

ANNUAL REPORT 2008-09



KERALA MAHILA SAMAKHYA SOCIETY

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Kerala Mahila Samakhya Society

Published by

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First Published in

August 2009

Cover design

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Obeisance and Love



To our dear
Manjula Subodh,
District Resource Person.

Who worked whole heartedly and with
dedication for the goal of women's
empowerment.

Women empowerment in Kerala is an oft – repeated phrase. The word “empowerment” needs to be cautiously examined. The development perspective of the last 10 years from 1990 has been on the efficiency approach. In the 1970’s and 80’s , the women’s movement was at its heights and struggles were taken up on the issues of dowry, domestic violence, amniocentesis, etc. This had its impact in all parts of the country and several autonomous women groups sprang up and took up issues of violence against women and sex rackets. But after the 1990’s, the efficiency approach propounded by multi- lateral agencies, world Bank has been the guiding perspective. Hence, there is an emphasis of improving the efficiency of women. As a result , we see women in all forms like the gramma sabha, working groups, development seminars an all developmental activities in the panchayat. The visibility of women has enhanced at all levels in Kerala but whether women are in decision making capacities is a question before us. Women’s participation in MPTA’s and welfare committees has enhanced. With the micro credit programmes, especially Kudumbashree, women’s access to capital has increased . This efficiency approach has enhanced women’s visibility and multiple task are imposed and thrust on women. But gender roles with respect to men has not changed at all. Men are mostly absent from all developmental activities of the panchayat. But, mostly decision making is concentrated in the hands of men. This ‘efficiency’ approach is confused with empowerment. Empowerment includes enhanced decision making of women and decision making from a women centered perspective. The endeavour of Kerala Mahila Samakhya Society has been to build up rights consciousness, combat issues of domestic violence and dowry and other related issues that affect our status and educational intervention to regain power, access to resources and opportunities.

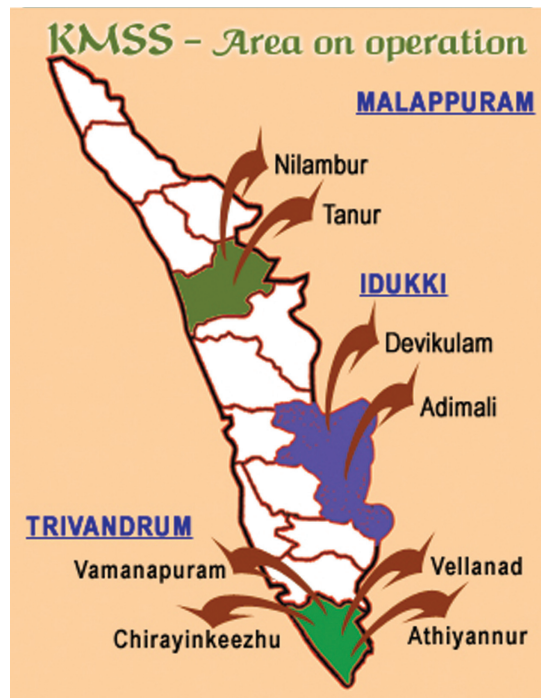
Seema Bhaskar
State Project Director



INTRODUCTION

MS programme in Kerala is basically geared towards gender equality and equity and the Sevini orientation is based on a women – centered perspective. The MS programme is the sole development programme in Kerala which functions in remote areas from a women-centred point of view and with a clear political orientation. The change in direction at State level has affected the functioning of the programme according to the analysis of the functionaries. Despite crisis, the functioning at the grass-root level has not suffered serious setbacks. The programme has always been process-orientated.

The problems in Kerala, quite unlike in other states are not based on conventional indicators like literacy, access to health services etc, but non-conventional indicators like violence against women, gender disparities at every level from the personal to public forum, low decision making capacities from the home to educational institutions to participation at panchayat level. But in remote tribal areas, food security, access to health services and education, basic sanitation facilities is still a major problem and even practical needs have to be focused on. State level consultation was convened to deliberate on issues to be focused in the future and the endeavour is towards convergence with various government



departments like NRHM, SSA, Social Welfare Department, Local Self-Governments, Kudumbasree, etc. We are also involved in the endeavor to get residential facilities for children of MSK so that they can gain self-reliance before they reach abusive and difficult circumstances. Advocacy and policy-level intervention would have to be thrust areas.

Kerala Mahila Samakhya functions in Thiruvananthapuram, Idukki and Malappuram. The Blocks in which Mahila Samakhya works are Adimali, Devikulam, Azutha in Idukki, Cherienkeezhu, Vamanapuram, Athiyannur and Vellanad blocks of Thiruvananthapuram and Nilambur and Tanur blocks of Malappuram districts.



District Implementation Unit, Trivandrum

The functioning of KMSS began in Trivandrum in 1998. Taking literacy as the parameter, it first started functioning in Vamanapuram block. It began working with all women but changed direction in 2005. It shifted its focus to colonies since 2005 among the most marginalized women. At present, it focuses in the tribal area of Vamanapuram and coastal area of Chirayinkeezhu block.

