

Report
One-day SHG women Training programme
On
Human Rights in Delhi



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Introduction

One- day training programme on Human Rights was organized for the women members of Self Help Groups (SHGs) of in Delhi. These SHGs are promoted by Mar Thoma Social Action, New Delhi and the training programme was organized in cooperation with the SHG promoter. The training programme was sponsored by National Human Rights Commission (NHRC).

Objectives of the Programmes

The major objectives of the training programme were to sensitize the women member of SHGs, who are from poor and marginalized communities, about the various aspects of human rights. It aims at the empowerment of women members of SHGs who participate and further take it to co-members of the respective SHG and their neighbours through their active interactions in the society. Various Acts and UN conventions related to human rights such as Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993; The Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976; Child Labour Issues & Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986; SC/ST issues & Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, Civil Liberties Act, 1988 & The Forest Rights Act, 2006; UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 1979 and UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989 and its optional protocols were among the main topics of the training programme.

Self Help Groups: Strategies and Training Approach

Self Help Group (SHG) is a group in which members provide each other with various types of help for a particular shared cause. These groups are organized and led by lay people, rather than professionals. An SHG normally cover 10-20 members, while one member represents a family and an SHG group covers 10-20 families. Though some of the SHGs are formed without any external support most of them are evolved under different categories of projects and programmes. By and large, local NGOs provide continuous support services to these SHGs as local promoters. These SHGs meet regularly as some of them hold weekly meetings some others meet either fortnightly or monthly. The agenda of their meetings, by and large, include various aspects of the ongoing micro-credit operations, employment and various government schemes, basic services such as drinking water, toilets, drainage, housing, education, etc. They have great potential in increasing awareness about human rights among members and non-SHG members of their community. In our training programme women SHG members are the means and end beneficiaries.

Self Help Groups which have become a powerful social capital¹ in slum areas of State of Delhi are taken as the target groups for the training programme. The general perception is that SHGs are formed only for economic gain. However, SHGs can become the agents of development in addressing the injustice behind the exclusion, deprivation and disempowerment of the poor. Keeping in view that social capital of women-based SHG members have tremendous potential in addressing the issues of human rights specially women, child and people coming from the poor and marginalized community, the participants were selected from the members of SHGs promoted by the Marthoma Social Action, New Delhi. Women members are in better position to create awareness among other SHGs members, their families and neighbours to enable them to seek rights and justice. SHG leaders could bring human rights issues of co-members, family members or even neighbours in these SHG meetings and seek remedial measures. Thus it is visualized that the coverage of the programme through a small group can be expanded through using the social capital of SHGs.

Content/Material: KDS Delhi has prepared the training material in as a simplified booklet in Hindi using the training inputs of NHRC. The training kits contain various provisions of human rights relevant to the target groups.

Participants: On 15 November, 2014, the training programme was organized at Mar Thoma Child Development Center, A-11, Mandir Mohalla, Samaypur, Delhi. A total of 121 women members of twenty-three different SHGs participated in the training programme. They are members of the SHGs promoted by the Marthoma Social Action, New Delhi. Active participation was reflected by the keenness of women in discussing their personal experiences with regard to right to education, voting rights, child marriage, etc. The group representing the varied age class i.e. below 23 to above 52 years of women members raised a number of questions related to the process of sending their complaints to the Human Rights Commission in case of human rights violation. It may be noted that about 35 per cent participants never attended schools while the remaining participants have school education.

Training Sessions: The training programme comprised of Inaugural session, four technical sessions and valedictory session.

¹Social Capital refers to such features of social organization like trust, norms and networks that can help to improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions.



Shri. T. K. Mathew, CEO, Deepalaya is inaugurating the training programme

Inaugural Session: The inaugural session was chaired by Rev. Eapen Abraham, President, Mar Thoma Social Action, Shri. T. K. Mathew, CEO, Deepalaya had inaugurated the training programme. Dr. Jacob John, President KDS delivered the keynote address and introduced the structure of the programme. Rev. Rency Thomas, Shri K. Joy kutty, Shri Alex C Joseph and Shri T.M. Abraham had addressed participants.



