

**REPORT ON THE  
SEMINAR ON EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN –  
“TREAT WOMEN AS EQUAL PARTNERS ON ROAD TO DEVELOPMENT  
AND EMPOWERMENT”**

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## **Inaugural Programme**

### **Seminar on Empowerment of Women – “Treat Women as Equal Partners on Road for Development and Empowerment”**

**Date – 27.2.2013**

**Venue – Yalana Hotel Shillong**

**Chief Guest** - *Padmashree (Smt) T. Phanbuh*  
*Chairperson*  
*Meghalaya State Commission for Women*

**Guest of Honour** - *Dr. Sulochana Vasudevan*  
*Senior Project Advisor & Nodal Officer*  
*National Mission for Empowerment of Women Govt. of India*

9.00 -9.45 am	<b>Registration</b>		
	Anchor	:	Shri. Gregory Kharumnuid Lecturer St. Anthony’s College
10.00 - 11.00 am	Inaugural Session	:	
10.00 - 10.05 am	Bouquet Presentation	:	
10.05 - 10.10 am	Welcome and Introductory Address	:	Ms. L. N Jyrwa Mission Director State Resource Centre for Women Meghalaya
10.10 - 10.25 am	Speech	:	Dr. (Mrs) M. K. Marak Director Health Services (MCH & FW) Meghalaya
10.25 - 10.45 am	Key note Address	:	Dr. Sulochana Vasudevan Senior Project Advisor & Nodal Officer National Mission for Empowerment of Women Govt. of India Guest of Honour
10.45 - 11.10 am	Inaugural Address	:	Padmashree (Smt) T. Phanbuh Chairperson Meghalaya State Commission for Women Chief Guest
11.10 - 11.20 am	Vote of thanks	:	Ms. I.Rapthap Asst. Coordinator State Resource Centre for Women Meghalaya
			Light Refreshment

**Presentation of Bouquets**



Padmashree T. Phanbuh  
Chairperson  
Meghalaya State Commission for Women  
Chief Guest



Dr.Sulochana Vasudevan  
Senior Project Advisor & Nodal Officer  
NMEW Government of India  
Guest of Honour



Shri.T.Dkhar I.A.S  
Commissioner & Secretary  
Social Welfare  
Meghalaya



Shri. H. M. Shangpliang M.C.S  
Director Social Welfare  
Meghalaya

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Highlights -**

With a view to ensure effective convergence mechanism of key partners that will transform and inspire overall development and empowerment of women. A seminar on Empowerment of Women a theme “ Treat Women as Equal Partners on Road to Development an Empowerment was organized by the State Resource Centre for women as one of the aims of NMEW Government of India. The objective is to promote a holistic development and empowerment of women, gender equality and gender justice through inter – sectoral convergence of programmes impacting women, forging synergy amongst various stakeholders and creating a conducive environment to social change.

The seminar was held on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2013 at Yalana Hotel Shillong for officials of line departments, NGO’s and Educational Institutions. All together there are 61 (Sixty one) participants attending the seminar.

**Welcome and introductory address by Smt. L. N. Jyrwa, Mission Director, State Resource Centre for Women.** I am delighted to have the pleasant task of welcoming the distinguished gathering for today’s programme seminar on Empowerment of Women – Treat Women as Equal Partners on Road to Development and Empowerment.

We are honoured this morning by the presence of Padmashree Mrs. T. Phanbuh Chairperson Meghalaya State Commission for Women. Thank you for consenting to be the Chief Guest at today’s programme. I Warmly welcome the Guest of Honour Dr. Sulochana Vasudevan Senior Project Adviser and Nodal Officer National Mission for Empowerment of Women Govt. of India for your presence and inspiration, inspite of busy scheduled.

I extend a warm welcome to Shri. T. S. Dkhar Commissioner & Secretary to the Govt of Meghalaya Social Welfare Department, H. M. Shangpliang Director of

Social Welfare, Dr. M.K. Marak Director DHS (MI), officials from line department, Dr M. P. R. Lyngdoh Adviser Lynmpung ki Seng Kynthai, NGO's, faculty members and lecturers of Lady Keane College, Women's College, Media print and electronics. I also welcome the eminent resource person who would be enlightening us on the related subject.

Women constitute 50% of the India's / country population. Society cannot progress without empowering 50% of its population viz Women. The importance of women as valuable Human Resource was recognised by the Constitution of India, which not accorded equality to women but also empowered the state to adopt measures of positive discrimination on their favours. A number of articles of the constitution specially reiterated and commitment towards the socio – economic development of women and upholding their political reviewing the scenario's in the North Eastern States, we may say that in Meghalaya we are a matrilineal society and as such are at par with the menfolks, however here too there is discrimination against women. This is true in the other North Eastern States also where women are forced to play second fiddle to their men counterpart.