Name of Block	Chirayinkeezhu	Vamanapuram	Athiyannoor	Vellanad
Area	84.64 sq.kms	421.15 sq.kms	73.73 sq.kms	372.12 sq.kms
Population	173663	248277	199585	207468
Women	91908	129319	99443	105440
Men	81755	118958	100142	102028
ST population	27943	27943	225	6992
Men is women ratio	1000 : 1124	-	1000 : 993	1000:1033
Literacy	85.73%	82.52%	84.48%	86.66%

Chirayinkeezhu consists of 7 panchayats viz. Vakkom, Mudakkal, Chirayinkeezhu, Azhoor, Kizhuvillam, Anchuthengu and Kadakkavur. MS started work in 2005-06 after completion of baseline survey. MSK began in Mudakkal where there are 50 colonies. In 2007, sevini started functioning in Anchuthengu .

Vamanapuram comprises of 8 panchayats viz. Vamanapuram, Nellanad, Peringamala, Manickal, Pangode, Kallara, Pullampara and Nanniyodu. In Peringamala, Pullampara, Pangode and Nanniyodu there are adivasis belonging to Kani community.



Demographic profile of the Panchayats

Name of the panchayat	Population	Male population	Female population	SC population	ST population	Literacy rate
Chirayinkeezhu						
Anchuthengu	16732	8267	8475	878	-	72.49
Azhoor	26829	12525	14304	4894	26	81.95
Chirayinkeezhu	29627	14042	15585	4336	2	85.87
Kadakkavoor	23037	10665	12372	3961	-	87.99
Kizhuvilam	29314	13661	15653	5803	-	88.65
Mudakkal	30474	14599	15875	6199	-	89.85
Vakkom	17640	7996	9644	1872	-	88.81
Vamanapuram						
Kallara	24048	11560	12488	2965	-	92.34
Nellanad	21768	10611	11157	3236	9	91.17
Pullampara	21673	10682	10991	3879	71	86.39
Vamanapuram	20114	9574	10540	1840	-	89.34
Pangode	27438	13281	14157	4351	815	89.32
Nanniyode	26064	12589	13475	3068	1586	90.66
Peringamala	30144	14821	15323	4656	2492	86.45
Manickal	32065	15747	16318	4403	25	88.07
Athiyannoor						
Athiyannoor	23515	11508	12007	3116	21	92.99
Kanjiramkulam	17191	8706	8485	1354	-	90.20
Karimkulam	25731	13001	12730	1381	-	79.02
Kottukal	28968	14540	14428	3699	11	84.31
Vizhinjam	42402	21597	20805	3794	25	75.50
Venganoor	28742	14360	14382	5493	128	89.91



Vellanad						
Aryanad	24735	11995	12740	2688	71	87.11
Poovachal	37980	18764	19216	3288	262	89.44
Vellanad	25306	12511	12795	1674	306	91.62
Vithura	26613	13165	13448	3404	3197	87.70
Uzhamalackal	19307	9542	9765	1296	50	86.50
Kuttichal	17048	8345	8703	1576	1004	85.96
Tholicode	23056	11159	11897	1440	2041	89.12
Kattakada	33423	16547	16876	3561	61	89.90

MAHILA SIKHAN KENDRA -TRIVANDRUM

- MSK - Nanniyode - 33 (No. of Students)
- MSK - Idinjaar - 30 “
- MSK - Kariavattom - 62 “

District Implementation Unit, Idukki

Name of Block	Adimali	Devikulam	Azhutha
Area	1062.24 sq.kms	994.49 sq.kms	1236.32 sq.kms
Population	138349	127830	162869
Women	67962	62377	80813
Men	70387	65453	82056
ST population	8611	12341	3527
Literacy	88%	71%	88%



Demographic profile of the Panchayats

Name of the panchayat	Population	Male population	Female Population	SC population	ST population	Literacy rate
Adimali						
Konnathady	30041	15197	14844	952	513	83%
Bisonvalley	13255	6761	6494	857	558	89%
Vellathooval	25461	12914	12547	1440	233	92%
Pallivasal	16585	8502	8083	3776	31	86%
Adimali	36314	18335	17979	3641	5749	78.68%
Devikulam						
Marayoor	9590	4792	4798	2742	2882	62%
Munnar	78343	40208	38135	38797	3475	76%
Kanthallore	10265	5272	4993	2717	3768	71%
Vattavada	4588	2362	2226	952	1478	32%
Santhanpara	13889	7113	6776	141	11061	63%
Chinnakanal	11155	5706	5449	597	5663	68%
Devikulam	29734	15101	14633	15802	216	66.45%
Azhutha						
Peruvanthanam	17596	8843	8753	1260	143	93%
Kumily	33722	17273	16449	7539	1787	84%
Kokkayar	12641	6354	6287	1660	850	95%
Peerumedu	25768	12837	12931	10966	315	85%
Elappara	27482	13798	13684	7565	28	82%
Vandiperiyar	445660	22951	22709	19178	404	75%

MAHILA SIKHAN KENDRA- IDUKKI

- MSK - Adimali - 76 (No. of Students)
- MSK - Marayoor - 67 "
- MSK - Vattavada - 50 "



District Implementation Unit, Malappuram

The functioning of KMSS began in Malappuram in 2008-09.

