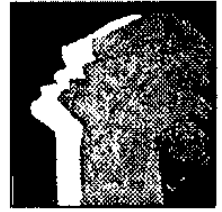


# Narikantha

*A Special Issue of the Newsletter of  
West Bengal Commission for Women*

March 2008



## Editorial

It is our proud privilege to greet you once again on the occasion of the International Women's Day. It comes back every year bringing newer challenges, demanding newer ways of meeting the challenges.

It is with great sorrow we notice the escalation of violence, not just against women but against children. The complete absence of tolerance of anyone with a different opinion and the unwillingness to argue out differences marked the entire trouble around Nandigram that vitiated all of last year. Women on both sides of the divide suffered and the West Bengal Commission for Women made several visits to the women in the area, talking to doctors and looking at their medical reports and trying to give support to any organization wanting to render assistance to the people. The Commission sent several recommendations to the government for taking action. We hope that the administration can restore a situation in which the usual developmental activities can be resumed leading to the well-being of people at large and of women and children in particular.

In the field of implementation of Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act we are very grateful to the Lawyers' Collective for keeping us posted with the nitty-gritty of the problems nationally and for keeping the network active with exchange of information. We feel very strongly that this efficacious law should not be allowed to languish without adequate funds. Since this is a Civil Act that has openly acknowledged the help of the Civil Society in the form of Service Providers that include, along with shelter, medical and psychiatric counselling, it is doubly important that they should be properly funded. The Eleventh Plan, we had hoped, would pay attention to this. We would urge upon both the State and the Central Government nodal agencies to demand funds earmarked for this in the estimated budget expenditure.

Another feature of the legal matters worth mentioning that is happening in our state is that marriage registration has been made compulsory since February 2008. So many women, particularly in the majority Hindu community, suffer because they have no proof of marriage, when their husbands decide to cheat them. This is also likely to act as a deterrent in the evil of early marriage. Marriage is also used as a bait by traffickers. Proof of marriage in a registration might also actively discourage such bland and false baits by cheats and traffickers. We are happy to note that the registration fees have been reduced for the poorer section going into the remotest parts of West Bengal.

This year saw the completion of our long engagement with the problem of trafficking of women and children in West Bengal. Member Sm. Sarbani Bhattacharya published her survey-based investigation of the problem in six traffic-prone districts of West Bengal. A documentary film on this problem in the state was commissioned by the West Bengal Commission for Women. Sm. Debananda Sen Gupta, the noted documentary filmmaker has completed the film. The book and the documentary were both formally released by the Hon'ble Minister-in-charge of Department of Women and Child Development and Social Welfare, Government of West Bengal in Nandan II during the fortnight of protesting violence against women. We are, meanwhile, trying to facilitate a Safe Migration programme of Jabala with the help of the Department of Panchayat and Rural Development.

We end by mourning the untimely and tragic death of Rizwanur Rehman and demand speedy justice. We deplore all such incidents of interference in marriages between two consenting adults. A multi-faith democracy like India must provide enough space for responsible adults to lead their own lives with dignity.



*Clara Zetkin declared March 8 as  
International Women's Day.*

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## JAYOTI GUPTA—IN MEMORIAM

It is with an abiding sense of loss that I write these few lines about Jayoti Gupta, who passed away in November 2007. It was an untimely death as she had barely reached fifty and was at the peak of her intellectual and professional life. Dr. Gupta was a Reader at the Department of Sociology in the Delhi School of Economics, Delhi University. She not only taught there with much admiration from her students, with respect from her colleagues, but took on important tasks such as that of building an archive in the department and many research projects involving her students. Prior to her appointment there Dr. Gupta was a Fellow in the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Kolkata. Here as elsewhere she conducted national and international research projects on issues pertaining to women, and gender relations with regard to land and agriculture.

Dr. Gupta's life long interest in women and their property rights was also in evidence in her extensive research regarding the issue of pattas, or title deeds, extended to the land poor in West Bengal after the coming of the Left Front Government. She drew attention to the implicit gender discrimination inherent in settling land on male heads of families and opened up the issue of joint pattas for men and women. The other interest of Dr. Gupta's was to bring a gender perspective to women's role in labour. She did in depth research on brick kiln workers in this area, looking at production sites surrounding the city of Delhi. In all of these areas of economic and agricultural sociology Dr. Gupta combined the methodology of Marxist political economy with a feminis/gender analysis, which is frequently missing from such studies. In bringing together class and gender, in showing how the family is both a socio-cultural and economic institution serving as cells in the body of Indian political economy, she both expanded and innovated in these academic disciplines.

This very brief account of Dr. Gupta's critical intellectual interest cannot be concluded without pointing out her interest in the process of *gram salishi*, a form of alternative dispute resolution

at the rural level, which again integrates gendered family relations with those of property. To pursue and expand her understanding in these matters Dr. Gupta visited Canada a few times, especially to research in Aboriginal land claims from both legal and political perspectives, as well as in Aboriginal dispute resolution courts. She was actively affiliated with York University and McGill University law schools as a Shastri scholar. She visited several Aboriginal reserves and presented in many conferences and seminars.

