given bath immediately after birth and the child who has been warm all through in the mother's womb finds it difficult to cope, instead a simple thing to do, is to wipe the infant with a clean cloth. An animal suckles its baby the moment it is born. But a human child is not fed till such time as the elders arrive. But the first thing a child needs is the mother's milk that has good cholesterol.

Ms Rego also pointed out that it is the duty of the sarpanch and other members as village leaders to know the needs of the community especially the child and the lactating mother. It is their duty to provide conditions for healthy life within the village environs.

Mr. Sastri in his chairperson remarks observed that one thing that impressed me most is the enthusiasm displayed in the group presentations. Panchayat raj is a great institution and CWS gives top priority to it in all its programmes. The very fact that ISS has come all the way from such a long distance to share our concern also indicates their commitment to the cause.

Panchayat has gained importance because the solutions to the people's problems can only come from it and not from Delhi or Hyderabad. The communities have strength including the intelligence to address issues affecting their lives. One hopes that the enthusiasm displayed here will percolate to their community situations and address issues effectively.

Vote of Thanks

Pramila Patnaik, ISS, Bhubaneswar, gave the vote of thanks and acknowledged the commitment and concern of all participants in making the convention a success.



5. Orissa

Bhubaneswar, 25 June 2005

The Institute of Social Sciences, Bhubaneswar, in collaboration with Plan International, New Delhi and Centre for World Solidarity (CWS) Hyderabad organised a state-level convention. About 240 elected representatives of different panchayati raj institutions of Orissa along with 77 NGOs, CBOs and other organisations participated in the Convention.

The Convention was inaugurated by the Hon'ble Governor of Orissa, Shri Rameshwar Thakur, the Minister of Panchayati Raj. Dr. Damodar Rout, Ms. Namita Panda, Chairperson, Orissa State Women's Commission and Mr. Swapneswar Baya, Commissioner-cum-Secretary, Panchayati Raj Department, State Government of Orissa, attended the Convention as guests of honour. Mr. Bibhu Kalyan Mohanty, Consultant CWS extended a hearty welcome and requested the Governor to light the candle and inaugurate the Convention.

Shri K.K. Patnaik, Regional Coordinator of ISS, Bhubaneswar welcomed the chief guest, the guests of honour and all the elected representatives and others who were present.

Mr. Swapneswar Baya, Secretary, Panchayati Raj Department, Orissa Mr. Baya recalled how in 1977-78 when the subject of panchayats was not being discussed so intensively, there was the system of nomination in panchayats, and 33 per cent reservation for women was made in Orissa much before the 73rd Constitutional amendment came into effect. Another unique provision made in Orissa laws was the condition that if the president was a male, the post of vice-chairman must go to a woman. In 1977 and 2002 elections, after women got 33 per cent reservation, a lot of improvement has taken place in status of women in panchayats. In 1969 medical authorities were declared as the registration authority for childbirth registration. The Health Department will hopefully transfer birth registration to the PR department and action has already been taken in this direction, he informed.

Ms. Namita Panda, Chairperson, Orissa State Women's Commission, said time has now come when women should come forward in public life. In the 1964-65 Gram Panchayat Act, several functions (optional & mandatory) have been prescribed for GPs. Children's interest should be

protected. Every child has right to live in society. Child's right to life, birth and identity and right to development should be provided. This is the responsibility of government, NGOs, parents and society. A child has every right to establish its birth right. People should ensure proper supervision of funds allotted for child related schemes. The interest of physically handicapped children should be protected. Nutritious food and medical facility, elementary education, technical know how needs to be provided. Gender bias should be removed. Emphasis on character building is what the child needs most child labour and trafficking should be prevented. Entry of children in the age-group of 15 years in the army should not be done.

Ms. Namrata Chaddha, Member, Orissa State Women's Commission, thanked the Governor and the Hon'ble Minister for giving her an opportunity to speak and posed the following questions:

Do we have any right? I have to ask members of my family to decide as to what menu should be done for the day. We talk of right in seminars but not implementing them in our homes. She spoke on sex trafficking – and growing violence on women as a major concern.

Dr. Damodar Rout, Hon'ble Minister, Department of Panchayati Raj, Orissa, in 1969, the UN Declaration spelt out the rights of the Child at a Special session of the General Assembly. Child rights as enshrined in our Constitution and those defined by the UN Declaration on child rights need discussion. Have the rights of the child been respected and have these been fully implemented? In developing and under developed countries, are children enjoying their rights? In highlighting the role of panchayats he said that Dr. George Mathew and Dr. L.C. Jain have been advising the Orissa State government on panchayats since 1990. Panchayats were doing birth registration earlier but later this responsibility was transferred to health department. Subsequently panchayats are ready to take up this responsibility now. Let this be given to Panchayati raj institutions. Gram Panchayats have several responsibilities for children. Eventhough devolution of power is not complete, they are in a position to take those responsibilities.

Mr. Rameshwar Thakur, Hon'ble Governor of Orissa

The Governor was glad to note that ISS has been focusing in the areas of decentralised governance, grassroots democracy, federalism, human rights, women's empowerment and other contemporary and social, political and economic issues. He appreciated that the Institute has been observing 24 April every year as women's political empowerment day. He paid glowing tributes to late Rajiv Gandhi for the 73rd Constitutional amendment Act. He said that incidentally this law came when he was the Central

minister for Rural Development and Mr. Rout was the State minister of Orissa. Ratification by two thirds states was required for passage of this law. This was a very difficult task but with co-operation of all the states, ratification of the Constitutional amendment for one third reservation for women was made possible. On the question of 33 per cent reservation in Parliament and State Assemblies, he was confident that a day will come when women will go to Parliament in large numbers. Orissa is rich in natural resources but unfortunately poor in economic index. Through Panchayati raj institutions, Orissa can be developed into a rich and affluent state in a short span of time.

Special Session

Panchayats and Child Rights

Dr. Bidyut Mohanty, ISS, presided over the session and said that child rights are fundamental rights. In the case of a female child, it is sadly observed that much love is not being shown in comparison with the male child. Female child is given relatively more attention in Orissa than Haryana. Female foeticide is resorted to after one female child is born, in some states like Haryana. Female child is being killed due to several compulsions such as dowry, caste, honour, etc. Children are being sent for bonded-labour for social and economic reasons. Many people do not know why registration should be done for birth and deaths. In a recent convention held in Delhi, it was seen that unless registration of birth is done, women's empowerment cannot be achieved. In Afghanistan, Africa etc., where wars are being fought and natural disasters take place, many children are lost or dead and these can't be traced, as they are not registered. So birth and death registration is absolutely necessary.