Name of Block	Nilambur	Thanoor
Area	863.26 sq.kms	116.78 sq.kms
Population	227379	248171
Women	115850	128370
Men	111529	119801
ST population	7581	9
Men is women ratio	1031 : 1000	1071 : 1000
Literacy	88%	85.51%

Demographic profile of the Panchayats

Name of the panchayat	Population	Male population	Female population	SC population	ST population	Literacy rate
Nilambur						
Nilambur	34966	17128	17838	2515	426	91.68
Amarambalam	26804	13065	13739	3404	623	86.84
Chaliyar	16476	8073	8403	1056	1468	82.25
Chungathara	44569	22095	22474	2875	2038	89.14
Karulai	17698	8600	9098	1980	723	83.90
Moothedam	19519	9558	9961	1780	546	89.42
Vazhikadavu	38108	18621	19487	2709	661	87.19
Edakkara	29239	14389	14850	1828	1096	88.27



Thanoor						
Cheriyamundam	25760	12302	13458	447	-	86.93
Kalpakencheri	26983	12881	14102	306	-	89.84
Ozhur	25501	12372	13129	1039	1	82.76
Tanalur	53628	25976	27652	2518	1	88.76
Valavannoor	27295	13032	14263	666	-	87.75
Thanoor	54243	26535	27708	1952	-	79.92
Ponmundam	34761	16703	18058	783	7	86.73

MAHILA SIKHAN KENDRA - MALAPURAM

- MSK- Nilambur - 23 (Students)



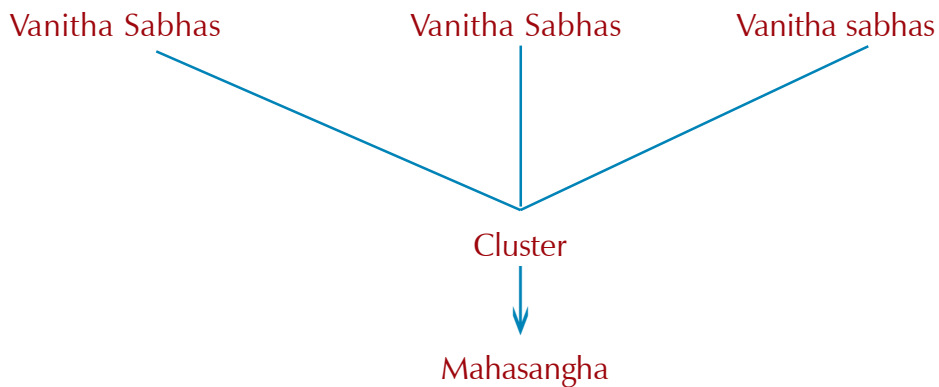
STATISTICS AT A GLANCE

FEDERATING VANITHA SABHA'S : Learning & Relearning

Formation of Mahasanghas:

In the earlier blocks of Adimali and Vamanapuram, cluster formation has been initiated. The process of formation of Mahasangha (network) of women at panchayat level had been developed in the workshop for JRP's. A resource group is being simultaneously developed to support and provide resource support for executive committee of Mahasangha. The resource centres in LSG are being developed by building up library and having participatory discussions on women's studies, culture and literature.

In the workshop held for JRP's the structure was planned as follows



Vanitha sabha from 3 wards would come together to form cluster and clusters would combine to form Mahasangha. The general body of the Mahasangha would select the executive committee and a resource group comprising of 30 to 40 women from each panchayat would support the executive committee in taking up issues, finding solutions, mobilization and conducting programmes. Resource centre in each LSG's have been activated, books bought and regular interactive workshops are being held with the resource group. The workshop focuses on study and discussion of literary and cultural aspects related to women's studies. Shabdham, a newsletter has been prepared by women themselves and they will be printed shortly.



UNFOLDING VISTAS : MS Enters into newer areas

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Expansion in Athiyannur block, Thiruvananthapuram

Due to our intervention in a case of child sexual abuse by a pedophile from Switzerland and legal and emotional support to the boy victims, we realized that work in this block should be in collaboration with social welfare department. Several instances of drop-out boys victimized to sexual abuse by foreigners is quite common. The proposal submitted to social welfare department has been accepted. MS orientation in the block has been completed. Discussion and deliberation on the issue in each LSG is being done in collaboration and the reports of Elected Representatives, ICDS supervisors and anganwadi workers corroborate our findings. So awareness campaign at all levels has been initiated with LSG's, schools, teachers, youth and life-skill education in schools is being imparted.

The programme at Athiyanur to intervene in the drop-out of boy children due to sexual abuse and mobilizing women around issues of education, domestic violence and girls education has begun. After MS orientation with Elected representatives and representatives of ADS and CDS, sessions have been facilitated with teachers and women. Issues of drop-out of both girl and boy children and girls wasting their time waiting for marriages whereas boys getting involved in rackets and roaming behind foreigners for money is being addressed. Alcoholism and substance abuse affects the life of young boys and men and women trace this as the main reason behind domestic violence. Sanitation issues are also severe and there are no toilet facilities and due to abuse, women feel insecure to defecate in the open. Alongwith workshops among the children and adolescents, a study is also being conducted on child sexual abuse.

Expansion in Nilambur block, Malappuram

In Nilambur block, dowry and desertion were seen as major issues as part of the status study of women. So a campaign relating to dowry has begun in Nilambur panchayat. The focus is on achieving equity and breaking shackles and barriers of social exclusion. In other panchayats status study completed and programme started based on the study.