It should also be mentioned that Dr. Gupta was not only a successful writer, but also involved in documentary film making. In partnership with Manjira Dutta, extending into the better part of her life, the duo produced highly important documentaries about property and gender. The most recent of these documentaries is *Samakal* (Present Times), but the list includes films such as *Sab Rasta Bandh* (on gender and bonded labour in the Garhwal region), *Rishte* (on female foeticide and violence against women), *Seeds of Plenty*, *Seeds of Sorrow* (on the Green Revolution) and *Sacrifice of Babulal Bhuya* (on colliery sludge charcoal makers), among others.

In conclusion I would like to emphasize Dr. Gupta's life long commitment to left politics, in particular the Communist Party of India (Marxist), and her deeply involved relationship with All India Democratic Women's Association. She was that extraordinary figure—a scholar activist for whom the project of social and political transformation went hand in hand with intellectual critique. A person of profound integrity, indefatigable political and intellectual researcher, always aware of and reaching out beyond the local, but never losing her ground, Jayoti Gupta remains a wonderful example for all who care about oppression and injustice and ways to make revolutionary changes. In our mourning for her we need to follow her footsteps to places where we have not gone before. In that she will live beyond death.

—Himani Bannerji

## DISTRICT VISIT

### Visit to South 24 Parganas

On 18 June 2007, the West Bengal Commission for Women visited South 24 Parganas district. Chairperson Prof. Jasodhara Bagchi, Vice-Chairperson Dr. Roma Das, members Smt. Bharati Mutsuddi (Mukherjee), Prof. Uma Basu, Smt. Sarbani Bhattacharya, Smt. ShyamasreeDas, Smt. Lakshmi Murmu and Smt. Bhagabati Mondal from the Commission were present in the district visit. Present at this meeting on behalf of the district administration were the District Magistrate, Additional District Magistrate, Sabhadhipati of the Zilla Parishad, SP, CMOH, representatives of the Social Welfare Board and workers of private organisations. The Chairperson and other members discussed the following topics :

- There has not been much progress in the activities of the Committee for the Protection of Women's Rights.
- No Officer or subordinate officer did receive any complaint relating to taking of dowry.
- There are PC & PNIDT advisory committees in the district.

Monthly meetings are held; according to the decisions taken therein Form 'F' is sent to different USG sectors for taking legal action. If needed, these Forms are analysed and necessary action is taken. Examining and decision-making committees have been formed for this purpose.

- Trafficking is a problem in South 24 Parganas. This district has been enlisted with the State Government as a pilot project. The SP has brought out a CD on the issue on his personal initiative and also submitted an important report to the Commission on the issue of trafficking.
- The issue of registration of births, deaths and marriages was discussed. It was committed that there would be a programme *Jago Nari Gram Jagao* in a place called Nimpith in Joynagar on 26 June 2007.
- The role of Protection Officers in the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act was discussed. The Department of Social Welfare has intervened in this matter and necessary action is being taken. There were no legal representatives present at this meeting.

—Bhagabati Mondal

## Visit to Nadia District

West Bengal Commission for Women held a meeting on 27.06.2007 at the Zilla Parishad Hall, Nadia with the district administration, voluntary organisations, teachers, women members of the Panchayat administrative body, lawyers and Director of the Health Department.

Present at this meeting were: Sri Omkar Singh Mina, DM; Sri Harikishore Kusumakar, SP; Sri Subrata Mitra, Additional Police Super; Sri Joydeep, Officer, District Social Welfare; Officer of Krishnanagar District Reformatory; SDO (Sadar), Additional District Magistrate (General); Sri Sadhan Mondal, public prosecutor; two District Magistrates; Zilla Sabhadhipati Sm. Rama Biswas; Superintendent, Women and Children, Zilla Parishad; some women members of the Zilla Parishad; gynaecologist of Krishnanagar Sadar Hospital; Ganatantrik Mahila Samiti; Paschimanga Mahila Samiti; Sreema Mahila Samiti; Democratic Lawyers' Association; headmistresses or teachers of about 25 girls' schools in the district; Prof. Jasodhara Bagchi, Chairperson, West Bengal Commission for Women; Dr. Roma Das, Vice-Chairperson; members: Prof. Gairika Ghosh, Prof. Uma Basu, Smt. Lakshmi Murmu, Smt. Bhagabati Mondal, Smt. Bharati Mutsuddi (Mukherjee), Smt. Sarbani Bhattacharya, Smt. Shyamasree Das and Member-Secretary Sri Sailajananda Halder; Sm. Sarmishtha Duttgupta as observer and Additional District Health Officer, people who helped with the Commission's work. The meeting was presided over and opened by District Magistrate Sri Omkar Singh Mina. District Social Welfare Officer Parthapratim Dasgupta said he had not received any complaint relating to dowry or any list of items of dowry. With the aim of increasing public awareness against dowry system, the prevention of dowry Act has been brought before the people through street theatre, Jhumur songs and Kabigaan in 116 Gram Panchayats of Krishnanagar subdivision.

Apart from this, this Act is being explained in various ways through booklets and feed charts of well organised child development centres and at mothers' meetings.

The district has worked towards prevention of child marriage, dowry system and trafficking in the shape of wall writings, hoardings, posters and holding of public awareness camps in Krishnanagar-I and Kaliganj blocks.