Women voices can be heard only if they are organised as a group and work collectively keeping in view the theme of today's seminar, it calls for visionary leadership, Political Will and Courage of Conviction to expand the democratic space for women in socio – cultural, economic, educational and political spheres. There is also an urgent need in networking and linkages of Government, Educational Institutions, University, Rangbah Shnong (Local Headman) civil society, NGO's, at every level and in every sector by mainstreaming and promote gender equality and economic empowerment.

Dr. M. K. Marak, focused on women with special emphasis on Health related issues and stated that due to difficult terrain, many of the villages in the state are inaccessible to health services. She stated that maternal mortality and infant mortality rate has improved in these last two years in the state, however there is scope for improvement and calls for concerted efforts to address the issue effectively by Government, civil society and NGOS. Dr. Marak also mentioned that Maternal Mortality Rate, anemia are amongst the persisting problems in the

state. The reasons for high MMR are due to anemia and teenage pregnancy. Infact, it is a challenging task to reduce IMR, MMR, anemia, access to health facilities and problems of malnutrition which still continues require of proactive role of convergence of all concerned line departments such as Health, Social Welfare, Community, NGO's to take on these challenges.

**Keynote address by**  
**Dr. Sulochana Vasudevan,**  
*Senior Project Advisor & Nodal Officer*  
*National Mission for Empowerment of Women Govt. of India*



I am indeed honoured to be part of this proceeding in this beautiful town of Shillong, where I have come after many many years. It was of course, less crowded with slower pace of life and more pristine then.

I was keen to make this brief intervention for two reasons, one is of course to briefly outline the role of NMEW and make you aware of this new organization at the centre. Secondly, my aim was to suggest to this august group that the topic such as what has been taken up for this daylong seminar covers a large canvass. Therefore, even while outlying the steps necessary to make women equal partner



in economic development, the house may focus on how to enhance the 4 E's for women in this development story. These are education, employment including skill development, entrepreneurship, and environment (including health care and better living standard). If we ensure improvement in these four areas, two other E's namely equality and economic empowerment of women will follow.

NMEW has been set up to work for the socio-economic empowerment of women and is headed by and works on a mission mode with less than two years completed. Its activities are still at nascent stage. Though, it has taken up varied steps and multi-pronged activities for economic empowerment for women, participation of States and UTs are sine quo non for its success.

At present NMEW is working in an important area viz the task of improving child sex ratio in the country which has shown a dismal trend of negative growth in recent decade. It has planned to adopt two hundred districts across the country. Although, Meghalaya has had a health CSR of 974 which compares well world standard, 2011 census reveal a decline by -3% this should be a cause of concern to us. The fall in CSR at the national level and in some states was seen to be alarmingly high.

I would like to flag three other issues for the seminar to focus on.

- Work participation of women as recently shown a fall nationally, particularly in organized sector including Service sector, this needs to be addressed. There is a strong need to improve the skills of women in north-eastern to ensure that they play an "inclusive role" in the Nation's Development Story. In fact, there are 100 million jobs is for asking in the manufacturing sector which would empower women for better placement. However, the manufacturing policy and guidelines needs to be endangered if we need to link up women with better skills.
- There is a need to organize women in Micro and Small Enterprises more effectively through effective financing and marketing and by organizing them into collectives and cooperatives. In the procurement policy of MSME sector, certain percentage needs to be earmarked for women that will draw more women into Micro and Macro Enterprises. Government of Meghalaya can play an important even if benign role.
- Improve the environment by providing better health care (more hospitals so that ratio of bed per 100 populations improves), clean water and access to sanitation. Finally I recognize that the North- East States are the new providers of skilled manpower to the engine of growth in the country. Workforce from these regions is seen in service sector and in organized industry and BPOs in large number. Their education and training is what sustaining this trend, I think grater efforts are needed to ensure

At the very outset, Smt. T. Phanbuh thanks Ms. L. N. Jyrwa Mission Director State Resource Centre for Women, Shri T. Dkhar Commissioner & Secretary Social Welfare, Shri H. M. Shangliang Director Social Welfare, Dr. M. K. Marak DHS (MCH & FW) and Dr. S. Vasudevan Senior Project Advisor NMEW Govt. of India.

