

# **Workshop on Women and Violence**

**29-31 August 2016**

## **BACKGROUND:**

Tezpur University is a central university established in 1994 by an act of parliament. Since then the university has emerged as a premier institute of science and technology with a strong focus on socio – cultural development within the region.

## **INTRODUCTION:**

Earlier the department of mass communication and journalism has already organized many such workshops. But this is the first workshop for the communication for development programme which was officially inaugurated this very year on the 26<sup>th</sup> August 2016. This workshop was organized under the guidance of Mrs. Anjuman Borah. Through this workshop we had the opportunity to interact with Dr. Monisha Behal who is the executive director and founder of the North East Network and Mrs. Sheetal Sharma works as project manager in North East Network which is a women's organization based in the northeast region.

About NEN- North east network is a women's organization working in the northeast region of India with a focus on women's human rights. Ever since its inception in 1995 their role has been that of a facilitator to empower women of northeast around issues of livelihood, health, conflict and governance through capacity building, awareness raising, networking, research and advocacy. Their work has been aimed at bringing out gendered understandings of human right situations in the region whether it's in the context of violence, livelihood, conflict, natural resource management or health.

## **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE WORKSHOP:**

1. To know more about 'feminism'.
2. Existing gender division of labour.
3. To know the deep impacts of Patriarchy.

4. To make us aware of the acts/laws protecting the rights of women.

### **DAY ONE (29<sup>th</sup> AUGUST 2016)**

Day one of the workshop started the small inaugural session. Our guide Maam Mrs. Anjuman Bora introduced us to Dr. Monisha Behal and Maam Sheetal. They have been associated with NEN since a long time. After our introduction Dr. Monisha gave us an insight about NEN and how it works. They started off the workshop discussing how gender and sex works. They explained us the exact difference between these two terms that is gender is socially constructed and sex is biologically constructed. How everything is based on gender and it is difficult to change these rules which have been continuing in the society since a long time. On the first day they explained us about three important topics that is:

- Gender/Sex
- Patriarchy
- CEDAW

The second most important topic that our mentors dwelt upon was Patriarchy. Patriarchy is a social system in which adult males hold primary position in the society. There are different views regarding patriarchy and they are –

- Traditionalistic view –
- Pseudo-Scientist view
- Radical Feminist view
- Marxist Feminist View
- Socialist Feminist view

- We also learnt about the Hindu Succession Act which was passed in 2005. Through this act Hindu women were entitled to equal property rights.
- We were screened a small animated video made by UNICEF called “The Impossible Dream” which showcases a woman’s endless struggles and her shattered dreams.

The third most important topic was CEDAW that is “The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women”. Article 1 of the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (1979) defines the discrimination against women as ‘any distinction, exclusion or restriction

made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the reorganization, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedom in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field. It is often described as an international bill of rights for women.

Our mentors also discussed with us about the concept of equality and how equality should be in terms of access, opportunity and outcome. Access in case of how both the sexes should have equal access to resources and rights. Opportunity in terms of how both the sexes should have equal opportunities in every sphere of life for example in job sectors etc. Outcomes in terms of how every outcome should be equal.

We also learnt about the various principles of equality which are-

**SAMENESS APPROACH** – Assuming that boy and girl have the same strength and they can do same type of work physically.

**PROTECTIONIST APPROACH** – Women are denied equality of opportunity on the ground that denial is in their best interest. This approach recognizes the problem as a weakness or inferiority in women and not in the environment which needs to be corrected.

**SUBSTANTIVE APPROACH** – This approach recognizes that women are in unequal position and may have to be treated differently in order to benefit equally. It ensures equality of results, and not only of means.

### **ACTIVITIES:**

We were assigned various activities that day. During the first half of the workshop we were divided into two different groups under the category of rural men and rural women. On different charts we had to showcase their working hours and define the amount of work and rest hours they have the entire day. Through this activity our mentors wanted us to know about the working patterns of an average rural men and women and how much rest they get during the entire day. This activity actually showed us the difference in the amount of work between a man and a woman and the difference in the rest hours between them.

## **DAY TWO (30<sup>th</sup> AUGUST 2016)**

It was 30<sup>th</sup> August 2016, the second day of our workshop with North East Network (NEN) under the mentors of madam Monisha Behal and the program assistant of NEN, madam Sheetal Sharma.