Recommendations for setting up of CWC and JJ boards in the district have been sent to concerned departments.

- The Chief Medical Officer of Health spoke about the PC & PNDT Act. He added that there are 57 USG machines in all in the district, of which 7 are in government hospitals. The district action-taken committee had had 12 meetings in all. The last was held on 20 June 2007. The CMOH said that it is not clear from form 'F' if female infanticide is being practised. So other methods are being adopted at the district level meeting to try and point out such cases.

The members said that the fact that there is no provision for surprise visits to USG centres more than twice a year is posing problem. It has been tried to publicise PC & PNDT. Act through

awareness camps, placards and an audio-visual CD prepared by Red Cross Society.

Now, birth certificate for a new-born baby is being given when the mother leaves the hospital with her child.

- SDO (Sadar) spoke on the issue on trafficking. He informed that workshops on the issues of child marriage, dowry system and trafficking are held at the Block, District and Panchayat levels.

200 persons participated in a combined workshop organised by NGOs and members of 116 Gram Panchayats of 10 Border Blocks.

Marriage of two minors Gauri and Anjali could be stopped and Anjali, on being encourage to study, has started studying.

With the help of UNDP the district is working towards preventing trafficking. The District Magistrate thinks it would help to make a list of all people going from the Gram Panchayat to outside areas. Formation and active participation of SIIGs might help in preventing the problem of trafficking.

- There is a coordinator in each of 12 police stations working to prevent trafficking. Registration slips are available in the police stations and the Panchayat. Somebody going outside the Panchayat areas may register using such slips, said the Police Super. While lodging a missing diary complaint, one must clearly mention the age of the person missing and the identity of the person who has taken her. This would enable in determining the nature of trafficking. There are assistance centres under each police station formed with distinguished women of that area. At such centres, it is being tried to have preliminary discussions and solve problems regarding family disputes.

Women's desks have been set up in four district subdivisions. There is a counselling centre at the district centre.

Having a separate women's crime cell would improve work but it is not feasible due to lack of women officers.

- Smt. Bharati Mutsuddi (Mukherjee), member of Women's Commission, spoke on the Domestic Violence Prevention Act.
- Participants from women's organisations and voluntary organisations, and two school teachers also made their speeches at the meeting.
- Public Prosecutor Sri Sadhan Mondal spoke about the need for having workshops for proper training of the volunteers of assistance centres under the different police stations.
- The District Magistrate and the Zilla Sabhadhipati participated in discussions on various issues at the meeting.

The Chairperson of the Women's Commission expressed content at the status of work based on the district report and asked the district administration to take an even more active role. She also asked to lay greater emphasis on the fund for prevention of trafficking, on rescue and rehabilitation. The administration should play an important role in establishment of women's rights through regular meetings of the district committee for protection of women's rights. In this respect, the Chairperson informed that two task force members of the Commission would specifically come to help in the district's work.

—Shyamasree Das

### Visit to Uttar Dinajpur District

On 18.09.2007, Prof. Jasodhara Bagchi, Chairperson, Dr. Roma Das, Vice-Chairperson and members Prof. Gairika Ghosh, Smt. Sarbani Bhattacharya, Smt. Shyamasree Das, Smt. Lakshmi Murmu and Prof. Uma Basu attended the Raiganj District Committee Meeting as part of Uttar Dinajpur district visit.

The meeting was opened by the District Magistrate and conducted by Prof. Jasodhara Bagchi. The DM said that the rate of literacy in this district is very low compared to other districts. Islampur block has remained most backward in this respect. Women are so little aware of their legal rights that nobody even claimed the body of a woman lying dead on the road. Present at this meeting were the ASP, ACMOH, SDO, ADM, Child specialist, a gynaecologist, representatives of a number of women's organisations, headmistresses of some schools, leader of Mahila Congress, Councillor of Block No. 84, MLAs and others.

The DSWO said that the meeting of the District Level Committee was last held on 23.08.2006. Their office has had not received any complaints related to dowry or any list of items demanded as dowry. The district also has some complaints of women and child trafficking. 3 complaints of domestic violence have had been lodged and the cases are under trial in the CJM court. One of these cases was settled. The CMOH said that the PCPNDT committee meets every two months and discusses the F-form birth registration report. Birth registration reports come regularly. It is seen that rate of birth of girls is quite less than that of boys. Very few number of deaths are registered, and such arrangements are not available everywhere. It takes about a month to get post mortem reports in Raiganj; and it takes even more time in Islampur and in North Bengal.

There was no Marriage Registrar present at the meeting. Public prosecutor Sri Pradip Sarkar said that there being no marriage registrar in Raiganj, it poses a big problem for getting marriages registered.

The headmistress of a girls' school said that the guardians often show discriminatory behaviour in regard to the education of a daughter. Child marriage and adolescent marriages are not absent in the district, informed a primary school teacher. They try to prevent this through discussions with the guardians, but they often fail to stop child marriages.

The ASP said that the setting up of Fast Track Court has augmented the judicial process. Unlike before, it is not taking a long time now to give charge sheets. There is Asha Project in PS. There are cases of trafficking in Raiganj, Kaliyaganj and Islampur. Girls have been rescued from Delhi and Haryana and one or two traffickers have also been caught. But the common people are very little aware of all this.