Ms. Gitanjali Jena, Centre for Youth Social Development, Bhubaneswar. Statistics show that only 57 out of 100 births of children are registered in Orissa. In Kerala and Goa, 100 per cent registration takes place. The reason for getting horoscopes and not registration of birth done, must be examined for its cultural validity. In order to assess the status of the child in India, registration of child's birth and death is necessary. Birth registration is the first right of child for establishing identity. There are other reasons also for not getting births registered. The present arrangement of going to hospitals for birth registration has created problems for parents due to economic, social and financial reasons. Therefore, this work should be given to panchayats as these institutions are closer to the people. Panchayats have a great role to play. Women can take leadership in this work. Registration of female child is much less

due to gender discrimination. As to how many children are born alive or dead, no account is kept. People's awareness and simplification of procedure is the first important task.

Mr. P.K. Das, Director, State Labour Institute, Orissa

In 1996, Supreme Court ordered for the preparation and survey of a list of all child labour in the country. In the present context, Palli Sabha should estimate the number identify and register their names accordingly. Parents who do not send children to schools and engage them in labour, will be penalised under the law but if the law is not obeyed or implemented, who will take action? District Magistrate and police authorities are empowered to take action. But no action is taken to register the cases. The authority to collect this information is not given to police. He cited cases of Lal Mahal, Kalahandi, Balasore etc., where children in workplaces were tortured. Therefore, the Gram Panchayat and rural families be made aware of the law against child labour.

Dr. Mohanty, ISS cited cases of Sivakasi in Tamil Nadu and the carpet industry in UP where large number of children work, although there is a law against engagement of children in such industries. Panchayats can evolve strategies to address these issues.

Ms. Pramila Swain, National Alliance of Women's Organisation Member, Orissa. Some years back there was no focus on child rights. But now there is a feeling that every child should get education, nutrition and health facilities so that his/her right to existence will be strengthened. In tribal areas, the demand is first for arranging food and not education. Children help parents in child rearing, collection of food material from forest and many other odd jobs. Poverty has engulfed them. If poverty is checked, children can show interest in education. If micro planning is properly done, difficulties can be removed. Panchayats should be keenly involved in the development programme, specially in tribal areas where sources of income from forests are depleting. Birth, death and marriage registrations should be done and panchayats have an important role to play in these areas. Ms. Swain appealed to the PR representatives to take steps to reduce and restrict child labour.

Dr. Mohanty who was moderating the session said that in Kerala, about 80 per cent child deliveries are done in hospitals. Doctors should report after delivery and register child's births. Due to globalisation resulting in flow of money, children and women are exploited to a greater degree than before.

Ms. Kasturi Mohapatra, Open Learning System Institute, Orissa said that every citizen has a right to live in dignity. Food, house and clothing

are the first requisites of a minimum living standard. Child trafficking sounds bad. Child can be exploited, abused, ill-treated and left at bay.

Universal registration of deaths, births and marriage has been visualised by the year 2010, in a Vision Document prepared by National Population Policy, 2000. Birth registration is a legal evidence that a child has a name and nationality. Children are valuable resources of society. Statistics show that child-labour numbering about 4.40 million in slums, have no birth registration certificate, hence they are deprived of their rights. Most of them have no parents or either one of them. Some children involved in offences were required to produce birth certificate in courts. Education certificate produced was not accepted as they had no birth certificate. Registration gives children right to property. Police officers put young children of 16 years in jail by increasing age to 18 years. Industries, factories etc., also employ children below 18 years. Early marriage can be restricted and prevented if there is birth certificate. Articles 17 and 18, of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1992, emphasise the registration of births. This has become very important in the context of increasing trafficking of children. At the national level, National Commission on Children and state level commissions on children should be established to protect and monitor child rights. Legislations for protection of child rights are being contemplated at state levels. Goa State Government has already enacted such a law. Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act, 1994 (PNDT) is existing which needs to be strengthened in all states. Members of NGOs/CBOs should be involved in these areas.

Ms. Namrata Chadha requested and appealed to all to hear, listen and note down the points raised by resource persons about child right as these are critical concerns. There is the PIT Act - but girl children are being taken out by middlemen against whom there is no law. Girls are considered as burden on parents making them vulnerable to easy trafficking for sex trade. In some cases, even old men marry young girls with full knowledge of parents, enjoying for sometime deserting them thereafter. Girl child deaths in Orissa is comparatively less than Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana although these states are advanced in terms of overall development. She concluded by saying that female foeticide is committed on a large scale in these states and a long term action plan and amendment to the existing law is required.

Dr. Mohanty shared how Kalpana Chawla's parents wanted to go for abortion when she was in her mother's womb but did not do so and this girl child later on turned out to be a great astronaut in USA.

Open Session

Chairperson: Mr. N.P. Dash, Director
Panchayati Raj, Government of India

Speaker: Dr. Saraswati Swain of National Institute of Health
and Rural Development (NIHARD), Cuttack.

Dr. Swain, questioning the role of panchayats observed that nobody speaks of health and environment which are important areas. Environment largely influences children. The concept of panchayats emerged from Gandhiji, he wanted everything to be done at village level but not in the name of globalisation. We have gone away from the Gandhian concept of panchayats. It is not empowerment of women alone. In the empowerment of panchayats, role of women and men is equally important. Women empowerment is dependent upon men also. Child trafficking of about 10 thousand children takes place from Orissa and Jharkhand every year. Abuse of women and children is increasing. About birth registration there are laws. It is the parent's duty to see that all births in the family get registered. Development of technology is negatively impacting the girl child as female foeticide has become rampant. Panchayats can play a strict monitoring role with regard to all these local level issues.

Mr. N.P. Das informed the audience that about 34,000 women have been elected to PRIs in Orissa, out of which 2500 are sarpanches. Women however, are not fully empowered in all respects. They have no right over their body. How many children should women give birth to is the decision of men and not of women. However, it is interesting to note that recently Human Development Index (HDI) of Deogarh district Orissa has placed the position of the district at five instead of nineteen because child death rate has been reduced to forty-one in that district. Women's health and social conditions are related to child health. Forty per cent of women suffer from anaemia and attention is urgently required here. Ibn Batuta, a 13th century Persian traveller to India, once said, if any, country is to be developed, investment has to be made only on women. For raising women's status, education and economic empowerment is needed.

Valedictory Session

Chairperson: Mr. K.K. Patnaik, ISS, Orissa

Speakers: Mr. Tripathi, People's Rural Education Movement (PREM), Orissa

Mr. S.B. Agnihotri, Commissioner-cum-Secretary,
Women and Child Development, Government of Orissa

Mr. Tripathi, informed the audience that PREM started universal birth registration campaign in Mohana block in Gajpati district in the year 2000, keeping in view four factors (i) Identity (ii) Name (iii) Recognition (iv) Right of children for which birth registration is necessary. Plan International and UNICEF worked in collaboration with PREM. Mohana experiment was highly appreciated. This programme of birth registration was launched in fifteen districts of Orissa. In Kendrapara district in 2005, children could not be admitted to school in absence of birth certificates. Tussle is going on between PRIs and Health Department to take charge of registration in Gajpati district. We campaigned for panchayats to take up this programme and some people who got visa and passport on the basis of birth certificates being given by PRIs, faced problems when Health Department objected to such certificates given by panchayats. Birth registration should be registered at panchayat level only. In Kerala such certificates are delivered/sent to children's homes. People must be made conscious. Everybody should cooperate in this. PREM is working in 136 blocks and has covered about 32 lakh children in the age group of 0-18 years till 2001. From 2002 to 2005 we propose to cover 10 more districts.