Smt. T. Phanbuh in her Inaugural Address highlighted the Women related issues facing in Meghalaya. “Even though the constitution provides equal opportunities for its citizens and despite many changes that the society have experienced in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, yet gender discrimination against girls and women, high infant mortality rate and other issues still continues to be a great challenge facing the society. She further stressed on the need to educate women especially in rural areas where women illiteracy rate is very high. Infact, due to illiteracy most of these women become victims of social and economic exploitation including oppression, rape and sexual harassment. Women has the required skills if guided and given a chance are Ambassador of the people. Government should ensure that enough opportunities are given to women in education, health and economics sector. Stressed to sensitize the local headman community leaders.

We the women of the present generation have witness the changes in the society especially those relating to the cause of women during the last couple of years. It is a fact that during this period, the position of women in India has changed in various aspects. The constitution of India has provided equal rights and equal opportunities for its citizens including women. However, gender discrimination against girls and women, high infant mortality rate and maternal mortality rates and cross violence of women, adolescence and child’s rights continue to be the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Legally, women are recognized socially equal to men, but the condition of rural women is still in the clutches of traditional roles assigned to them, since most of this women are illiterate. When India became independent, various laws were enacted based on equal rights and opportunities for women. With this in view, women came out and took out leadership in the field of education, health, social work, politics, administration and so on. Mrs. Indira Gandhi rose to a stature of highest honour when appointed



as Prime Minister of India. Vijay Lakshmi Pandit, Sarojni Naidu, Padmaja Naidu, Sucheta Kripalani and Bonny Khongmen are the name of few Indian ladies who have joined higher political post and served the country very efficiently. Now a days we have Smt. Mira Kumar, who is the speaker of the Lok Sabha, Sushma Swaraj, Brinda karat, Sheila Dixit and Mrs. Sonia Gandhi are few women who have made the position and place in politics because of their confidence, education and have shown the path to upcoming women leaders. Women are essential and integral part of the development process including planning, decision making and implementation. Mother Theresa has devoted her entire life for the welfare of the poor, the sick and the down trodden and has received worldwide recognition for humility and social service. With a view to tackle issues affecting women from welfare to development and to empowerment, the Govt. of India declared the year 2001 as the Women's Empowerment year. The empowerment of women by legislative measures have resulted in acknowledging that women have the necessary skills and can act as the eyes and ears of the people. When we talk about making women aware of their rights, we should be careful not to inflame their minds against the rights and responsibilities of men. Indian women have labored for centuries their efforts to create harmony in the domestic front and a better and more prosperous society can be termed "Labour of Love". We therefore need to try and ameliorate the working conditions of women by making men, society and the government aware of the problems that women face. We have to concentrate our attention on providing opportunities to women in the sectors of education, health and economic self reliance. By simply demanding equality of sexes we may be creating a confrontationist situation between the sexes. Man and women are the two halves of a whole. They are not competitors. We must not attempt to transform women in to men, because this will create a conflict in the society. Therefore the most important thing is that we should respect each other and work together so that we will be able to root out the problems faced by women. Our constitution is committed to the goal of providing social justice, liberty and equality, reflecting a wonderful vision the makers of our constitution had. Building a rights based and gender friendly society, however is a big challenge facing the judiciary, government, social society and social activist.

Mere legislation cannot bring any change in social perception, what is needed is to change our mindset. It is also important that women at grass roots level should be trained in leadership advocacy, policy making and should be helped to emerge as powerful partners in development and in making society more gender sensitive.

As far as Meghalaya is concerned, it may be noted that according to our customary law, women are not allowed to participate in the local durbar/traditional institution. But with advancement of time, it is felt that there is an urgent need to involve women at the decision making process, so as to ensure justice at all levels. We were disappointed with the Women's Reservation Bill still lying with Lok Sabha even after the bill was passed by the Rajya Sabha in 2010.

Smt. I. Rapthap Asstt. Coordinator State Resource Centre for Women offered the vote of thanks on behalf of State Resource Centre for Women. A special thanks to Padmashree (Smt) T. Phanbuh, Chairperson Meghalaya State Commission for Women for being present at the Seminar and has inspired and encouraged all of us. I also expressed my heart felt thanks to the Guest of Honour Dr. Sulochana Vasudevan, Senior Project Advisor and Nodal Officer National Mission for Empowerment of Women Govt. of India, for her presence and highlighting the positive role of National Mission for Empowerment of Women Govt. of India. I also expressed my gratitude to the Speaker Dr (Mrs) M.K.Marak, D.H.S (MCH& FW) who addressed the theme expressively and meaningfully. I also acknowledged a special thanks to the Commissioner & Secretary to the Govt. of Meghalaya Social Welfare Department Shri. T. Dkhar, I.A.S, Director of Social Welfare Shri. H.M.Shangpliang M.C.S for their cooperation. I also extend a word of thanks to the Resource Persons, Smt. D. Thangkhiew Asstt. Public Prosecutor,

**Session I : Legal Rights of Women**

**Resource Person: Smt. D. Thangkhiew, Asstt. Public Prosecutor  
East Khasi Hills**

Constitutional Provisions, Refer to crimes against women.