Many of those who attended the meeting said they are not treated well when they go to the police stations. The *Jago Nari Gram Jagao* programme has been implemented in this district.

—Uma Basu

### Visit to Dakshin Dinajpur District

As part of Dakshin Dinajpur district visit, on 19.09.2007 members of the West Bengal Commission for Women attended a meeting in Subarnat Conference Room, Balurghat with officials from the district administration and representatives of different local

organisations. Present on behalf of the Commission were Chairperson Prof. Jasodhara Bagchi, Vice-Chairperson Dr. Roma Das, members Smt. Shyamasree Das, Smt. Lakshmi Murmu, Smt. Sarbani Bhattacharya and Member-Secretary Sri S. N. Halder. Also present were DM, ADM (Dev), SP, Additional SP, President, CMOH, SDO (Sadar), CDPO, DSWO, teachers and headmistresses, representatives of different organisations like Ganatantrik Mahila Samiti, Agragami Mahila Samiti, Paschimanga Mahila Samiti, Nikhil Banga Mahila Sangha etc.

The main issues of discussion were registration of birth-marriage-death, trafficking, torture on and harassment of women etc. What came up from the discussions were :

1. No complaints were lodged related to dowry.
2. No list of items demanded in dowry was submitted.
3. No meetings of the PNDT committee are held.
4. The number of births registered is satisfactory.
5. Lack of awareness about birth registration.
6. Regular meetings of Child Welfare committee are held.
7. The administration has no information about any adoptions in the district.
8. There are cases of eve-teasing, as the representatives of different women's organizations said.
9. Those who are caught on charges of trafficking get released due to lack of substantial evidence; the cases take a long time to be solved.

There was a detailed discussion on these issues in which everybody present participated. On behalf of the Commission, Prof. Jasodhara Bagchi heartily thanked the administration of Dakshin Dinajpur for such a well-organised meeting and for extending a warm welcome to the Commission. A few recommendations were made by the Commission for the district:

1. Giving dowry at marriage is an insult to women. The administration and voluntary organizations should be on alert to know if dowry is being given in marriage.
- Giving or taking dowry is a legal offence.
2. The sex-ratio of children aged 0-6 years should be paid attention to. This would tell if any female foetus is being destroyed.
3. Every committee should hold regular meetings.
4. Illegal marriage registrations should be stopped.
5. The administration should see to it that every marriage is registered.
6. Everybody should be made aware of Domestic Violence Prevention Act 2005.

Conducted by the Chairperson of the Commission, the meeting became lively and a very important one with the active participation of everybody present.

—Gairika Ghosh

### Visit to Malda District

Members of West Bengal Commission for Women went to visit Malda district on 19.09.2007. Present at the meeting were different officials of Malda district administration, voluntary organisations, Zilla Parishad, representatives of Old Malda and Englishbazaar municipalities and various women's organizations.

Present on the occasion were :

- Smt. Indrani Saha, Additional District Magistrate
- Sri Pratyarpan Sinha Roy, Officer of District project (ICDS)
- Sri Saibal, Additional District Health Officer

- Smt. Arunima Dey, SDO (Sadar)
- DSP
- Sri Mukul, Chairman, Old Malda municipality
- Sri Asish Kundu, Member-in-Council, Englishbazaar municipality
- Sri Soumitra Roy, Superintendent of Fishery, Zilla Parishad
- Smt. Minati Sarkar, member of Zilla Parishad
- Sri Kumar, Public Prosecutor
- Paschimbanga Ganatantrik Mahila Samiti
- Paschimbanga Mahila Samiti
- Agragami Mahila Samiti
- Nikhil Banga Mahila Sangha
- Prof. Jasodhara Bagchi, Chairperson, West Bengal Commission for Women
- Dr. Roma Das, Vice-Chairperson, West Bengal Commission for Women
- Members of West Bengal Commission for Women Prof. Gairika Ghosh, Prof. Uma Basu, Sm. Sarbani Bhattacharya, Smt. Lakshmi Murmu, Smt. Shyamasree Das
- Sri Sailajananda Halder, Member-Secretary, West Bengal Commission for Women
- Various voluntary organisations.

The District Magistrate met with the Women's Commission and representatives of different organisations of the district. Prof. Jasodhara Bagchi presided over the meeting.

The topics discussed at the meeting were :

- problems relating to dowry system and implementation of prevention of dowry Act to solve such problems
- duties of the District Health Officer according to PC & PNDDT Act
- registration of births, deaths and marriages
- Child Welfare Committee—child adoption
- district legal services (DAISA)
- women and child trafficking
- Domestic Violence Prevention Act 2005
- violence against women in the district, and the role of police and the judiciary in preventing such violence.

The points that became clear from the discussion are as follows :

1. The number of deaths registered is very few and there are various reasons for it.

2. Rate of marriage registrations is low in case of Hindus.
3. According to the District Health Officer, the committee formed according to the rules of the PC & PNDDT Act is trying to work properly.
4. Various questions on the role of police in preventing trafficking and violence on women were raised by women's organisations, public representatives, voluntary organisations and the public prosecutor present at the meeting. The police officer present could not give any satisfactory explanation to everybody.
5. The Officer working towards prevention of dowry system in the district had received two cases relating to dowry. One has been settled, one is under trial. Regarding lists of items given in marriage, the officer said that these lists are not submitted. Even the state government officials do not submit any list of gifts given in marriage, despite government orders.