Mr. S.B. Agnihotri said that definite strategy to counter panchayat level problems was needed. He observed that there is a voice of disappointment everywhere. Till panchayats are given the task for birth registration, we need to go through the available system; if people are illiterate, no use sending pamphlets; whatever exists in law has to be obeyed. If there is difficulty in changing the legal provision, provisional certificates signed by panchayats can be given. This will be taken up with Health Department for regularisation; subsequently it is not merely giving PRIs the power to do birth registration, which may not be enough. In West Bengal, it is now being thought of in the reverse way. Eighteen years and below children are being arrested and sent to jail. This should be examined clearly. Panchayat Samiti chairpersons may report this to the police authorities as a group as part of their responsibilities; and Juvenile Justice Act provisions and birth registration advocacy campaigns can be communicated to PRIs.

Vote of Thanks

Dr. Pramila Prava Patnaik, Research Officer, ISS, Bhubaneswar extended a vote of thanks at the end of the convention.



6. Tamil Nadu

Chennai, 24 June 2005

Thiru. Era Sezhian, Senior Fellow, Institute of Social Sciences (ISS), presided over the Inaugural session of the State level Convention held by the ISS in Chennai. Speaking in honour of Dr. Anbumani Ramdoss, Union Minister for Health, he said that the intention was to have 'a good human being for a good cause'. He informed the participants that it is a fundamental right of a child that his/her birth is registered. Registering the birth will reduce various problems that the child would otherwise face in the future. It will affect the child's future, if his/her birth goes unregistered. In India, the first systematic census was taken in the year 1881. In 1886, the Registration of Births Deaths, and Marriages Act was enacted. The Registrar's offices began functioning but registration however, was not made compulsory. Thiru Era Sezhian shared how during the time when he was a member of Parliament in 1969, the present Act was passed, which made it compulsory that the birth of all children be registered even if they have not been given a name at the time of registration. He also noted that the financial resources are inadequate for village panchayats and MP-LAD, MLA-LAD schemes should be stopped and the funds should be devolved directly to panchayats. With these few comments, he requested Dr. Mathew to give the welcome address.

Dr. Mathew in his welcome address highlighted the role of the Institute of Social Sciences (ISS), which has been working for the past 20 years on decentralisation and local governance. He said the ISS has worked with the conviction that without decentralization of power, the country cannot develop to its full potential nor can it ensure improved livelihood to its people

Briefly, the history of the 'Women's Political Empowerment Day' celebrations instituted by ISS to commemorate the passage of the 73rd and 74th Constitution Amendments, ensuring 33 per cent reservation for women in local governance was shared. Regret was expressed, that even after 60 years of the country's independence children's concern remained a non issue. He pointed out that in many states in the northern part of the country, birth registration is not taking place at all, this has lead to corruption and when the need to obtain a birth certificate arises people are actually paying money to get a certificate which is to be given otherwise free of cost. He praised Tamil Nadu in this regard and said that TN is amongst those few

states where birth registration data is good and relatively more complete.

Moving on from the issue of birth registration, Dr. Mathew talked of the condition of those children who are engaged as child labour. Tamil Nadu has several hundreds of children working in home based industries. In Dharmapuri alone he pointed out, there are 10,125 children employed in labour intensive jobs. The panchayats he emphasised have a critical role to play in preventing child labour in their constituencies.

In introducing the Hon'ble Minister Dr. Ramdoss, Thiru Era Sezhian expressed hope that with Dr. Anbumani Ramdoss at the helm of the Ministry of Health, the panchayats, the state and the country would benefit at large. He said public health goes beyond the disease; it extends to the ills in the entire society. On the issue of the Honorable Minister's recent intervention on banning smoking, Sezhian appreciated that the Minister had courage in being able to speak out publicly on the controversial issue of banning smoking altogether.

Dr. Anbumani Ramdoss, Union Minister for Health, in his Inaugural address stated that the panchayat representatives are the actual rulers. Constitution of India declared the panchayats as the third tier of government of the Indian political system. Gram sabha and village panchayats are real institutions of people's democracy. He insisted that one-third reservation for women is not enough. (It was informed to the Minister that the Institute of Social Sciences, along with women panchayat leaders had flagged the demand for a fifty fifty share in local and Parliamentary decision making bodies).

He said the Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh is interested in devolving funds directly to village panchayats. Even today 75 per cent of the population live in rural areas and they avail only 25 per cent of all medical facilities. If government spends one rupee, only 10 paise reaches the people. So the funds should directly reach the people.

The Honourable Minister also talked about the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM). In order to implement the scheme the panchayats will have to play a very important role. The scheme has already started in southern states and very soon it will start in the northern states also. Under this scheme, health specialist will be trained to handle local level medical needs and mandatory check ups. The scheme has duration of seven years.

Given a worldwide picture on birth registration, he observed that on an average 4.8 crore child births in the world are not registered. In India among 2.8 crore births, one crore children are not registered. National Population Policy 2000, on the other hand insists that all the births, deaths and marriages should be registered before 2010. Referring to the indifferent attitude towards health, he said that normally women do not bother about their own health.

80 per cent of the pregnant women in India die due to anemia. He also criticized the two child norm which prevents candidates from contesting the panchayat elections. He said that two child norm is against the fundamental rights of citizens. There are so many ways to control the population without resorting to two child norm.

Mr. Malan, eminent Tamil journalist said in his speech that there are two kinds of India. One is modern India that is scientifically and technologically developed. The other is the larger India comprising a huge number of illiterate people living in utter poverty due to the increasing unemployment. There is greater need for economic, caste and gender equity to be addressed. In this context, panchayats should be considered as being central to development at village level. Devolution of powers should be decentralized. Panchayats can play a vital role particularly in the case of establishing child rights. Registration of births, deaths and marriages should be done by the panchayats.

The panchayat presidents interacted with the speakers particularly with the Minister. Dr. Anbumani Ramadoss.

Some of the issues raised are as follows:

- The toilets constructed in schools and private houses are not used properly since the adequate supply of water or electricity is not taken into consideration
- In Community Health Centres, beds are not enough and medicines are inadequate
- Often village people go to private doctors, this makes healthcare very costly
- Therefore government doctors must be involved and their services expanded to all village panchayats.

In a village panchayat in Maravamangalam in Sivagangai district telemedicine is under implementation.