Expansion in Tanur block, Malappuram

In Tanur Block panchayat and all panchayats of Tanur Block, a one-day orientation followed by the training for the status study of women which is being used as a base-line survey was conducted. Following the base-line survey, a one-day seminar was facilitated in all panchayats to present the data and incorporate the findings in the planning. Gender sensitisation workshops were held for anganwadi workers and CDS & ADS respectively.



MS'S ENDEAVOURS TO ADDRESS ISSUES OF FOOD SECURITY

HARITHAMITHRAM : Training in Organic Farming

The programme of developing Harithamithram and disseminating organic farming and manure is being done in collaboration with Kunnathukal labour bank and LSG's. Women would be given ongoing training and provided seeds and manure like vermi compost. Constant training on gender issues and farming are being held for Harithamithras to build up their solidarity and recognition as women farmers. The haritamitrams have become service providers in the block panchayat and the block panchayat has set apart a budget of 6 lakhs for the programme. They have also been upgraded as resource persons. The programme was envisaged to address the issues of food security and make available good food for the community.





STATUS STUDY OF WOMEN : A Tool for Education

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Status study of women using focused group discussions as methodology was conducted in each panchayat. This is to basically understand the status of women, the level of empowerment they have achieved after intervention of KMSS and to envisage programmes for the future keeping in mind the issues and problems realized from FGD's. The focused Groups Discussions included issues of marriage, dowry, education, access to education, health, reproductive health, sexuality, work participation rate, Kudumbashree, political participation, violence, etc. Data was compiled and consolidated and reports prepared. These reports were then presented in front of LSG's in all 4 blocks and there were several responses from the elected Representatives. Based on this, our sevinis received official invitation to participate in development seminar and in Chirayinkeezh block, we could prepare and submit Integrated Women's Development Project, which was accepted by the block and is being submitted to TAC. Similarly in Vamanapuram we submitted some projects in the Development seminar. Hence, we could actualize gender planning and gender budgeting to a great extent and we could get space to write and present projects, usually done only by implementation officials.





GENDER EDUCATION OF TEACHERS Collaborating with Social Welfare Department

Gender education of teachers was completed at the state level and district level by formation of state resource group and block resource group. State resource group comprises of DIET faculty, BRC trainers, CDPO and ICDS supervisors. The response from all districts was overwhelming in the inculcation of gender concepts. The State resource group workshop held in Trivandrum had life-skill education, child rights and gender education as its component. The state resource group members who argued about the status of women in the initial exercise called 'sociogram' later realized the need for gender equity through gender division of labour, discussion and clarification of gender concepts,



adolescence, sexual behaviour, child abuse and counseling. Several teachers also felt that they had never taken into consideration the emotions of children while teaching them and the atmosphere had not been child friendly. The State Resource Group members had a planning session in the

districts and later a district level workshop was held in all districts and district level resource group was formed and the response was positive. SRG meeting was convened to discuss the district level meetings and the demand to conduct the block level meetings is high. There was a suggestion to incorporate life-skills within the gender education module. The proposal submitted to social welfare department for the gender education of teachers was accepted and the financial support was extended. A series of follow-up meetings was held in each district on the themes of gender planning in education. Following this, workshop was facilitated for teacher's unions and the response was positive. The plan now is to convene gender education of teachers at the block level and undertake action research in some schools to achieve gender equity.



GENDER SENSITIZATION WORKSHOP FOR VARIOUS FUNCTIONARIES

Collaborating with Kerala State Planning Board

The gender training programmes, as part of the project on the preparation of Human Development Index in Kerala undertaken by the Planning Board was held in the districts of Ernakulam, Wayanad, Kottayam and Kannur.

REPORT ON GENDER TRAINING WORKSHOP

In relation to the United Nations Development Programme to prepare the human development indicators, the Planning Board asked Mahila Samakhya to conduct gender training and a proposal was submitted including module for gender training. The training was held in the districts of Ernakulam, Kottayam, Kannur and Wayanad on 15th and 16th December 2008, 22nd and 23rd December 2008, 5th and 6th January 2009 and 29th and 30th January 2009 respectively. The training was attended by circle inspector, sub inspector, Assistant educational officers, ICDS supervisors, Health Inspectors, CDS Chairperson etc. The training was for two days and non- residential. The number of participants were 42 in Ernakulam, 28 in Kottayam, 35 in Kannur and 38 in Wayanad.





The training session began with an introduction about Mahila Samakhya and the training programme. The discussion on the status of women was done through the exercise called sociogram where the participants were asked to divide into two groups, those who believed that when compared to other states, the status of woman in Kerala was better than that of other states and those who believed that it was not better than that of other states. Those who were confused were asked to stand in between. This exercise in all districts began with the participants especially men vehemently arguing that the status of women was much better than other states quoting conventional indicators like literacy rates, maternal mortality and infant mortality rates, etc. Educational achievements and economic empowerment through kudumbashree was quoted as major indicators for the empowerment of women in Kerala. But those who believed that women's status in Kerala was behind the women in other states said that issues like violence against women, molestation, lack of mobility, etc affected women's status. The discussion was consolidated by the facilitator by explaining the difference in between the position and status of women. Looking at the conventional indicators like the level of literacy, maternal and infant mortality, life expectancy, sex ratio, etc the position of women in Kerala is favourable. But when one looks at the non-conventional indicators, the status of women shows a disturbing trend. Women's access to property is low. The ability to incur income from property is also low. The work participation rate of women is abysmally low. Control over body and fertility is low. Violence against women whether in the domestic spheres or public spaces is high. Gender segregation is pervasive and affects the personality development of children and also leads to several gender issues. Mobility is extremely restricted. Political participation and cultural participation is extremely low and the decision making capacity in all matters is extremely restricted. Though women were increasingly subjected to poverty due to macro-economic policies, micro-credit programmes operated through women. Kudumbashree programme in Kerala had succeeded in enhancing the visibility of women but women had also become increasingly indebted and very few women engaged in productive activities.