In order to understand sex ratio in the district, the house-to-house survey reports of workers working in the child development project are being submitted to the district project supervisor. This might help in understanding the present sex ratio, said the supervisor.

The Women's Commission made the following recommendations at the end of the discussion :

1. There is no women's home in the district. There should be one.
2. There should be child helpline.
3. Trafficking and kidnapping should be differentiated properly. Women and child trafficking should be identified and necessary action taken promptly. This task of identification should be ensured with the participation of the Panchayat and the municipality.
4. The Panchayat and the municipality should see to it that deaths are registered properly and lawfully at the places of performing the last rites.
5. A workshop should be organized on Domestic Violence Prevention Act 2005. Initiatives should be taken to involve the police, block and district Social Welfare officers, SDPO, DPO (ICDS), women's organizations and voluntary organizations in such workshop for proper implementation of the law.

—Shyamasree Das



### Liluah Home Visit

On 4.05.2007 a team from West Bengal Commission for Women visited Liluah Home. In the team were Vice-Chairperson Dr. Roma Das, members Prof. Gairika Ghosh, Prof. Debjani Sengupta (Deb) and Smt. Bhagabati Mondal.

Present at the home then were 19 inmates, including 2 of the staff. Apart from them, the numbers of others staying there were: Rescue – 18, After care – 101, Child Care and Protection–37, Observation–33.

The Commission team spoke to the Super of the home. There was a discussion regarding the home atmosphere and its activities,

looking after the inmates, their training, education and health conditions; also discussed was the issue of entertainment for the inmates. The NGOs already working in the home was carrying on with their own curricula as decided earlier. Formal and non-formal education was on as usual. The home had no Madhyamik or Higher Secondary examination candidates in 2007.

The Commission suggested the authorities to make necessary arrangements for inmates willing to study or take examination. Health related activities were going in the old manner and need to improved; of course, the home has an ambulance. Repairing the home has improved its environment. There are food supplies as provided by the Government, but the inmates demand better quality food.

—Roma Das

### Inauguration of 'Short Stay Home' under Swadhar Project

On 12.05.2007, on behalf of the West Bengal Commission for Women, I attended the inaugural function of the Short Stay Home under Swadhar Project, organised by Paschimbanga Mahila Samiti in Rajpur of Sonarpur block. Present on the occasion were Officer of the Department of Social Welfare, Sonarpur block; CDPO, ICDS Project; Dr. Ashoka Gupta, Chairperson, Paschimbanga Mahila Seba Samiti, Secretary Sm. Yasmin Sengupta and other members. The inmates of the home presented a nice cultural programme at the inauguration.

There are many small children staying at this home. It would be nice if a centre could be started for them with the help of Sishu Bikash Seva Prakalpa. Cases of trafficking and rape abound in the district of South 24 Parganas. There is particular need for this kind of homes there for the security of women.

—Bhagabati Mondal

### Visit to Nadia District Home

During West Bengal Commission for Women's Nadia district visit on 27.06.2007. Chairperson Prof. Jasodhara Bagchi and members Smt. Bharati Mutsuddi (Mukherjee), Smt. Bhagabati Mondal and Prof. Uma Basu visited the district Home. This is a short stay home with arrangements for 25 persons. The premises are very neat and clean, but are not spacious enough. Of the 16 residents 4 were children, and they were all born there. Speaking to quite a few inmates, the Commission learnt that all of them want to go outside the home from time to time, as they live in a confined state there. From what the Commission came to know on talking to the inmates separately, it made the following recommendations :

1. The cases of the Under Trial inmates should be solved as early as possible and they sent back to their own homes.
2. Minors who were under trial for marrying under age have now come of age. They should now be sent to their father-in-law's or any other place of their choice with the help of prompt judicial action.
3. Arrangements should be made to send mentally challenged inmates to Pavlov/Behrampore Home as there are no provisions for the treatment or separate accommodation of mental patients here.
4. It is necessary to arrange for proper rehabilitation of inmates who are either mentally traumatized rape victims or have been abandoned by their husbands.
5. There was a child inmate who got lost and could not tell the proper address of his house. Arrangements should be made to send him back to his own home with the only clues he could give about its whereabouts.
6. If residents show interest in studying, their studies in open schools should be arranged for.
7. As there are no arrangements for taking proper care of the aged inmates in this home, they should be sent to old age homes.
8. The inmates will have to be taken on strolls outside the home premises to keep them mentally healthy.

—Uma Basu

### Visit to Uttar Dinajpur Home

**Residential School for the Deaf and Dumb: Surjadoy, Karnajora, Raiganj**

A new day lies ahead of the rising sun. The day keeps rolling with the buzz of life, with its highs and lows in daily business. *Surjadoy* or sunrise is hence, for us, not just a universal natural phenomenon, but the symbol of beginning of a fresh, vibrant life.

This thought came to my mind on visiting 'Surjadoy', the residential school for the deaf and the dumb in Raiganj, on 18.09.07. As per our schedule, I had gone to visit this home with Prof. Jasodhara Bagchi, Chairperson of our West Bengal Commission for Women. The clean and well-arranged environment, attention towards education, health and games and, above all, the enthusiastic and cordial relationship between the authorities, teachers and the inmates fascinated us.