Vote of Thanks

Mr. M.L.Doss, Director, The South India People's Governance Council pointed out that even though Tamil Nadu leads next to Kerala in health and sanitation compared to all the other states in India, the health and sanitary conditions in Tamil Nadu are not satisfactory. So NRHM and ASHA schemes should be implemented in Tamil Nadu also. He was of the view that the Hon'ble Union Minister for Health should take necessary steps to ensure the same. In the afternoon there was an interactive session with the presidents of village panchayats. Dr. George Mathew made some critical observations for future interaction with panchayat members and government officials.



BACKGROUND PAPER

Panchayats and Child Rights: Birth Registration as the First Right to Identity

Bidyut Mohanty

"The child shall be registered immediately after birth and shall have right from birth to a name, a right to acquire a nationality and as far as possible the right to know and be cared for by his or her parents".

The Child Rights Convention, 1992

Introduction

In 1969, the United Nations issued its first Declaration on the Rights of the Child, in which the aspirations of young people, their 'entitlements' to adequate nutritional food, free education, medical care as well as rights against exploitation and discriminating practices were included. Three decades later, in 1989, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which put clear emphasis on "the rights of children", was signed. In the nineteen nineties, the UN made it mandatory for all the nations to report on their progress in implementing the Convention. India ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1992.

Various views have been put forward and debated extensively regarding the definition of child as well as their rights. The homogeneity of their composition has been an issue since the definition of a child includes the age group of zero to eighteen years of age (Franklin, 1995). For example, the range from zero to eighteen indicates the most rapid and extensive period of an individual's physical, intellectual and emotional growth. So the period between birth and adulthood can be divided into four distinct periods with different types of needs. In addition, girl child, disabled children, child labour, children experiencing post-war conditions, displacement due to various developmental activities etc., have very special needs which often go unobserved.

However, at the same time it can be argued that in a developing country like India where different sections of the society are in different growth trajectories, the basic rights to nutrition, education, livelihood, health

care, even to self-identity are often denied. This disparity is more glaring in the context of male and female as well as urban and rural divide.

Various indicators on incidence of female foeticide, infant mortality rate, dropout rates, number of child labour, incidence of undernutrition and last but not the least, under enumeration of birth and death registrations reflect the violation of child rights.

Given the present scenario, it is encouraging to note that there is a vast body of grassroots political institutions namely, *panchayats* to which (since 1994), more than three million persons get elected for a five year term; these representatives have an effective role to play in protecting child rights. Out of three million elected representatives, one million are women. It is also worthwhile to note that *panchayats* have been given 29 subjects ranging from agriculture to poverty eradication, including "registration of vital events."

In the present paper therefore, an attempt will be made to briefly trace the child rights policy of the Government of India, followed by review of the status of the child in terms of the above indicators and the role of *panchayats* in addressing the above critical issue namely, the under enumeration of vital statistics.

Government Policy on Children

Indian society presents an odd mix of contradictory and often discriminatory attitude towards its children. A male child preference exists even among the most educated and well to do families, because a male child is (notionally) assumed to be an asset for the well being of his parents in old age. Religious readings add to these myths and it is widely believed that begetting a male child is necessary as he opens the doors of heaven for his parents in the nether world. On the other hand statistics tell us that the incidence of female foeticide by even the upper economic strata of society is on the increase with an alarming speed. Similarly, due to poverty a large number of children are being pushed into child labour and the number of trafficked children too is incredibly large. This despite the fact that the Constitution of India has included various clauses, such as Articles 15(3), 23, 24, 39, 45, 47, in order to protect child rights.¹

The well-being of children has been a priority and also an integral part of the country's development planning. During the 1960s, child development planning was characterised by a welfare orientation. A shift from the

¹ Article 14- equality before law, Article 15- special provision for children, Article 23- prohibition of trafficking in human beings, Article 23-prohibition of child labour in any hazardous occupation, Article 39-prohibition of child abuse, Article 45- right to education up to the age of 14, Article 47- state endeavour to raise the level of nutrition.

welfare approach to the development approach in the 1970s, expanded child welfare services to include health, education and nutrition indicators. During this period, the National Policy for Children (1974) and Integrated Child Development Services(ICDS) (1975) were adopted. The ICDS has adopted an integrated approach to extend a package of six services, viz. health check-ups, immunisation, referral services, supplementary feeding, pre-school education, and health and nutrition education for children up to six years and expectant and nursing mothers through a single window delivery at village level. In the 1980s; there was an effective consolidation and expansion of programmes which were started in earlier plans.

During the 1990s, a holistic approach to child development in three core sectors namely, health, nutrition and education, was initiated. A comprehensive programme of Reproductive Child Health (RCH), with special thrust on child survival, widened these efforts. Under the RCH programme, significant achievements were made in the universal immunisation programme against some serious diseases increasing by 100.3 percent in respect of DPT; 98.2 percent in respect of OPV; 102.7 percent for BCG; and 92.1 percent for measles by the end of 2001. But in some states like Uttar Pradesh, the immunisation programme has failed, partly because of negative social attitudes towards polio drops and other types of immunisation. All these were proved to have a definite impact in reducing the infant mortality rate from 70 per 1000 live births in 1999, to 63 in 2002. Further, the Government also launched a school health programme aimed at screening all school children for common ailments.

As regards nutrition, children below six years, and expectant and nursing mothers receive top priority in accordance with the provisions of the National Nutrition Policy (1993) and the National Plan of Action on Nutrition (1995). These efforts have resulted in substantial gains. The percentage of children with normal nutrition status has increased from 5.9 in 1975-79 to 9.8 in 1996-97, and that of children with severe nutrition deficiencies has declined from 15 to 6.8 per cent in the same period. The Special Nutrition Programme (SNP) has reached 31.5 million children in the age group of 0-6 years, and the mid-day meal programme has reached 105 million school children in 6-14 years. However, there are large state-level variations in reachout as well as in the nutritional status of children.

In the field of education, there has been special emphasis on Universal Elementary Education (UEE). The number of schools increased from 2.31 lakh in 1950-51 to 9.88 lakh in 1999-2000, and enrollment at the primary school level jumped up by about six times from 19.2 million to 113.6 million. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), which was launched in 2000, aims to provide quality elementary education to all children in the 6-14 age

groups by 2010, beside aiming at bridging gender and social category gaps at the primary stage by 2007 and universal retention by 2010. It is to be mentioned here that the dropout rates continue to be staggering.

In order to ensure that all girl children enter schools, Balika Samriddhi Yojana (1997) was launched to extend special packages for girl children belonging to below the poverty line (BPL) families. Kishori Shakti Yojana is a scheme which was introduced in the year 2000, to improve the nutritional and health status of girls in the age group of 11-18 years and train them in vocational skills. An additional central assistance is extended to states to fill the existing financial gaps for implementing the Special Nutrition Programme (2001). These Central schemes have either not been implemented properly or have been withdrawn midway. Besides, these schemes do not take into account specific local needs, hence, implementation has been tardy.

The National Rural Health Mission: A Holistic Approach?

The Health Ministry of the Government of India recently introduced a scheme known as National Rural Health Mission, focusing on the health aspects of rural India, in which *panchayats* will play a vital role. This is the first time that the Government has tried to integrate health services through *panchayats*.