In Ernakulam, the participants argued that the education of women in Kerala was high. They enjoyed more freedom and enjoyed property belonging to matrilineal families. They enjoyed recognition, had several educational opportunities, had increased non-formal knowledge and did not suffer from subjugation. The opposition group argued that women did not enjoy security. They argued that women were women's enemies. But the



group who expressed confusion argued that it was the circumstances that caused violence against women. A group talked about how women worked several hours of the day and did not even have time to understand public affairs. In Kannur, the session on the status of women was facilitated by Asha Jose, faculty, KILA. They strongly argued that there was no dowry issue in Kannur.

Followed by the discussion on status of women in Kerala, participants were asked to divide into groups and discuss the roles, responsibilities and qualities expected from society. All the groups made interesting presentations about the differential roles, responsibilities and qualities.

After consolidating this session, the next session was gender division of labour where the participants were divided into groups and given situations of men and women from different communities and to look at how they spend 24 hours of their day. It was realised that women spend more time doing invisible work. They carry multiple burden of work irrespective of the community they belong to. Conceptual clarity regarding gender division of labour and how certain jobs are relegated to men and certain to women were discussed and how these become specialisations were discussed.

This was followed by an input session on gender concepts and patriarchy and how gender is socially and culturally constructed through the process of socialisation. This is perpetuated through the institutions of family, society, religion, legal systems etc. The construction of masculinity and femininity was explained and how children were inculcated into these roles was elucidated.

Following this, gender and development was explained through power-point presentation. The shift from women in development to gender and development was elaborated upon through case-studies. In Ernakulam, this session was facilitated by Neena Joseph from IMG who gave examples of some projects and asked for an analysis. The Nepal project gave women cattle but in their culture, women tended after the cattle and girl children helped their mothers. So seemingly the project benefited women and enhanced their income but the girls dropped from schools. Boys went to school regularly.

The next day began with a re-look at the previous day and then gender and decentralisation was discussed. The positive changes with the 73rd and 74th amendment, 10% set apart for women's component plan, 33% reservation for women as elected representatives, 50% representation of women in grama sabhas, working groups and development seminars. The participation of women in kudumbashrees and jagratha



samithis is an extremely positive step. Criticisms about the actual implementation of WCP and inability to convert strategic needs to projects was also discussed.

This was followed by the session on gender planning, budgeting and auditing using power-point presentation. The session was elucidated with several examples. Gender planning and budgeting is not a separate process of planning and budgeting but the method through which gender needs are incorporated into planning and budgeting. The difference in between practical needs and strategic needs was explained. The incorporation of strategic needs into women's component plan was discussed. In Ernakulam, the session on gender planning and budgeting was facilitated by Sudarshanabhai, faculty, KILA.

Following this a discussion on violence against women was conducted with the help of case studies. The participants were divided into groups and discussions conducted case studies had to be analysed and presented. Then an input session on various forms of violence and the places where violence took place was discussed. In Wayanad, there was a vociferous argument about the efficacy of the prevention of domestic violence act and how these laws did not cater to men's needs. The stereotypical assumption that women are women's enemies was strongly debated.

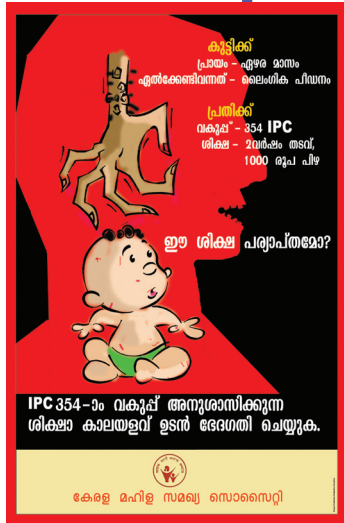
The final session was on legal measures and systems for the protection of women. The constitutional provisions, the laws like the dowry prohibition act, the prevention of domestic violence act, sexual abuse laws were discussed. The session was facilitated by Adv. Rajasri, Human Rights Law Network. The workshop ended with an evaluation. The evaluation was extremely positive and they appreciated the participatory methodology of the workshop.



COMBATING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Strengthening Jagratha Samithy

Our Sevinis participated as resource persons in ToT of jagratha samithi at KILA and facilitated training for Jagratha samithi in training centers at Trivandrum and Kottayam. Now, our Sevinis are engaged in strengthening jagrathasamithi in each LSG. Jagratha samithi has been constituted under the state government’s initiative for addressing issues of violence, discrimination and exploitation of women and includes panchayat president, ICDS supervisor, doctor, lawyers, police personnel and elected women representative, CDS chairperson of Kudumbasree, SC/ST representative and representative from Anganavaadi workers. Several awareness programmes are being held at the ward level to help strengthen jagratha samithy and address issues of violence. KMSS has registered as service providers under the prevention of Domestic Violence Act, 2005.