This 'home' is under the Department of Social Welfare and Women and Child Development, Government of West Bengal. It was set up in 1968 as a boys' home. On 15 August 1997, a section was opened with a girls' hostel.

It was Viswakarma Puja on the day we visited the home. The school was nicely decorated with *alpna* drawn by the inmates. The entrance, the place where the puja was done, the doorways of every room — it was a bright and pleasant sight everywhere with such fine drawings and decorations.

There were many medals and shields in the office of the home. The boys and girls have won them in different competitions at the state and national levels. These boys and girls are deprived of two senses — they cannot speak or hear. But they have made up for this lack with their effort, perseverance, interest and initiative. Not only that, they have proved themselves by achieving top positions in various kinds of activities. Seeing the entire environment of the home, it has seemed to us that the boys and girls have been able to prove their dexterity and can develop themselves with their enthusiasm, interest and happiness. Because of the great patience, hard work and humane behaviour of the authorities and trainers, this school has really become a house, indeed a home to them, and not just yet another place of accommodation. The informal, yet disciplined and regulated pattern of life has made living, education, sports and games etc. very easy, smooth for these boys and girls.

We were very happy to know that because of the efforts of a teacher of this home, a boy inmate found his parents and his own house. But the boy has done so good in his studies as well as games and sports at the home that both his parents and the school authority kept him there.

On the whole, it has seemed a 'model' home to us.

—Gairika Ghosh

### Visit to Nibedita Home, Dakshin Dinajpur

West Bengal Commission for Women visited Nibedita Home in Balurghat, Dakshin Dinajpur. Present on behalf of the Commission were Chairperson Prof. Jasodhara Bagchi and members Smt. Shyamasree Das and Smt. Lakshmi Murmu. Also present at the visit was the DSWO, Balurghat.

This home runs on private funding; there is very little of government grant for this home. The home gets all its help through the local clubs and NGOs. Against its capacity to accommodate 75 inmates, presently there are 69 staying.

Sm. Krishna Chowdhury is the Secretary of the home. The home runs under her supervision. There are 4 trainers for the inmates. They teach to make handkerchiefs, necklaces and earrings. 2 girls read in Class IX. When we went to visit the home,

the inmates sang and said their prayers before us very nicely. The authorities said to us that they look forward to receiving government grants. Prof. Jasodhara Bagchi and the others from the Commission assured to look into the matter. Nibedita home is the only home in the district. Many more girls might come to this home in the future. It is very much necessary that the Commission pays attention towards its development.

—Lakshmi Murnu



## CORRECTIONAL HOME VISIT



### Visit to Purulia Women's Correctional Home

Purulia Women's Correctional Home is the only correctional home in West Bengal that is exclusively for women.

Chairperson Prof. Jasodhara Bagchi, Vice-Chairperson Dr. Roma Das, members Prof. Uma Basu, Smt. Bhagabati Mondal and Prof. Gairika Ghosh from the West Bengal Commission for Women visited this home.

The activities of the correctional home are supervised by Smt. Reba Mandi, Superintendent, Assistant Controller Smt. Saraswati Roy, Smt. Mina Das of Female Ward and 6 guardian staff.

On 19.02.2007 the home had as its inmates 54 adults and 2 children, of whom 23 are under section 498A. The inmates themselves do the cooking and cleaning work of the home; they also engage in gardening and various handicrafts. In their meals, along with rice, they have fish and meat each once a week, and *dal* and vegetables all other five days. Some of these vegetables come from the garden in the home itself.

The doctor comes at ten every morning, routine check-up is carried out, necessary treatment given, and, if needed, patients are sent to hospitals outside for treatment.

Every inmate gets a daily remuneration of Rs.13 for their work at the home. Maintenance of discipline in all kinds of activities, proper arrangement of things, the kitchen, the residential room, the garden and even the drains, all speaking of neatness—all these are indeed noteworthy aspects of this correctional home. The flowers and plants have made the place all the more lively, more beautiful; all this have been done by the inmates themselves, under the supervision of the authorities of the home. Their work is bringing them money and doing away with their boredom as well; the nice atmosphere they themselves are creating is soothing and enriching their minds. It really is a home where they can and does correct themselves, and not any place of confinement for them.

We have been told by the authorities that having eight persons in the staff instead of the present six would make work more convenient for them. It would also be nice if the per head quantity of vegetables for the residents is increased, they added. We have assured them of recommending the matter to the concerned authorities.

The Chairperson and members of the Commission spoke to the inmates and asked them, among other things, about their crimes, the present status of their cases, the food at the correctional home and the atmosphere there. They freely replied saying they live there in a very homely atmosphere. Everybody there loves and cares for them. They feel most interested in keeping everything

neat and clean and in gardening. It makes them very happy, the inmates said. They also added that the authorities pay special attention to their health, their food and the work they learn at the home, among other things.

Convicted inmates have taken the responsibility of cooking upon themselves. Keeping by the food chart prepared for the week, they independently prepare the daily food charts. Remaining within the limits of the weekly food allotment, they try to bring as much variety to the daily menu as they can. This makes it very much clear that this task is in no way a burden for them, rather something they really enjoy, mixing happiness with responsibility.