The Government is going to raise expenditure on health from 0.9 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), to 2-3 per cent over the next five years. It is worth noting that as has been mentioned above this is the first time that a health scheme is trying to reach out to the marginalised sections of society namely, women and children, through grassroots organisations.

Under the envisaged scheme — the National Rural Health Mission (2005-2012) *panchayats* would be assigned the responsibility of drafting the 'Health Plan' for each village in consultation with villagers. These local governance institutions will be incharge of supervising and maintaining health-related activities.

Challenges Ahead

While all indicators have been showing favourable trends as mentioned above, the child sex ratio of 0-6 years age group shows a negative trend with male:female sex ratio being 1000:945 in 1991 to 1000:927 in the 2001 Census of India. This has been a cause of serious concern to policy makers, planners and demographers. Reasons for such an alarming state of affairs as put forth by Census 2001 are i) The neglect of girl child resulting in the high female infant and child mortality and maternal mortality rates ii) Sex selective abortions and iii) Female infanticide. The steep

decline in the sex ratio can definitely be attributed to the 'son preference' phenomenon in our society.

Though the infant mortality rates have declined sharply from 94.5 IMR in 1988 to 71.7 in 1999 (Sample Registration System Bulletins of respective years, Registrar General & Census Commissioner, GOI), there exists a serious regional variation. The highest IMR was 96 in Orissa and the lowest being 6.6 in Goa in 1999. The Child Mortality Rate (CMR) has been consistently higher for females than males with 24.5 per thousand live births in 1997 for females and 21.8 for males. (Sample Registration System Bulletins of respective years, RG & Census Commissioner, GOI). Like IMR, there are regional variations in CMR too. While Madhya Pradesh recorded the highest CMR of 32.3, the lowest of 3.3 was recorded by Kerala in 1997 (Tenth Five Year Plan).

The World Health Report 2005, indicates that in India the per capita Government expenditure on health is US \$ 20 which is a much less rate when compared with Norway (2845), USA (2368), Britain (1801). The same Report indicates that India is still endemic to polio and still short of 100 per cent immunisation. The still birth rate of children is 39 per 1000 live births - very high in comparison with developed countries like USA (4/1000) and Britain (93/1000).

Each year 3.3 million babies- maybe even more- are still born, more than 4 million die within 28 days of coming into the world, and a further 6.6 million young children die before their fifth birth day. Maternal deaths also continue unabated, the annual total now stands at 529 000. Sudden, unpredicted deaths often occur during pregnancy itself (about 68000 as a consequence of unsafe abortions), during childbirth, or after the baby has been born- leaving behind devastated families, often pushed into poverty because of the cost of health care that came too late or was ineffective.

How can it be that this situation continues when the causes of these deaths are largely avoidable? And why is it that it is still necessary today to emphasise the importance of focusing on the health of mothers, newborns and children, after decades of priority status, and more than 10 years after the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development put "access to reproductive health care for all" firmly on the global agenda? (World Health Report 2005).

In the field of education, 40 million children (28 million girls and 12 million boys), have never entered schools despite the fact that education has been made a fundamental right in India. The school dropout rate also is very high with 40.3 per cent at primary level and 54.6 per cent at the middle school (Census of India, 2001). At the same time, gender differentials continue to exist in actual enrollment and dropout from the schools.

After having accepted the rights based approach to the development of children, it becomes obligatory for the Government to ensure the 'survival, protection and development' of its children and especially that of the girl child. The first priority action should be to ensure survival by curbing IMR, CMR and declining sex ratio with special efforts to eliminate social evils like female foeticide. In addition, special efforts should be made to ensure compulsory registration of births and deaths, as visualised in the National Population Policy (2000). The second priority should be protection of children of special categories: children with under/malnutrition; children with disabilities; children whose parents are sex workers, child drug addicts, convicts; children in custody, children with HIV/AIDS, children as victims of natural/man made calamities etc., should receive Government attention. The third priority should be to fulfill the birth right of every child to 'development', especially those belonging to disadvantaged and marginalised groups.

Further, the results of the 2001 Census showed that there was a decline in the female – male ratio (sex ratio) in the age group of 0-6 between 1991 and 2001. The decline is sharper in relatively prosperous states like Punjab, Haryana, Delhi and Maharashtra. This has resulted in trafficking of young girls and women from relatively female-surplus states like Assam, West Bengal and Orissa to female-deficit states like Haryana and Punjab. This trend not only violates the human rights of women but also exposes them to the risk of getting infected with HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). The trafficking of large number of women from villages goes unnoticed because their births are not registered, and also there is no proof of age of trafficked children. Given these various implications, it becomes relevant for us to examine the status of civil registration in India.

Status of Civil Registration in India

The Government of India passed the Sample Registration Act in 1969, to collect statistics more carefully. While there is a long history of collecting data on births and deaths, the collecting agencies, namely, *chaukidars*, and more recently, *anganwadi* workers, village accountants and *tehsildars* have been found to be lacking in enumeration efficiency.

Factors like poor remuneration by data-collectors, gender bias, non-institutional deliveries by local *dais* (village women traditionally specialising in child delivery) have contributed towards the gaps in the registration of births and deaths in India.

Recently, the Registrar General of India pointed out that only about 57 per cent of births and 51 per cent of deaths get registered all over India.

As regards the state-level scenario, Kerala, Mizoram and Goa are model states — they have registered 100 per cent births and deaths, but in states like Bihar, only 18 per cent of the vital statistics get reported annually. The sex composition of the above statistics shows that the data of the male population is relatively more complete than that of the female population. Even the National Campaign on Issue of Birth Certificates, launched by the President of India in 2003, has not been successful in giving the complete picture regarding the number of births. Even though, the panchayats have been activated most of the states have treated the registration of vital statistics as purely health issue as Annex 1 shows.

Role of Panchayats

The passage of the Seventy-third Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992, has given a new life to grassroots political and social institutions at the village, block and district levels. There are about 600 district panchayats, 5912 block panchayats and 2,31,630 village panchayats, in which more than three million elected representatives take part in the decision making process. As mentioned earlier panchayats, are elected for a period of five years, and have been given charge of 29 subjects such as, agriculture, livelihood and registration of births and deaths. Many State governments have entrusted panchayats with the task of collecting birth and death statistics, even though the members themselves are not aware of their own responsibility to register births!

An important provision of the new Panchayati Raj Act is the reservation of not less than one-third of the total seats for women. This provision has resulted in one million women getting elected per five year term and two million women becoming involved in the political process within a span of 10 years. The presence of such a large number of women in local government institutions has led to a kind of 'social mobilisation' and women today are more visible in the public sphere than ever before.

The elected women representative (EWR), is assumed to understand the issue of child rights much better than her male counterpart as children, be it a boy or a girl are close to a mother's heart and his/her development is of immediate interest to the mother. Once, the EWRs are made aware of various linkages of registration of vital statistics with other development issues they will carry forward the task sincerely and efficiently, as various micro-studies conducted in different parts of India show.