Legal Provisions – Various forms of violence against women.

IPC – (1) Rape (2) Kidnapping (363) (373) Dowry Deaths IPC (Torture) 498 (A) IPC.  
All cases are not gender specific however there are few laws.

Activate the legal aid cells, create awareness, Technology providers be sensitive, Punitive actions against Police/Medical Officers/Legal aid service authorities be disseminated.

### **Important Constitutional and Legal Provisions for Women in India.**

The principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Indian Constitution in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles. The Constitution not only grants equality to women, but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women. Within the framework of a democratic polity, our laws, development policies, Plans and programmes have aimed at women's advancement in different spheres. India has also ratified various international conventions and human rights instruments committing to secure equal rights of women. Key among them is the ratification of the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1993.

#### **1. Constitutional Provisions:**

The Constitution of India not only grants equality to women but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women for neutralizing the cumulative socio economic, education and political disadvantages faced by them. Fundamental Rights, among others, ensure equality before the law and equal protection law; prohibits discrimination against any citizen on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth, and guarantee equality of opportunity to all citizens in matters relating to employment. Articles 14, 15, 15(3), 16, 39(a), 39(b), 39(c) and 42 of the Constitution are of specific importance in this regard.

#### **Constitutional Privileges**

- (i) Equality before law for **women (Article 14)**
- (ii) The State not to discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, **sex**, place of birth or any of them **(Article 15 (i))**
- (iii) The State to make any special provision in favour of **women** and children **(Article 15 (3))**

- (iv) Equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State **(Article 16)**
- (v) The State to direct its policy towards securing for men and **women** equally the right to an adequate means of livelihood **(Article 39(a))**; and equal pay for equal work for both men and **women (Article 39(d))**
- (vi) To promote justice, on a basis of equal opportunity and to provide free legal aid by suitable legislation or scheme or in any other way to ensure that opportunities of securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disabilities **(Article 39 A)**
- (vii) The State to make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief **(Article 42)**
- (viii) The State to promote with special care the educational economic interests of the weaker sections of the people and to protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation **(Article 46)**
- (ix) The State to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people **(Article 47)**
- (x) To promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India and to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of **women (Article 51(A) (e))**
- (xi) Not less than one – third (including the number of seats reserved for **women** belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every **Panchayat** to be reserved for women and such seats to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a **Panchayat (Article 243 D (3))**
- (xii) Not less than one – third of the total number of offices of Chairpersons in the **Panchayats** at each level to be reserved for **women (Article 243 D (4))**
- (xiii) Not less than one – third (including the number of seats reserved for **women** belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every **Municipality** to be reserved for **women** and such seats to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a **Municipality (Article 243 T (3))**

- (xiv) Reservation of offices of Chairpersons in **Municipalities** for the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and **women** in such manner as the legislature of a State may by law provide **(Article 243 T (4))**

## **2. Legal Provisions:**

To uphold the Constitutional mandate, the State has enacted various legislative measures intended to ensure equal rights, to counter social discrimination and various forms of violence and atrocities and to provide support services especially to working women.

Although women may be victims of any of the crimes such as 'Murder', 'Robbery', 'Cheating' etc, the crimes, which are directed specifically against women, are characterised as 'Crimes against Women'. These are broadly classified under two categories.

### (1) The Crimes Identified Under the Indian Penal Code(IPC)

- Rape (Sec. 376 IPC)
- Kidnapping & Abduction for different purposes (Sec.363-373)
- Homicide for Dowry, Dowry Deaths or their attempts (Sec. 302/304- B IPC)
- Torture, both mental and physical (Sec. 498-A IPC)
- Molestation (Sec. 354 IPC)
- Sexual Harassment (Sec.509 IPC)
- Importation of girls( up to 21 years of age)

### (2) The Crimes identified under the Special Laws (SLL)

- Commission of Sati ( prevention) Act 1987 (3 of 1988)
- Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 (28 of 1961)
- Indecent Representation of Women (prohibition) Act 1986
- Immoral Traffic ( Prevention) Act 1956

Although all laws are not gender specific, the provisions of law affecting women significantly have been review periodically and amendments carried out to keep pace with the emerging requirements. Some acts which have special provisions to safeguard women and their interests are:

- The Employees State Insurance Act, 1948
- The Plantation Labour Act, 1951
- The Family Courts Act, 1954

- The Special Marriage Act, 1954
- The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955
- The Hindu Succession Act, 1956 with amendment in 2005
- Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956
- The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961( Amended in 1995)
- Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961
- The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971
- The Contract Labour ( Regulation and Abolition ) Act, 1976
- The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976
- The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006
- The Criminal Law ( Amendment) Act, 1983
- The Factories (Amendment) Act, 1986
- Indecent Representation of Women ( Prohibition) Act, 1986
- Commission of Sati ( Prevention) Act, 1987
- The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005

### 3. SPECIAL INITIATIVES FOR WOMEN

#### **(i) National Commission for Women**

In January 1992, the Government set-up this statutory body with a specific mandate to study and monitor all matters relating to the constitutional and legal safeguards provided for women, review the existing legislation to suggest amendments wherever necessary, etc.

#### **(ii) Reservation for Women in Local Self – Government**

The 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment Acts passed in 1992 by Parliament ensure one – third of the total seats for women in all elected offices in local bodies whether in rural areas or urban areas.

#### **(iii) The National Plan of Action for the Girl Child (1991 – 2000)**

The plan of Action is to ensure survival, protection and development of the girl child with the ultimate objective of building up a better future for the girl child.

#### **(iv) National Policy for the Empowerment of Women, 2001**

The Department of Women & Child Development in the Ministry of Human Resource Development has Prepared a “National Policy for the

Empowerment of Women” in the year 2001. The goal of this policy is to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women.

**Session II : Women Health as an indicator of development**

**Resource Person: Dr. Joy Lyngwa , District Tuberculosis Officer  
Reid Chest Hospital**

Health as defined by WHO is a state of complete physical, mental and social well being and not merely the absence of disease.

When we talk about health care in Meghalaya, I must admit that our women are well informed and very much aware of the importance of taking good care of the health of their whole family. If we count the number of people in the OPD and even in the wards of our hospitals we will find that most of them are females. They may not be patients themselves, but they are there to accompany their husbands or children to the OPD or as attendants in the wards. It is always the mother who will bring her baby for immunization or for any health programme conducted for the welfare of the children. Men may not like to admit that they are sick but the woman will fuss around and force him to see the doctor. So we can say that we see a positive indicator of development since our women in Meghalaya are health conscious and responsible for the health of everyone.

Talking about women’s health, a look at a few indicators of health will show exactly where we are as women of Meghalaya in the staircase of development.

1. **Nutritional status** – Our women are addicted to eating betelnut and they will trade other healthy foods in order to buy the highly priced betelnut. If they give up the habit of chewing betelnut they would definitely be able to buy fruits, vegetables and other nutritious foods to eat themselves and to give to their children.

Anaemia is a major health problem in our state and the government has come up with various programmes like free distribution of Iron and Folic acid tablets for pregnant and lactating mothers and the recently launched WIFS programme for the adolescents to combat anaemia. It is the lack of education on nutrition and choosing not to eat healthy nutritious foods which are locally available and cheap that contribute to the poor nutritional status of the women in Meghalaya.

2. **Morbidity and mortality rate** – In today’s world, our life expectancy has increased and more in the case of women who are blessed with longer longevity than men. But still we cannot turn a blind eye to the fact that in our country there are many women in the reproductive age group and especially girls between the age of 15 yrs to 19 yrs who die due to



problems related to child bearing. The Govt. of India has introduced the RCH programme to address the problems of women in their reproductive years and even to look in to the specific problems that adolescent girls encounter by setting up the ARSH programme. Many young girls suffer grave consequences of unwanted pregnancy due to unsafe abortion, and many women and girls die when they have a home delivery and suffer post partum complications thus escalating the MMR in our state. Almost zero awareness about sexuality and reproduction, and the hesitation to avail the current free Adolescent and reproductive health services, the contraceptive services and other MCH services provided at all Government health facilities and refusal of institutional deliveries result in high morbidity and mortality in women.

3. **RTI and STI** are on the rise because of sexual promiscuity an young girls are sexually active at a very tender age. Because of their poor socio – economic condition coupled with their social and biological predisposition they have become easy prey to the flesh trade and thus are at risk of contracting RTI, STI, HIV and AIDS. Our people are still unaware of the dangers posed by these diseases and they have refuse to use condoms or to come forward to get themselves tested for HIV. But the big question is - How many of our women especially in the rural areas go for antenatal check ups and how many of them really get access to HIV resting? The figures regarding HIV positive patients in our state may just be the tip of the iceberg and I am afraid we are yet to get into the ground realities and the harsh and grave reality of the whole situation.
4. **Morbidity and mortality due to other diseases** – Our women along with the rest of the population still suffer from communicable diseases like TB, Malaria, Typhoid, Gastroenteritis and other major health problems that developing countries have to grapple with diseases are preventable and treatable, yet deaths do occur especially in the rural areas where proper health care is still a far cry.