The well laid out flower plants and shrubs are really an adornment for the correctional home. They present a feast for the eye.

—Gairika Ghosh

### Visit to Bishnupur Sub-Divisional Correctional Home

The Bankura district visit of West Bengal Commission for Women included a visit to Bishnupur Sub-Correctional Home. On 20.02.2007 the Chairperson Prof. Jasodhara Bagchi, Vice-Chairperson Dr. Roma Das, members Prof. Uma Basu, Smt. Bhagabati Mondal, Prof. Gairika Ghosh, Smt. Shyamasree Das and lawyer member Smt. Bharati Mutsuddi (Mukherjee) went for this visit.

The members met 12 inmates at the home. They informed that for breakfast and tiffin they have *muri*, *chire* etc.; for lunch and dinner rice, *dal* and vegetables. They have fish and meat each once a week.

The doctor comes regularly for check-up. The inmates are aware of Legal Aid but there is no provision for it for those under trial.

The District Judge comes on visit once every month.

Most of those who come under 498A cases are BPLs.

The inmates appealed to the Commission members for having a television at the home. The Commission immediately recommended it to the authority. The hospital is more or less clean. The authority tries to provide as much amenities as is possible.

—Gairika Ghosh

### Visit to Nadia Correctional Home

On 26.07.2007 the West Bengal Commission for Women visited the Correctional Home in Nadia District. Present in this visit were Dr. Roma Das, Vice-Chairperson of the Commission, members

Prof. Gairika Ghosh, Smt. Shyamasree Das and Smt. Sarbani Bhattacharya.

The home has 83 inmates and 2 warders at present. It has a library with reading facilities, a television, and thanks to the NGOs, there is also a separate entertainment room with arrangement for playing ludo, carrom, cards, chess etc. The help of the NGOs has also facilitated studies for the inmates. The doctor visits the home regularly and medicines are also available. At present, there are two beds for emergency purposes. Sports are held annually. Different advisors come once a week for religious discussions. The NGO Prajapita Brahma Kumari Ishwariya Vishwavidyalay arranges for Rakhi Bandhan festival which is celebrated with great enthusiasm here. There are sufficient number of fans in each room of the home. The inmates have no complaints with the food or anything else. All inmates have their own lawyers arranged by themselves or by the authorities. There are no convicted inmates at this home.

Ramakrishna Mission Ashram arranges for vocational training and also looks into the general studies of the inmates. Sister of Charity of Malapota takes care of cultural programmes and meditation exercises.

It also needs to be added that most of the rooms in the home has almost double the number of inmates than would be justified. Only the good news is that two correctional homes are being built in Tahatta and Kalyani, of which work of the Tehatta home is almost finished. When these two homes are ready, the problem of space crisis will hopefully be solved.

—Roma Das

### Visit to Uttar Dinajpur Correctional Home

In Raiganj of Uttar Dinajpur, the sub-jail built in 1956 has been developed into the Correctional Home of today.

At present, the home has arrangements for accommodating 15 women inmates. 12 are staying now, of whom 3 are from Bangladesh and are free. The West Bengal Commission for Women has voluntarily come forward to help in arranging to send them back to Bangladesh. Documents describing their identities have been sent to the concerned department.

The home has provision for the studies of all the inmates. There is a doctor who comes from outside to see the inmates. Medicines are available in sufficient quantities; if needed inmates can also be sent to the district hospital for treatment. There is adequate number of fans and lights, and a colour television as well. But the sanitary provisions have not met the requirements and work is on in this regard. The authorities have obtained permission for setting up a crèche and would soon start work in this direction. This crèche would be for accommodation of and imparting of necessary education to the children of women inmates.

Library and newspaper facilities are available for inmates willing to read. The food chart is prepared as per governmental stipulations. Doctors are recommended for the women inmates.

—Roma Das

### Visit to Dakshin Dinajpur Correctional Home

The West Bengal Commission for Women went to visit the Dakshin Dinajpur district correctional home in Balurghat on 17.07.2007. Chairperson Prof. Jasodhara Bagchi, Vice-Chairperson Dr. Roma Das, members Prof. Gairika Ghosh, Smt. Lakshmi Murmu, Smt. Sarbani Bhattacharya and Smt. Shyamasree Das were present. A detailed inspection was done by Dr. Roma Das, Prof. Gairika Ghosh, Smt. Sarbani Bhattacharya, Jail Super, IG (Prison), Jailor and MO.

The number of inmates at the home on that day was 40—10 convicted and 30 under trial. Even if all the staff sanctioned to look after them are not engaged, it does not hamper the activities of the home. It has been recommended to make up this lack in the number of staff.

Voluntary organisations are in charge of general and work education of the inmates. On its own initiative, Ramakrishna Mission has arranged for sleeping mattresses for the inmates.

Food supplies are as per government allotments. There is proper arrangement of drinking water. Provisions are there for general treatment of the inmates. If needed, they can also be sent to the district hospital.

There are proper bathrooms and lavatories. The inmates can also get mattresses if and when needed.

Free legal aid is available. Above all, there is the DLAS office in the correctional home.