As mentioned earlier it is noteworthy that the Central government has finally recognised the pivotal role of panchayats in ownership, control and management of public health services. Under the envisaged scheme, National Rural Health Mission (2005-2012), panchayats would be assigned

the responsibility of drafting the 'Health Plan' for each village. These institutions are in charge of supervising and maintaining the activities related to the above subjects.

The core strategies of panchayats in health service delivery are-

- Key role of panchayati raj institutions (PRIs) in ownership, control and management of public health services.
- Taking healthcare to household levels in the village, through female health activists, called Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA), for each village.
- Health Plan for each village through Village Health Samiti of the panchayat.
- Strengthening sub-centre through an untied fund to enable local planning and action and more Multi Purpose Workers (MPWs).
- Strengthening Primary Health Centres (PHCs) for improved outreach and delivery services.
- Strengthening existing Community Health Centres (CHCs), and providing a 30-50 bedded CHC per lakh population for improved curative care to a normative standard (Indian Public Health Standards defining personnel, equipment and management standards)².

Annex 1 depicts the picture of State level variations. It is noticed that out of 28 states, 13 states have delegated the responsibility of collecting the vital statistics panchayats. Other State governments have depended either on police or health officials. It is also worth noting that 17 State governments treat the collection of vital statistics as health subjects. So the department of health looks after the registration. In other words, there has been a sectoral approach to the collection of the statistics. Since the panchayats are in charge of preparing the development agenda of the villages, collecting and assimilating the statistics will help them in planning. Panchayat members being the inhabitants of the villages, they will be relatively more aware of births and deaths occurring in the villages. Similarly the pregnancy records as well as those of female foeticide may get tracked down easily. Finally, with universal birth registration, children will get their first identity as human beings.

Summing Up

Thus it was noticed that the various articles of the Indian Constitution have provisions for protecting child rights including trafficking, prohibiting child labour, child abuse, access to education etc., even though Indian

At the time of revision of this paper, it was noticed that many State governments have started taking measures to involve the panchayats in the NRHMS. Pragativadi (Oriya Daily) dt.10.Nov 2005

government ratified the Convention on the Child Rights much later in 1992. In accordance, the Government has tried to formulate as well as to implement child related policies with reference to health, education, nutrition, banning child labour, female foeticide etc. But the implementation of the above schemes has been tardy. In addition, the schemes lack cohesiveness since these are visualised sectorally. So even though the status of child has improved over the years there exist the adverse statistics on sex ratio, nutritional status, child labour and birth registration which present a far from satisfactory position.

In conclusion, one can say that the panchayats even after a decade of their existence continue to be merely utilised as implementing agencies of the Central government and not as agents of social change at the level of local governance. Finally, women in panchayats who can make a difference in this given situation, lack the basic knowledge regarding the functioning of panchayats as well as the existence of child related schemes, including the relevance of registering births and deaths. Their greater involvement would address the issues of child labour, child trafficking not to speak of the right of the child to a clean healthy environment, to education and above all to know and be cared for by her or his parents.

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Civil Registration Hierarchy in States and Union Territories

Annex 1

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Women and Political Empowerment - 2005

Sr. No.	State level	District level / Below district level	Local area level (Rural)	
1.	Andhra Pradesh Chief Registrar Director of Health	<p>Addl. Chief Registrar Addl. Director of Medical & Health Services (CD) Commissioner & Director Municipal Administration</p> <p>Dy. Commissioner Panchayat Raj, Dy. Chief Registrar: Dy. Director of Medical & Health Services (Stat.)</p>	<p>District Registrar: District Medical and Health Officer</p> <p>Addl. Distt. Registrar: Dy. Distt. Medical & Health Officer in-charge of Medical & Health Work other than Family Welfare District Revenue Officer & District Panchayat Officer Addl. Distt. Medical & Health Officer (FW)</p>	<p>Registrar: Panchayats with Executive officer</p> <p>Other Villages – Village Administrative Officer (VAO)</p>
2.	Arunachal Pradesh Chief Registrar Director of Economics & Statistics	<p>District Registrar: Dy. Commissioner</p> <p>Addl. Distt. Registrar: District Statistical Officer</p>	<p>Registrar: Extra-Assistant Commissioner/Circle Officer</p> <p>Sub-Registrar: Teacher/Village level worker</p>	
3.	Assam Chief Registrar Director of Health Services	<p>District Registrar: Joint Director of Health Services Addl. Distt. Registrar: Addl. Chief Medical & Health Officer</p>	<p>Registrar: Senior Medical & Health Officer</p>	

Sr. No.	State level	District level / Below district level	Local area level (Rural)
4.	Chhattisgarh Chief Registrar Director of Economics & Statistics	Dy.Chief Registrar: Dy.Director (VS)	District Registrar: District Planning & Statistical Officer
			Registrar: In-charge of Police Station
5.	Bihar Chief Registrar Director of Statistics & Evaluation	Joint Chief Registrar: Joint Director (VS) Dy. Chief Registrar: Dy. Director (VS)	District Registrar: Dy. Development Commissioner
			Registrar: Panchayat Sevak
			Addl. Distt. Registrar: Distt. Statistical Officer Addl. Distt. Registrar: Block Development Officer
6.	Goa Chief Registrar Director of Planning, Statistics & Evaluation	Addl.Chief Registrar: Joint Director, Planning, Statistics & Evaluation	District Registrar: Additional Collector
			Registrar: Secretary of Village Panchayat
			Addl. Distt. Registrar: Block Development Officer
7.	Gujarat Chief Registrar Commissioner of Health, Medical Services & Medical Education	Dy. Chief Registrar: Addl. Director (Stats.) Addl.Dy.Chief Registrar: Dy. Director (Stats.)	District Registrar: District Health Officer/ Chief District Health Officer
			Registrar: Talati-cum-Mantri/Mantri
			Sub-Registrar: Clerk of Village Panchayat
			Taluka Registrar: Taluka Development Officer
8.	Haryana Chief Registrar Director General of Health Services	Addl.Chief Registrar: Dy. Director Health Services (M&E) Asstt. Inspector General of Police Under Secy., Local Self Government	District Registrar: Civil Surgeon
			Registrar: Incharge Medical Officer P..H.C
			Addl.Distt.Registrar: Distt. Health Officer