Non communicable diseases like Diabetes, hypertension, coronary heart diseases and cancer are claiming many lives and the women of our state are not an exception. How many of the women in our state even the educated and the elite group do regular health checkups and get to check their blood pressure and blood sugar levels? How many women care to go for important screenings like mammography, pap smear which will help detect cancer at the earliest? I think we still like to go by the saying – “Ignorance is a bliss” but don’t you think it is wiser and better if we can detect any disease and nip it at the bud at the earliest before it gets the better of us? It is better to be classed as hypochondriacs because at the end of the day it is always better to be safe than sorry.

5. **Mental health** – The last indicator of health I would like to discuss with you is our mental health. Are we the women of Meghalaya mentally

sound? We live in a fast world and all of us are caught up in the rat race of our daily lives.

We cannot ignore the current challenges that we as women face in this perverted generation. Everyday, we read or hear about crimes against women like rape, incest and so on and today our war cry as women is “what can we do to stop these offences?” I would like to list out a few drawbacks that we face in the medical profession in handling medico legal cases –

- i. Most of us are not up to date with the latest methodology or even the proper way of dealing with medico legal cases. We need CMEs on these important topics and should be well equipped in handling medico legal cases in an appropriate and helpful manner. We need to learn the soft skills of good communication and counselling so that we can help the victim in their time of distress.
- ii. In Meghalaya, we still lack a good forensic laboratory and forensic experts who can handle the cases efficiently and correctly and help the law to dispose off the cases at the earliest.

In conclusion I would like to put this question once again – As Women of Meghalaya, “where do you think we are in the stairway of development” – down the first few steps, or half way up or we can say we are almost up there on the platform of development.

**Session III** : ***Empowerment and Development of Women through Livelihood Skills***

**Resource Person:** ***Smt. G.S. Lyndem , Principal Extension Training Centre SIRD.***

### **National Policy for Empowerment-2001**

#### **Objectives:**

- To bring about advancement, development and empowerment of women
- To eliminate all forms of discrimination against women
- To ensure active participation of women in all spheres of life

#### **Themes and Issues of the Policy:**

- Judicial legal system,
- Economic empowerment

- Social empowerment including health, education, violence, science and technology, drinking water and sanitation.
- Women and decision making, media and girl child etc.

### **Women Empowerment Initiatives**

- Increasing the coverage of women specific programmes
- Reviewing the laws to remove gender bias
- Campaigning for equal rights for women and men
- Enabling income-generating activities and livelihoods options
- Providing support services like day-care centres with creche facilities, working women's hostels etc
- Formulating laws and policies aimed at holistic empowerment of women, eg NREGS, Swayamsidha, etc.

### **Economic Empowerment and Livelihoods**

- in the present context of livelihood Skills as necessary conditions for women Development and empowerment, we shall limit to economic empowerment

### **Current Situations**

- Women today are facing the economy which is increasingly becoming less-labour intensive but more capital, technology, knowledge and Skills driven.
- Individually, women (for generations) have been in various forms of livelihoods and income generation activities including marketing
- Traditional livelihoods resulted in accumulation of skills Inherited through generations
- **BUT** .....

Women who work in isolation (DUE TO MANY REASONS) Lacked information necessary for acquiring new skills

This, delayed women empowerment as they continued to suffer from poverty and economic marginalization.

### **Our concern**

- Current situations show a woman has no means of obtaining empowerment and development by oneself alone

Therefore.....

- Women should organize themselves as a group in the form of SHG or as a federation for .....promotion of diversified and gainful livelihoods in order to provide appreciable increase in income on sustainable basis.
- Should start income generating activities for livelihood as a business venture by selecting viable micro-enterprises. For this purpose as a group , they -
- should upgrade Skills, credit worthiness and credit absorption capacity
- Groups should qualify the test of Market Acceptance

**Main livelihood activities pursued by women  
(farm/nonfarm/trade/profession/vocation)**

- A – low-skills types  
Farm labour, menial works, small trades, craftworks, tailoring, etc
- B – high-skills types  
Teaching, office works, service provisions, etc

**What is our concern?**

- Women in category A
- Livelihood skills however small can result in big and positive impact on women development and empowerment  
Why the concern
- Because these women are poor, ignorant and unorganized
- Preparing each one of them for skills - acquisition/upgradation is a long drawn process