ADOLESCENT SANGAMOMS

Adolescent Sangamom was an effort to bring together adolescents from various panchayats. Our MSK children also participated in the sangamom. This is a step towards the formation of federation among adolescents to enable them to prevent violence and exploitation in their lives and be conscious about their rights. Four adolescent camps comprising of 100 children each were held in the 4 blocks. The camps were of 5 days



duration and included adolescents from each LSG in the block and MSKs. The main sessions were environment education, nutrition focusing on organic food and organic farming, folk songs, child rights, gender, sex education etc. Participatory methodologies like theatre, songs and dance were used and every evening was adorned with cultural performances for

adolescents. With respect to gender and sexuality sessions, adolescents came up with presentations of how groups of adolescents like KMSS can help address issues of violence and discrimination. Following this, a group of adolescent girls were given ToT and they facilitated sessions on environment, gender, issues of adolescents etc. Following this, one-day workshops are being held in each panchayat in which around 100 to 120 children are participating and the children are themselves taking initiative in chairing the entire





programme and talking to other adolescents. The basic objective is to form networking of adolescents, which will help them combat issues of violence.

Adolescent sangamam was held in Idukki in which 1000 adolescents participated. This was a culmination of the several adolescent programmes held in each panchayat where children facilitated the workshops. There were several parallel sessions on environment, gender, culture and several dance and song performances. The team from Sarang performed various items like kalaripaitu, folk songs and dance, musical instruments like the flute, etc. This initiative is part of girl's education on various social issues, increasing feeling of solidarity and building up self-confidence. This is a culmination of the several adolescent programmes held in each panchayat where children facilitated the workshops.

At present, KMSS has started working with groups of boys and girls in 3 phases in each panchayat where the first workshop is on environment, the second media and third on gender. This is an effort to bring together adolescent boys and girls and build friendship in between both genders.



CONSULTATION ON CHILD ABUSE LAWS & FRAMING OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE BILL

A one-day consultation was convened on “Child Abuse” in collaboration with child welfare department. The study undertaken by Ministry of women and child welfare with the support of UNICEF and Prayas covered 13 states including Kerala. As a follow-up of the study, it was essential to have a state consultation to assess the situation of children undergoing abuse and chalk out plan and programmes to counter all kinds of abuse.

With this perspective in mind and as a follow-up of the consultation by women and child welfare ministry, we conducted a one-day state level consultation on child abuse, in collaboration with Social Welfare Department. All agencies like Juvenile home functionaries, members of child welfare committee and other organizations working with children, participated in the consultation.

As a follow-up of this consultation, several rounds of consultation were held with the functionaries of the social welfare department, child welfare committees, juvenile justice board, etc. Discussions were held on the children’s code bill and suggestions submitted to Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer, Chairperson, Law reform committee. Finally, after discussion with the social welfare department and the Law Minister, it was decided to work only on the bill on child sexual abuse laws. A 2 day workshop including members of the National child rights commission was held on the 25th and 26th of July and a draft bill was prepared. The bill will be discussed with a wider group of social workers before it is submitted to the government. This is engaging in a process of advocacy on the issue Kerala is grappling with at present.



WOMEN'S DAY CELEBRATION

March 8, women's day celebration was held for nine days where several issues were raised. On March 1st, in Vamanapuram, sessions were facilitated on the perspective towards health and health care, organic farming and food security, use of pesticides and impact on health and the indiscriminate use of genetically modified seeds. Following this, all panchayats expressed their readiness to incorporate harita mitram project in their plan.

March 2nd and 9th was set apart for senior women and the celebration was held in Veli in Thiruvananthapuram and at Munnar in Idukki. The women aged above 60 years expressed their happiness, shared their experiences and sang and danced. It was for the first time that they were going on a tour.



On March 3rd, the study regarding the implementation of NREGS was presented and the meeting attended by the Mission Director, Shri Jitendran IAS and members

of the monitoring committee like Satish Chandra and Mini Sukumar and the panchayat members and CDS and ADS representatives. It was for the first time that a scheme had addressed the question of equal wages and the programme aimed at eco-restoration and had to be based on water shed plan but in reality, due to lack of clarity, the project only involved women in sanitation work. They were not provided any protective tools and had bruised their hands and feet. The issues were raised and this was followed by experience sharing by all panchayat members and the panchayats requested informative sessions on NREGS based on water shed plan.

On March 4th, the study on the reproductive health issues of tribal women in Adimali and Devikulam blocks of Idukki district was conducted and presented in Adimali



in the seminar attended by tribal women, NRHM co-ordinators, kanis (tribal leaders) and doctors. After the presentation of the study findings, the tribal women spoke about their issues and it was decided to visit each interior hamlet and make a core group of tribal women, vyatasis and Asha volunteers to monitor the reproductive health condition of women.