Sr. No.	State level	District level / Below district level	Local area level (Rural)
9.	Himachal Pradesh Chief Registrar Director of Health & Family Welfare	Dy. Chief Registrar: Dy. Director (CR)	Registrar: Gram Panchayat Vikas Adhikari of Gram Panchayat
		Distt.Registrar: Medical Officer, Health Specified Officer Block Development Officer	
10.	Jammu & Kashmir Chief Registrar Director of Health and Family Welfare	Adtl.Chief Registrar: Director of Economics & Statistics	Registrar: In-charge of Police Station
		Distt Registrar: Distt. Statistics & Evaluation Officer	
11.	Jharkhand Chief Registrar Director of Statistics & Evaluation	Joint Chief Registrar: Joint Director (VS) Dy. Chief Registrar: Dy. Director (VS)	Registrar: Panchayat Sevak
		Distt Registrar: Dy. Development Commissioner Adtl. Distt. Registrar: Distt. Statistical Officer Adtl. Distt. Registrar: Block Development Officer	
12.	Karnataka Chief Registrar Director, Bureau of Economics & Statistics	Joint Chief Registrar: Joint Director, Economics & Statistics Dy. Chief Registrar: Dy. Director Economics & Statistics	Registrar: Village Accountant
		Distt Registrar: Dy. Commissioner Adtl.Distt.Registrar: District Statistical Office	

Sr. No.	State level	District level / Below district level	Local area level (Rural)	
13.	Kerala Chief Registrar Director of Panchayats	<p>Addl.Chief Registrar: Addl. Director of Economics & Statistics</p> <p>Dy. Chief Registrar: Dy. Director of Panchayats</p>	<p>District Registrar: Asstt. Director of Panchayats</p> <p>Addl.Distt.Registrar: Senior Research Assistant of DSO</p>	<p>Registrar: Secretary of Gram Panchayat</p> <p>Sub-Registrar: Jt. Suptd./Head Clerk/UDC of Gram Panchayat</p>
14.	Madhya Pradesh Chief Registrar Director of Economics & Statistics	<p>Addl.Chief Registrar District Collectors</p> <p>Dy.Chief Registrar: Dy.Director (VS) Asstt. Chief Registrar Assistant Director (VS)</p>	<p>District Registrar: District Planning Officer</p>	<p>Registrar: Chief Executive Officer, Janapad Panchayat Sub-Registrar Panchayat Secretaries / Karmies</p>
15.	Maharashtra Chief Registrar Director General of Health Services	<p>Dy. Chief Registrar: Dy. Director of Health Services (SBHI & VS)</p>	<p>District Registrar: District Health Officer</p> <p>Addl.Distt. Registrar: Dy. Chief Executive Officer (VP) BDO (Panchayat Samiti)</p>	<p>Registrar: Gram Sevak/ Asstt. Gram Sevak/VDO</p>
16.	Manipur Chief Registrar Director of Medical & Health Services	<p>Addl. Chief Registrar: Director Economics & Statistics</p> <p>Dy. Chief Registrar: Dy. Director (VS)</p>	<p>District Registrar: Chief Medical Officer</p>	<p>Registrar: BDO in valley block areas Sub-Divisional Officers/Medical Officer in-charge of PHC of hilly areas. Sub-Registrar: Panchayat Secretary in valley block areas.</p>

Sr. No.	State level	District level / Below district level	Local area level (Rural)
17.	Meghalaya Chief Registrar Director of Health Services	Dy. Chief Registrar: Joint Director of Health Services	District Registrar: Distt. Medical & Health services Registrar: Medical and Health Officer in-charge of PHC
18.	Mizoram Chief Registrar Secretary/ Commissioner Planning	Adtl. Chief Registrar: Director of Economics & Statistics Dy. Chief Registrar: Dy. Director of Economics & Statistics	District Registrar: Deputy Commissioner Addl. Distt. Registrar: District Education Officer Asstt. Distt. Registrar: Research Officer Economics & Statistics Registrar: Primary School Teacher
19.	Nagaland Chief Registrar Director of Economics & Statistics	Dy. Chief Registrar: Dy. Commissioner District Registrar: District Statistical Officer Addl. Distt. Registrar: BDO	Registrar: LP Teachers
20.	Orissa Chief Registrar Director of Health Services	Adtl. Chief Registrar: Joint Director of Health Services (Public Health) Dy. Chief Registrar: Dy. Director (VS) Asstt. Chief Registrar: Asstt. Director (VS)	District Registrar: Chief District Medical Officer Addl. Distt. Registrar: Addl. District Medical Officer Registrar: Medical Officer in-charge of PHC

Sr. No.	State level		District level / Below district level	Local area level (Rural)
21.	Punjab Chief Registrar Director of Health & Family Welfare	Addl. Chief Registrar: Dy. Director (Stats.)	District Registrar: Civil Surgeon Addl. Distt. Registrar: District Health Officer/ Assistant Civil Surgeon	Registrar: Panchayat Secretary
22.	Rajasthan Chief Registrar Director of Economics & Statistics	Addl. Chief Registrar: Joint Director (Vital) Economics & Statistics Dy. Chief Registrar: Dy. Director (VS)	Addl. Chief Registrar: Collectors District Registrar: District Statistical Officer Addl. Distt. Registrar: Development Officer Panchayat Samiti	Registrar: Gram Sevak/Gram Sachiv/ Head Master of Primary School Sub-Registrar: Assistant Teacher
23.	Sikkim Chief Registrar Principal Director of Health & Family Welfare	Joint Chief Registrar: Director, Bureau of Economics & Statistics	District Registrar: Chief Medical Officer	Registrar: Medical Officer in-charge of PHC
24.	Tamil Nadu Chief Registrar Director of Public Health & Preventive Medicine	Dy. Chief Registrar: Jt. Director, SBHI	District Registrar: Collector District Revenue Officer/Additional Addl. Distt. Registrar: Dy. Director Health Services	Registrar: Village Administrative Officer
25.	Tripura Chief Registrar Director of Health Services		District Registrar: District. Magistrate/Collector	Registrar: Tehsildar (in TTAADC Rural area)

			<p>Addl. Distt. Registrar: Sub-divisional Officer (in Tripura Tribal Area Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) Rural area)</p> <p>Block Development Officer (in Non TTAADC Rural area)</p>	<p>Panchayat Secretary (in Non TTAADC Rural area)</p>
26.	<p>Uttar Pradesh Chief Registrar Director General Medical & Health</p>	<p>Director Local Administration (Urban area)</p> <p>Director Panchayat Raj (Rural area)</p> <p>Dy. Chief Registrar: Assistant Director/Statistical Officer, Medical and Health</p>	<p>District Registrar: District Collector</p> <p>Addl. Distt. Registrar: Chief Medical Officer</p> <p>Dy. Distt. Registrar Dy. Chief Medical Officer (Urban area)</p> <p>Addl. Distt. Registrar District Panchayat Raj Officer (Rural area)</p>	<p>Registrar: Gram Panchayat Vikas Adhikari</p>
27.	<p>Uttaranchal Chief Registrar Principal Secretary/ Secretary, Medical, Health and Family Welfare</p>	<p>Addl. Chief Registrar: Director General of Medical, Health and Family Welfare</p> <p>Director Local Administration (Urban area)</p> <p>Director Panchayat Raj (Rural area)</p>	<p>District Registrar: District Collector</p> <p>Addl. Distt. Registrar: Chief Medical Officer</p> <p>Addl. Distt. Registrar Dy. Chief Medical Officer (Urban area)</p>	<p>Registrar: Gram Panchayat Vikas Adhikari</p>