**Our challenges**

- Women in productive age (youth) are prepared to go to any extent to secure a wage or salaried employment as livelihood (by any means – good or bad)
- Self-employment is regarded as bad livelihood activity full of risks
- Education is more academic than vocational producing more skill-less people in the employment market
- There are even more women who are not even educated and have no skills for improving their livelihoods

**What next?**

- Through dedicated external intervention - both
- government and non-government agencies

- improved livelihood skills will have to be injected (through all means constitutionally valid) into women (category-A) by using the following steps :
- Organize women into groups – preferably according to their traditional livelihoods
- Prepare them to improve upon their skills by:
  - i. Giving them training on group saving, internal lending and book keeping
  - ii. Introduce them to bank for bank linkage process
  - iii. Introduce managerial and technical skills – technology/computer, infrastructure, raw-materials and market exposure
  - iv. Influence them to build demand for credit for investment
  - v. Introduce them to State policy supports – Swayamsiddha, NREGS, etc

3. Guide them to undertake Innovative Activities through Skills Diversification.....and prepare your EXIT

### **Livelihood Skills - Road to Success ? ? ?**

- During my visit to one village near Shillong I met 4 women earning their livelihood working as housemaids in different homes in Shillong during day time
- They wanted to supplement their income and started to collect dirty clothes from nearby locality for washing together after work in one home closest to where water is easily available
- On most days it usually takes 2-3 hours for washing in the evening
- More people wanted to give clothes for washing but they had to refuse due to physical and domestic constraints
- I suggested (almost jokingly) getting a washing machine to save time, wash more clothes and earn more, since water is not a problem and electricity is available in their homes
- To my surprise they took this seriously and started saving hard
- **Together they have a goal: to buy a washing machine and more washing machines and to compete with the best Dry Cleaners in town**

### **the basic Skills required by them are;**

- To operate the washing machine
- To learn bookkeeping so that they know how money comes and goes, profit and loss, costing, etc

- To upgrade their skills in ironing and folding of clothes
- Collection and delivery mechanism
- Self-promotion
- It is too early to predict about their success.
- They have organized into a group even without having any training on the concept of SHG.
- They are enthusiastic
- They believed that their LIVELIHOOD SKILLS will enable them to become Economically Empowered.

### **Conclusion**

- For lack of skills such as technical skills, managerial skills and market exposure, women will not be willing to take risks and would rather remain content with whatever they have today
- Sometimes they even gave up better opportunities for their own development and empowerment
- **SO LETS HELP THEM**

**Session IV** : ***Basic rights of women with special emphasis on education, economic and decision making with special reference to Meghalaya***

**Resource Person:** ***Dr. V. Kharmauphlang, Principal P.G.T College Shillong.***

The Constitution of India guarantees equality of treatment, prohibition of discrimination on the basis of sex, affirmative discrimination in favour of women and equality of opportunities in matter of public appointments as Fundamental Rights. The Central Government have enacted number of laws to protect women for example, protection against domestic violence, sexual harassment, sex determination, prevention of sati, immoral traffic in women, dowry prohibition, indecent representation of women, maternity benefit, etc. The National Policy of Education, 1986 addresses not only the issue of equality of educational opportunity for women but mandates the entire educational system to work for women's equality and empowerment.

## ***Status of women***

Garo, Khasi and Jaintia women of Meghalaya enjoy enhanced social status since time immemorial. Lineage of clan and inheritance of property run through women being matrilineal society. Widowhood does not attract stigma and remarriage is prevalent. Women have come up in every field in professional studies, in business and trade, Government services etc. Social restraints of the larger Indian society like untouchability, bride burning, female foeticide, dowry etc do not exist among Garos, Khasis and Jaintias. However there are other social problems like illiteracy, dropouts, unemployment, early marriage, broken marriage and divorce. Women therefore need empowerment through education, economy and decision making even in a matrilineal society of Meghalaya.

## ***Education***

In Meghalaya, against average literacy rate of 75.48%, women account for 73.78% while males account for 77.17 as per Census of 2011. National figures for 2011 are males 82.14 and female 65.46. Female and male literacy rate was 59.6 and 65.4 respectively as per 2001 census figures. Census of 2001 rural area male 58.72 and female 53.97; urban area male 88.95 and female 84.58. Urban areas have higher female literacy rate than rural females.

