



Conference Report: May, 2006

The Report of the consultation on Women and Livelihood

A Consultation on Women and Livelihood was organized in Chennai on 22nd May 2006. 75 participants from all over Tamil Nadu participated and had an opportunity to learn and to interact on the livelihood issues pertaining to women. The program was jointly organized by **Programme on Women's Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (PWESCR) Delhi, and Tamil Nadu Women's Forum, Chennai.**

Ms. Burnad Fatima gave the inaugural address. The speaker welcomed the participants and the resource person **Ms. Preethi from PWESCR.** She briefed the objectives of the meeting and touched the core issues around the women and livelihood. Since few participants were not fully clear about the term livelihood the meaning of the term livelihood was shared by the participants individually. The following is the group of consolidation.

- The basic needs that are required to lead a dignified life.
- It includes the socio, economic cultural rights of women to live.
- The right to land and resources and also employment opportunities.
- Access in the Natural resources.

- Women should get all the fundamental rights.
- A dignified life without violence against women, non pollution and without interference of the globalisation process.
- The livelihood includes non interference of the multi national companies over the local resources.
- It is status of upholding women's rights over her self, body, health, economic resources, social status and cultural equality.
- The controlling factors that subjugate women need to be over thrown. The life of women would need to be discussed on par with the livelihood.

This was followed by a panel session. **Ms. Beulah,** chaired the panel.

A team of five women representatives from self help groups shared in the panel. They shared about their economic activities and the initiatives of the groups towards promoting the livelihood sources of the group members. They shared that the activities helped the women to increase their economic status in a small way. They could achieve only enhancement of economic status and not in the social level.

Following this the resource person gave the key note address on women and livelihood. At the Indian level 70% of rural women are involved in the agriculture work. They are able to earn little money from that work. But they don't have the control even over this little money. The women earn very little due to the low wage and the less remunerative nature of jobs they get. To overcome this they should have the land in their names. Women don't have equal power in the society. How one is going to address this situation?

The World Bank has been instrumental in promoting women self Help Groups. The main aim of the SHG's is to abolish the poverty. Poverty is not only an economic issue. It is a social as well as cultural issue. World Bank introduces American products in the villages through SHG's. It did not empower the women in the society instead women's economic situation has not increased, poverty has not abolished by the SHG's. Self help groups have played a role as agents of MNC's and promoters of consumerism.

The speaker facilitated the participants to share their understanding on the Right to Livelihood. The participants came out with the following;

- Economic security
- Land, water, social security
- Health
- Food security
- Property
- Decision making

- Equal wages
- Employment
- Job security / Income security
- Economic power in the society
- Political power
- Control over in the public resources
- Domestic works should be recognized
- Education

The speaker consolidated the sharing and expressed that every one shared from their own personal experience and all of them were true. We have to protest the social discrimination and demand the government to exercise its real role and function. This in turn will enable everyone to benefit instead of the existing system of defunct system where only a creamy layer benefits. Women have to come together and protest against the anti social activities. In December, the National consultation is going to be conducted by PWESCR. It is such an opportunity for women to join hands to protest to uphold their rights over livelihood. The speaker asked the women to equip themselves and to enhance their capacity in the current scenario. Women need to stand together to challenge the discrimination and there is a dire necessity for the grass root women to rise up to the occasion.

The concluding session was the feed back on the consultation. The participants shared that the consultation was very meaningful and relevant. They could learn the core issues pertaining to women and livelihood. It was expressed that the grass root women need to be empowered. They

should join hands in protest to achieve better success. The controls of the World Bank and International companies on us need to be challenged and overcome. Basic and fundamental changes need to be brought in

the society. Every initiative of women should focus towards change and promotion of an alternate society where the livelihood rights of women are upheld.

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