On March 6th, a discussion on strengthening jagratha samithis in each panchayat to combat violence was held. The participants were elected representatives, CDS chairpersons and the sessions were facilitated by Justice Sreedevi, Madanmohan, Faculty, KILA and Dr. Jayaprakash, Psychiatrist. The elected representatives demanded that the sevini should be part of the jagratha samithi and asked for Mahila Samakhyas's support in reaching out at the ward level.



On March 8th, women's day celebration was held in collaboration with Social welfare department. Around 1000 women participated in the programme. The women's policy of the government was discussed by Dr. T.N. Seema. Dr. Usha Titus, secretary, Social Welfare Department



gave the inaugural address and Sarada Muralidharan, Director, Kudumbashree and Advisor, Gender Board, spoke to the women and the experiences of how they had outlived their difficulties.

On March 9th, the programme was with elderly women in Idukki and the sharing of their life experiences. Women considered this as the most treasurable and memorable experiences of their life.

On March 14th, women's day celebration was held at Nilambur panchayat in which 850 women participated. This was a continuation of the several programmes held against dowry in the panchayat. Dowry issues were strongly raised. Women achievers from various fields were felicitated and they shared the seat with other dignitaries on the dias. There were cultural programmes like drama, dance, songs etc which were also based on the theme of dowry. This programme was a continuation of the various programmes held as part of the campaign on dowry. The campaign was inaugurated by MP Sachin Pilot and there were several rounds of discussions with religious leaders. There was a 3 day camp with various sections of society.



EDUCATIONAL INTERVENTION IN ATHIYANNUR BLOCK IN RELATION TO CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE RELATED TO TOURISM

Mahila Samakhya decided to expand its programme to Athiyannur. The expansion began with the discussion of MS concept in the Athiyannur block followed by discussions on child sexual abuse related to tourism. The response to the issue was overwhelming, Elected representatives, CDS members and anganawadi workers felt that this was a major issue which affected the entire area/community. There was a suggestion to strengthen jagratha samithis, have life – skill education workshop for adolescents and discussions among religious groups.

This was followed by MS orientation and conceptual clarity in each panchayat. In all the 6 panchayats of Kottukal, Karimkulam, Kanjiramkulam, Vizhinjam, Vengannur and Athiyannur, the participants were elected representatives, CDS and ADS members and the basic issues addressed were dowry, child sexual abuse and high level of domestic violence. Tourism related child sexual abuse was common specially of boys but as it drew income, the parents were silent about it.

The workshop with teachers in a school in Kottukal and meetings in anganwadis revealed that children especially after 7th standard, dropped out in large numbers and fell into rackets of youth who allured them into practices like sexual exploitation, drug abuse and alcoholism. They were hardly obedient to teachers and did not abide by what the teachers said. They expressed their anger and resentment often by bunking classes together, indulging in alcoholism, etc . Meetings in anganwadis revealed that several girls were drop-out and merely awaiting marriages. Sanitation issues were extremely severe and women and girls had to go to toilets only in the darkness of the night.

Workshops were held for all anganwadi workers in Athiyannur block where child rights and gender concepts were discussed. The workshops held on the 18th and 19th of June had 83 participants. It was decided to conduct a study about child sexual abuse among adolescent children and anganawadi workers were keen and enthusiastic about having workshops on life – skills for adolescents. The workers said that such exploitation of children especially males was quite common but ignored by parents as it produced income to the family. Women engaging in prostitution as part of tourism was also common. They felt that vigilance committees for monitoring tourism should also be formed.



Orientation programme for anganwadi workers, ADS and CDS was held in Venganoor on 24/06/2009, 30/06/2009 in Athiyannur and 01/07/2009 in Vizhinjam. The workshop for anganawadi workers focused on issues of child rights and gender and gender concepts for CDS and ADS representatives. Several issues of domestic violence and escalating demand for dowry. In Vizhinjam and Venganoor, child sexual abuse related to tourism was commonly raised.

Orientation programme for anganawadi teachers, CDS & ADS members was held in Athiyannur panchayat on 26/06/2009, in Vizhinjam on 17/06/2009 and in Vengannur on 20/06/2009. Anganawadi teachers came with similar responses.

An sensitization workshop for youth was held at Adimalathura on 05/07/2009 in which there were 200 participants in which they talked about how they were influenced by the rackets and how the boys who succumbed to tourists needs were taken to countries like Switzerland.





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In Kanjiramkulam, MS orientation programme was held on 04/07/2009 where the major issues of discussion were child sexual abuse, domestic violence and dowry. There were 70 participants in the programme.

Adolescent workshop was held in Vizhinjam in which there were 111 participants. The major issues discussed in adolescent workshop was child rights, gender and a questionnaire focusing on child rights, gender and abuse especially sexual abuse was given to children for completion and children demanded counseling centers.

Sensitization on gender and child rights was provided for girls students on 07/08/2009 in which there were participants from Athiyannur panchayat. The issues focused on were child rights, gender and child abuse.

MS orientation programme was held in kanjiramkulam panchayat on 03/07/2009 in which there were 100 participants. Adolescent programme was held on 11/07/2009 in which 100 adolescents participated in kanjiramkulam panchayat. The children filled up the questionnaire which is being consolidated. Adolescent programmes were facilitated on the 4th of July in Chavady, Kanjiramkulam, St. Mary's church, Vizhinjam, Kovalam and kottapuram in which 100 adolescents participated. The major issues discussed were child rights, gender issues and abuse with special focus on child sexual abuse.