Rev. Eapen Abraham, President, Mar Thoma Social Action, address the Inaugural Session

Technical Programme Sessions: Training programme had four different technical sessions. Ms. Mohini, Lawyer in Delhi, Mr. Md. Umar Ansari, SHG trainer from Bihar, Ms. Jyothi Prem, Executive Director, Oasis Charitable Trust, Delhi and Mr. Jaji Varghese, Mar Thoma social Action, were the resource persons who had taken technical sessions.



Dr. Jacob John, President KDS delivering the keynote address

Session I: In the first session of the programme, Ms. Mohini, introduced the term “Human Rights”. In the introductory session, she talked about the constitutional provisions relating to human rights. Participants were asked certain questions to assess their awareness level. Articles mentioned in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, 1948 were explained with the help of various illustrations. Issues of human rights related to marriage, voting, employment, child education etc. were discussed. Experience sharing by the participants was the part of the session.



Ms. Mohini delivering Human rights session

Session II: Mr. Md. Umar Ansari, presented the provisions of Acts related to the human rights Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993. He explained the background, organizational set up and working of the human rights institutions in India. Functioning of National Human Rights Commission and State Human Rights Commission were discussed. The participants were explained about the process of sending a complaint to the Human Rights Commission and redressal mechanism.



Mr. Md. Umar Ansari addresses the participants

Session III: Ms. Jyothi Prem, Executive Director, Oasis Charitable Trust, Rohini, dealt with the major issues of rights of women and children. She discussed the significance of development and protection of a child recognizing as children are asset of India. She asked women to fight for the dignity of girl child by using the social capital of SHGs. She elaborated the National Policy for Children 1974 which outlines services the State for the complete development of a child, before and after birth. Women's Right was another important section covered during the session. Ms. Jyothi Prem highlighted the UN Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against Women, 1979. Women members of the self help groups showed great interest in sharing their experience during this session.



Ms. Jyothi Prem, Executive Director, Oasis Charitable Trust, Rohini addresses the Participants

Session IV: In the fourth session, Mr. Jaji Varghese, Mar Thoma Social Action, dwelt on the issues of bonded labour: the reason for the prevalence of such systems in our society. He provided detailed information on the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976. He discussed the human rights issues of Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribes. The programme followed the discussion cum lecture methodology. Two video clippings on bonded labour and child labor were presented to the participants and a detailed discussion was held.



Mr. Jaji Varghese, Mar Thoma Social Action is delivering Training Session IV

Valedictory Session

In the valedictory session, the feedback from the participants were presented and discussed. Mr. P. T. Chacko, Marthoma Social Action coordinated this session.

Impact of the Training Programmes and Way Forward

In the training programme a total of 121 Women Self Help Group members were trained on human rights. During various sessions of the training programmes, the grievances of several participants including certain violations of human rights were presented and discussed. The participants were from poor families and marginalized communities. Most of the women members of SHGs do not have any regular income or employment. Their awareness level about various aspects of human rights is abysmally low. SHG network can play a critical role in widespread dissemination on human rights.



Team of Resource Persons

In the state of Delhi a large numbers of SHGs are already formed slum areas. In addition, SHG clusters/ associations/federations are formed. This process is still being continued under various programmes of government and non-government agencies. The network of woman SHGs have become a powerful social capital. The social capital of poor women- SHGs can be effectively used in any programmes to provide access to justice.

In fact, the accessibility of justice and human rights to women belonging to poor families and marginalized communities is poor in many States and hence these woman SHGs can be means and ends of such training programmes. Such approach of conducting training programme can be used and applied in other Indian states as well. Social capital of women-based SHG members have tremendous potential in addressing the issues of human rights violation faced by people from poor families and marginalized communities. SHG leaders can bring grievances and issues of co-members, family members or even neighbors in these SHG meetings and seek remedial measures. It shows that the coverage of the training programmes for marginalized people can be expanded through using the social capital of SHGs.

To conclude, our experience shows that SHGs can become the agents of development in addressing the injustice behind the exclusion, deprivation and disempowerment of the poor. Direct beneficiaries of the project are women from poor families are marginalized communities. Most of the indirect beneficiaries are family members of the direct beneficiaries and co-members of SHGs.