Sr. No.	State level	District level / Below district level	Local area level (Rural)
28.	West Bengal Chief Registrar Director of Health Services	Dy. Chief Registrar, Addl. Director, Medical, Health and Family Welfare Dy. Chief Registrar: Director (SBHI) Asstt. Chief Registrar: Asstt. Director Health Services (VS)	Addl. Distt. Registrar District Panchayat Raj Officer (Rural area) District Registrar: District Magistrate/Dy. Commissioner Registrar: Block Sanitary Inspector Sub Registrar: Pradhan, Gram Panchayat
		Addl. Distt. Registrar: CMO of Health Addl. District Magistrate. (Gen.Admn.) CMOH – II	
Sr. No.	Union Territories	District Registrar	Registrar
1.	A&N Islands Chief Registrar Director Health Services	Medical Supdt. of G.B. Pant Hospital for Andaman and M.O. in-charge of Nicobar District	Medical Officer-in-Charge of Community Health Centres and Primary Health Centre
2.	Chandigarh Chief Registrar Director of Health Services	District Registrar: Medical Officer of Health Addl. Distt. Registrar: Nosologist	Registrar: Thana Officer

Sr. No.	Union Territories	District Registrar	Registrar
3.	Dadra & Nagar Haveli Chief Registrar Secretary to Administration	District Registrar: Mamlatdar-cum-Survey & Settlement Officer	Registrar: Patel, Talati
4.	Daman & Diu Chief Registrar Development Commissioner/ Secretary, Planning	Addl. Chief Registrar: Dy. Director, Planning & Statistics District Registrar: Collector Addl. Distt. Registrar: Block Development Officer	Registrar: Panchayat Secretary
5.	Delhi Chief Registrar Director Bureau of Economics & Statistics	Addl. Chief Registrar: Municipal H.O. of MCD Municipal H.O. of NDMC Executive Officer Cantonment Area	Registrar: Municipal Health Officer Officer In-charge (Vital Stat.) Dy. Health Officer
6.	Lakshadweep Chief Registrar Secretary, Health	Addl. Chief Registrar Director of Medical & Health Services	Addl. District Registrar: Medical Officer in-Charge Registrar: Health Inspector
7.	Pondicherry Chief Registrar Director of Local Administration	District Registrar: Dy. Director (Municipal Administration/Local Admn.) Addl. Distt. Registrar: Dy. Director (Statistics) Local Admn. Deptt	Registrar: Commissioner of Commune Panchayat

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Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY)

Janani Suraksha Yojana under the overall umbrella of National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) is being proposed by way of modifying the existing National Maternity Benefit Scheme (NMBS). While NMBS is linked to provision of better diet for pregnant women from BPL families, JSY integrates the cash assistance with antenatal care during the pregnancy period, institutional care during delivery and immediate post-partum period in a health centre by establishing a system of coordinated care by field level health worker.

Vision: To reduce over all maternal mortality ratio and infant mortality rate; to increase institutional deliveries in BPL families.

Target Group: All pregnant women belonging to the below poverty line (BPL) households: of the age of 19 years or above; and up to two live births.

Features

The benefits under the scheme would be linked to availing of antenatal check ups by the pregnant women and getting the delivery conducted in health centres/hospitals. Reduce maternal mortality by promoting deliveries at health institutions by skilled personnel like doctors and nurses. Accordingly, cash assistance is to be provided to women from Below Poverty Line (BPL) families; Incentive to the ASHA or an equivalent worker: Since CSSM programme, a large number of traditional birth attendants (Dai) have been trained. It is time to link them to a regimented system of delivery care services. ASHA or an equivalent worker should be working as a basic health provider in the village. Such workers functioning in the rural and urban areas would get an incentive in all the low performing states for providing certain essential support services. Assistance for Caesarean Section: FRUs/CHCs would provide emergency obst. services. Compensation payment for Tubectomy/Laparoscopy Disbursement of cash assistance: The disbursing authority would arrange an imprest money of Rs. 5000/- to every Auxillary Nurse Midwife / health worker and authorize her to make payment subject to the conditions that the beneficiaries concerned fulfils all eligibility conditions and the ANM has completed the laid down procedure. The ANM should keep cash advance of atleast Rs 1500/- at any point of time with ASHA for institutional delivery of beneficiaries already registered under JSY and replenishment thereafter. Partnership with Private Sector. Provision to meet administrative expenses.

Decentralisation of the implementation mechanism is the key to making available the benefits to the poor expectant mothers. To achieve this, wherever possible the Gram Panchayat/local elected bodies should be appropriately involved.

Where Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) exist and an elected body is in place, the State Governments/District society will be at liberty to keep the money with Panchayati Raj Institutions and empower Auxiliary Nurse Midwives to incur expenditure jointly with the Gram Panchayat through a simple procedure to recoup the imprest periodically. All disbursements should be made immediately after delivery, if possible, in the hospital itself.

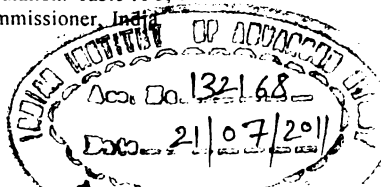
The panchayat and the local bodies should be effectively involved in the certification process in a manner that genuine poor women are able to benefit from this scheme.

Source: mohfw.nic.in/layout-09-06.pdf.

**Sex Ratios of Total Population and
0-6 Age Group in Indian States**

States	Sex Ratios 1991		Sex Ratios 2001	
	Total Popn.	(0-6 yrs)	Total Popn.	(0-6 yrs)
Andhra Pradesh	972	975	978	961
Arunachal Pradesh	859	982	893	964
Assam	923	975	935	965
Bihar	907	953	919	942
Chhattisgarh	985	984	989	975
Goa	967	964	961	938
Gujarat	934	928	920	883
Haryana	865	879	861	819
Himachal Pradesh	976	951	968	896
Jammu and Kashmir	—	—	892	941
Jharkhand	922	979	941	965
Karnataka	960	960	965	946
Kerala	1036	958	1058	960
Madhya Pradesh	912	941	919	932
Maharashtra	934	946	922	913
Manipur	958	974	978	957
Meghalaya	955	986	972	973
Mizoram	921	969	935	964
Nagaland	886	993	900	964
Orissa	971	967	972	953
Punjab	882	875	876	798
Rajasthan	910	916	921	909
Sikkim	878	965	875	963
Tamil Nadu	974	948	987	942
Tripura	945	967	948	966
Uttaranchal	937	949	962	908
Uttar Pradesh	876	927	898	916
West Bengal	917	967	934	960
India	927	945	933	927

Source: Jayant Kumar Banthia, Census of India 2001, Primary Census Abstract - Total Population: Table A-5, New Delhi: Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, India





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