There is a major demand for more workshops in schools. So the focus would be on workshops in schools, discussions for youth and open learning centers for youth who have dropped out.



DISCUSSION WITH SANITATION DEPARTMENT

Proposal was submitted to rural department about the lack of sanitation in kudis and with the help of sanitation mission, meeting was convened in Adimali block in which sanitation officers and MS participated and a list of toilets to be constructed was compiled. The sanitation mission has approved our demand for toilets in Kudis. Due to the destruction of forests and coming up of plantations, women hardly have the open spaces to use toilets and go to the insecticide ridden plantations for their ablutions. In Vattavada panchayat of Devikulam block in Idukki, a marathon effort was made to develop a plan for understanding the deficit of toilets and engage in construction of toilets. The plan was developed with sangha women and submitted to the sanitation mission.



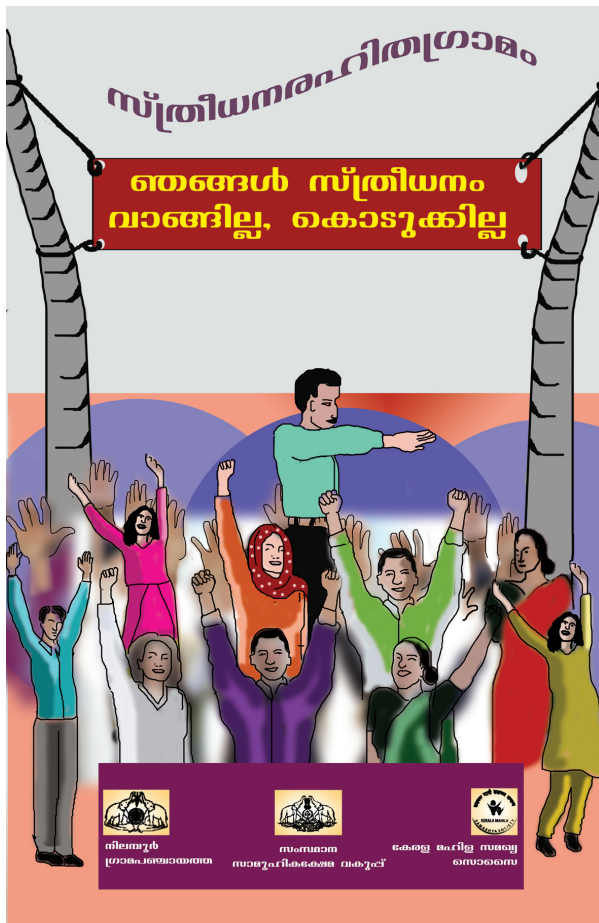


DOWRY FREE VILLAGE CAMPAIGN

Dowry Free village Campaign is another such innovative attempt undertaken by both the panchayat and Kerala Mahila Samakhya Society. The status study of women conducted in Nilambur revealed that 80% of women had given dowry and several faced desertion. Women hardly had access to property rights and no decision making roles, either within the family or in public spaces. Dowry was hardly used by women but basically handled by men and his family members. Dowry was mostly in the form of gold or cash. Dowry demands existed prior to and following marriage and was the major reason behind desertion. Early marriages and lack of education, even being bereft of vocational, technical education or life-skills to fend for themselves due to gendered norms of socialization left women in critical condition. Desertion is considered as a tabooed condition and several

covert societal restrictions are imposed upon women. Women, especially from Muslim communities have an early marriage as their value in the marriage market descends after a particular age. Commodification of women is a common trend which severally affects their status.

Kudumbasree and other government programmes like SSA have impacted on education of girl children and women's entry into public forums. Kudumbashree has enhanced visibility into public domains but not affected the stereotypical patriarchal norms and gendered relations. Women have entered more into various forms of voluntary work as Asha's, ADS of Kudumbashree and engaging in developmental work mostly as passive implementers of the programme and have no role in decision-making forums or capacities.





Workshop on the dream of achieving a dowry-free village – January 14th, 15th, 16th 2009

The campaign began with a 3 day workshop which had around 100 participants including religious leaders, youth and women from the CDS and ADS bodies of Kudumbashree. The facilitator stimulated participants dreams about and vision towards a dowry-free village, resources of the panchayat, the social issues and problems they encounter and the solutions arrived at especially for tackling the issue of dowry. The workshop led to all the participants pledging for a dowry-free village and that they would not accept or give dowry.

It is in such a context that the dowry-free village campaign was initiated. The campaign was inaugurated by Hon. MP, Sachin Pilot and attended by MPs, MLA, elected representatives and religious leaders from various religious organization like MET, ISI, etc.

Discussions were held with Mahal Committees in each ward and they compined

with the opinion of making Nilambur a dowry free village. Since Mahal committees playing an influential role in solemnizing marriages, their position on the issue has a decisive role. They have expressed their solidarity in this campaign.

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കേരള മഹിള സമഖ്യ സൊസൈറ്റി

Panchayat level registration for Dowry Free Villages

Registration for dowry-free panchayat was conducted on 13th of June 2009. The registration included registration of the names of young men and women in between the ages of 14 and 30 years. The form includes the perspective of the head of household towards marriage whether they prefer “dowry-free” or “dowry paying” marriages or have they not