Dropout rate for ST in Meghalaya(2002-2003) Classes 1-V boys 61.42 and girls 59.29. For Classes 1-V111 boys 81.11 and girls 80.30. Dropout rate in Class 1-X (6-16years) in 2010 for Meghalaya is 77.89 total and girls 76.46 ranking 3<sup>rd</sup> in India against all India average of total 52.76 and girls 51.97

The low enrolment and high dropout rates indicated as above may be due to several factors some of which may be identified as under:

- Social factors contributing to teenage pregnancy, poor health services
- Economic factors such as low family income through household works to support family
- Educational factors such as inadequate educational infrastructure, poor quality teaching particularly at rural institutes and the likes



***Economic Activities:***

Meghalaya ranks 5<sup>th</sup> in all India ranking in Female Work Participation rate NSSO 2010. Against national average of 35.6, Meghalaya's ratio is 51.4. The higher FWPR may be due to high level of women's participation in community based organization of subsistence production like jhum cultivation, paddy growing and educational attainments.

***Decision making:***

- Maternal uncle and brothers play dominant role in deciding property and other matters of the family. She is not heirless in the strict sense of the term. She does not have any control or rights to sell property without the consent and advice of her maternal uncles and other siblings. The family property is more of a joint family trust.
- Women generally are not allowed to participate in village council/dorbar affairs. Rest of India obtained 33% reservation for women in urban bodies and local institutions but this privilege has eluded women in Meghalaya.

***Conclusion:***

Status of women in Meghalaya, in spite of material background, leaves on the whole much to be desired more so when it is compared in the backdrop of the twenty-first century global background. The claims of nonexistent or rare case of gender discrimination notwithstanding, the rising incidences of crime against women remain a matter of serious concern.

What accounts for the rising level of crime against women? (Crime against women seems about 35% of the total accounting for the highest district wise crime despite that the East Khasi Hills is the most educated district in the state).

Female work participation appears to be high. Participation in decision making leaves much to be desired both in family, social and political affairs.

What is the level of decision making authority?

What is the freedom to exercise options in investment/expenditure measures?

What is the allowed level of participation in planning matters of personal and family economic activities?

**Session V:**

**Role of Police in combating crimes and violence against women**

**Resource Person: Shri. B. R. Rana, IPS, IGP (CID), Shillong.**

Shri. B. R. Rana presented an illustration on the reported incidence of the rate of crime in the state with effect from 2008 – 2012.

Sl. No	Crime Head	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
1.	Rape	88	112	149	130	158
2.	Kidnapping of women and girls	25	26	37	37	11
3.	Dowry Death	2	0	0	1	0
4.	Molestation	54	72	48	74	43
5.	Sexual Harrassment	4	1	0	1	1
6.	Cruelty by Husband or Relatives	32	24	24	21	18
7.	Importation of Girls	0	1	0	3	0
8.	Immoral Traffic (P) Act	3	1	3	2	5
9.	Total Crime Against Women	208	237	261	269	236

Mr. B. R. Rana also emphasised on the following issues that would strengthen convergence mechanism:

- Synergy among all the Govt. deptts dealing with social legislations and welfare concerning women and children; to strategize their approach in tackling various problems of women
- Awareness programmes to be held in rural areas in consultation with the village elders and public representatives.

- Women as victims of crimes, be it, trafficking, domestic violence, etc. Should be given relief in terms of monetary relief and rehabilitation through meaningful livelihood.
- Mr. Rana called for a concerted efforts of line departments and NGOs to set up more Shelter Home for women in the state and also emphasise for police to have a positive attitude.

***Action Ahead – Recommendations –***

- Prepare a State Policy for Empowerment of Women by Meghalaya State Commission for Women and State Resource Centre for Women.
- Set up Fast Tracking Court Trial of cases of crimes against women including children.
- Provide relief to women as victims of crimes in terms of Monetary relief and rehabilitation through meaningful livelihood.
- More Awareness Programmes to be held in rural areas.
- Strengthening of Forensic Department.
- Sensitization and interaction with village headman regarding participation of women at the local durbar – demand for 33% women representatives in durbar.
- Proper infrastructure facilities in educational institutions particularly in Rural areas.
- Proper implementation of law, legal rights – identify gaps in the implementation between services providers and stakeholders.
- Synergy among all the Government Departments dealing with Social legislations and welfare concerning women and children.
- Gender sensitive curriculum in schools.

- Involvement and more pro – active role of Educational Institutions, Universities, NGOs and Community.
- Adolescent Education to revamp and reinforced.
- Leadership training, sensitization and capacity building of women adolescent girls and village durbar.
- Infrastructure facilities to be made available in the PHCs & CHCs.
- Networking and Linkages.
- Disseminate information through Informatin Education & Communicaiton (IEC).
- Create a website of State Resource Centre for Women for publicity.