- The day started with the introduction of various acts and laws for protecting the rights of women. Acts like Criminal Law Amendment Act 2013, ICRW and CEDAW. And we were also asked to present our views on how the rights of women can be violated.
- The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013 is an Indian legislation passed by the Lok Sabha on 19 March 2013, and by the Rajya Sabha on 21 March 2013, which provides for amendment of Indian Penal Code, Indian Evidence Act, and Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 on laws related to sexual offences.
- ICRW has been the world's premier applied research institute focused on women and girls for almost four decades. Their evidence-based insight seeks to optimize programs, influence policies and identify scalable solutions that help them lead safer, healthier and more empowered lives.
- The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is an international treaty adopted in 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly.
- And apart from that we had discussions on many other social problems in which woman are preyed by the society. The Spiral of Violence, womb to tomb were many such terms through which we came across and the impacts and outcomings were explained.
- Spiral of violence was discussed in which we came across the violation of women rights since their womb to tomb. The rights of women are violated not even before their birth, even the foetus has to go through stages of violence, (female foeticide, discrimination in providing proper nutrients during pregnancy of the mother), infancy (female infanticide, sexual violence), childhood (sexual harassment, incest, child marriage, objectification of female body), teenage (restricted mobility, voyeurism, violation of reproductive health rights), adulthood (stereotyping female, discrimination in jobs, dowry,

physical/verbal/emotional violence, marital rape, sexual violence in conflict, acid attacks, forced disrobing) and also in old age.

- The Awareness Videos like “It’s my Fault”, “Bell Bajao - got milk?”, “boys don’t cry” were screened made by some leading organisations like Vogue India, Drishti and ICRW. These videos are made in order to make people aware and make them learn to raise their voice against violence that are existing in our society against women.
- We also came across the story of Birubala Rabha, who has been tirelessly fighting the cause of witch hunting since 1980’s. Witch-hunting is a process of tracking down people deemed as witches, which often involves episodes of public frenzy. Although it seems like an outdated idea and concept, remotely rural Assam, witch-hunting is not uncommon.

## **DAY THREE (31st August 2016)**

### **MORNING SESSION (10:30am onwards)**

1. The session started with a recap of the previous day. One by one, the participants shared their individual experiences. The participants spoke about their learning from the interactive sessions of the previous day.
2. After this, the participants were introduced to the *Protection of Women against Domestic Violence Act, 2005 (PWDVA)* which is a civil and secular law that addresses the needs of women in situations of violence and applies to women of all communities. It also categorically recognizes the right of a woman to live a life free from violence and also to reside in a shared household. This act also expands the definition of violence to include mental, verbal, physical and economic abuse and threats and demands for dowry. It is applicable not only to married women but all women in a family as well as women in relationships akin to marriage. The resource person then discussed about the *Domestic Incidence Report (DIR)*. DIR is similar to FIR but this is filed only in case of domestic violence.
3. The NEN team then showed a video titled *AIB: Rape-It’s your Fault* by All

***India Bakchod*** which responds to the string of abusive and hateful remarks made by people against women.

4. After the video, they discussed about the ***Sexual Harassment of Women at the Work Place Act, 2013 (SHWWP)*** and showed a video on ***Laws against Sexual Harassment of Women*** so that the participants get a better idea of the act. This act says that the sexual harassment against women can be categorized into two segments: one 'quid pro quo' which means 'this for that' underlining sexual harassment caused by those in authority/power in workplace resulting in noticeable or tangible employment related action. The second one is 'hostile work environment' in which the abuse does not result in tangible employment action but creates an unfriendly working environment making a women employee uncomfortable or threatened. In both cases, the women can make a complain to the following ***Internal Complaints Committee (ICC)*** for organizations with more than 10 employees or ***Local Complaints Committee (LCC)*** for organizations with less than 10 employees.

## **OUTCOMES OF THE SESSION:**

- The participants were able to understand the issues concerning women in a more detailed manner from a broader perspective of law and justice.
- The session made the participants aware of the two acts namely;
  - Protection of Women against Domestic Violence Act, 2005 (PWDVA) and;
  - Sexual Harassment of Women at the Work Place Act, 2013 (SHWWP)

## **CONCLUDING SESSION:**

During the concluding session, Ms. Anjuman Borah, the coordinator of the workshop asked for experiences, feedback, queries and suggestions from the participants in context of the three-day workshop by the North-east Network, held in the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, Tezpur University. Ms. Chayanika Baruah and Mr. Sujit Muktan shared their experiences on behalf of all the participants of the workshop. After that Ms. Anjuman Borah, the coordinator of the workshop offered the vote of thanks.

## **ANNEXURE:**

- I. Protection of Women against Domestic Violence Act, 2005 (PWDVA) and;**
- II. Sexual Harassment of Women at the Work Place Act, 2013 (SHWWP)**



*Students of C4D stand together with Dr. Monisha Behal and Sheetal Sharma after the workshop*