Regular health check-ups, vaccination programmes etc. are held as needed. There is carrom and other games for entertainment. Along with Durga Puja, Saraswati Puja etc., arrangements are made for saying *namaj* and celebrating the festival of Id. There is arrangement of music on such occasions. The home has a crèche for the children. Altogether, the Correctional Home was very impressive.

There are Bangladeshi inmates here of whom 6 are free. The Women's Commission has intervened in the matter of sending these six women back to their country.

The Commission has recommended for (a) a separate dining hall for the women inmates and (b) making arrangements so that the inmates can remain engaged in their daily activities, apart from their studies.

—Roma Das

### Visit to Malda Correctional Home

On 19.09.2007, Chairperson Prof. Jasodhara Bagchi, Vice-Chairperson Dr. Roma Das, Smt. Lakshmi Murmu and Smt. Sarbani Bhattacharya from the West Bengal Commission for Women went to visit the Malda district correctional home.

There are 26 inmates at the home at present. Most of them have come on cases of torture on or murder of daughters-in-law. There is 1 Bangladeshi inmate who is under trial. The home has accommodation for 50 inmates (40 under trial and 10 convicted).

There is a male doctor appointed for the treatment of all the inmates. But neither there is any female attendant, nor any beds for the patients. There are no specialists doctors. The home has to depend upon the district hospital in such cases, and there is an ambulance for such purposes. There is no provision for doctors

or counsellors for the drug addicts, no provision for detection or prevention of HIV and AIDS.

The arrangements for food are as has been granted by the government. The home provides for general education, work education and vocational work that would help the inmates earn some money. Different voluntary organisations perform the duty of imparting education to the inmates. If needed, any sick inmate is given food according to medical prescriptions.

Apart from the clothing and sleeping arrangements of the inmates as fixed by the government, voluntary organisations have provided them with sleeping mattresses, and, at times, clothes as well. The bathrooms and lavatories are in good condition. The recommendations made by the Commission are :

1. Detection of HIV/AIDS should be made mandatory.
2. A lady doctor should be appointed.
3. A dining place should be provided for the women inmates.

—Roma Das

### **Correctional Home With A Difference Celebration of International Women's Day at Presidency Correctional Home**

On 8 March 2007, on the occasion of International Women's Day, the authorities at the Alipore Presidency Correctional Home organised a remarkable programme with the women inmates there.

The jail Super made his speech on behalf of the organisers of this programme. Talking about various legal complications and problems prisoners face when released, he drew the attention of the concerned minister and the West Bengal Commission for Women to the reluctance of many people to accept a person back home on release from jail, and also demanded remedies for these.

The inaugural speech was made by the Minister, Department of Women and Child Development and Social Welfare and Department of Jail, Sri Biswanath Chowdhury. In her Chief Guest's address, Prof. Jasodhara Bagchi, Chairperson, West

Bengal Commission for Women talked about the significance of International Women's Day and its importance in the life of the inmates under trial. Among other speakers were Smt. Santwana (Ghosh) Lahiri, Chairperson, State Social Welfare Advisory Board, Dr. Roma Das, Vice-Chairperson, West Bengal Commission for Women and Inspector General, Department of Jail.

Present at the inaugural ceremony were: members of West Bengal Commission for Women Prof. Gairika Ghosh, Prof. Uma Basu and Smt. Shyamasree Das, as also voluntary organisations engaged in imparting training at the correctional home.

A cultural function was held with the Under Trial inmates and their children. The children welcomed the guests with flower bouquets. Through group song and dance they made their prayer: "*Sato phul bikasito hok, jato agachha nirmul hok*" (may a hundred flowers blossom, may all weeds be rooted out).

For quite some time now, in all correctional homes of the state, combined efforts of the administration and voluntary organisations are aiming towards making everyday life at the correctional homes interesting and meaningful for the inmates, thereby allaying their boredom, through humane behaviour towards them, through arranging for their education, cultural engagements and various kinds of vocational training.

Adding to that, now has begun the observance of International Women's Day on 8 March, the symbolic day geared towards establishment of women's self-respect, towards women's self-empowerment.

The way the women prisoners expressed their mental richness through their songs and poetry, thanks to the combined efforts of the government officials and the voluntary organisations. This was but a soft, gentle breeze in the problem-ridden lives of these women.

May such little efforts bring in new rays of hope in the lives of these women; this was the heart-felt wish of all present.

—Shyamasree Das

## **International Women's Day : 7 March 2007 Celebration**

International Women's Day moves us from within. It is not any ordinary day; at the same time, it is not just an occasion to be celebrated on one particular day of the year. This is a day to pledge for fighting for women's rights, dignity, respect. This is a day to voice protest against all kinds of gender discrimination. This is a day to take account of things and to look back — how much have we acquired through our struggle, our movement, and how much do we still have to go.

Like every year, this year too West Bengal Commission for Women held a programme on 7 March 2007, on the eve of International Women's Day, at the office premises. The function began with song sung by Debasis Roychowdhury, Ananya Dutta, Rohini Roychowdhury and Aparna Dutta.

Five distinguished women were felicitated by the Commission on the occasion.

### **Felicitations**

On 7 March 2007, on the eve of International Women's Day, West Bengal Commission for Women felicitated five successful

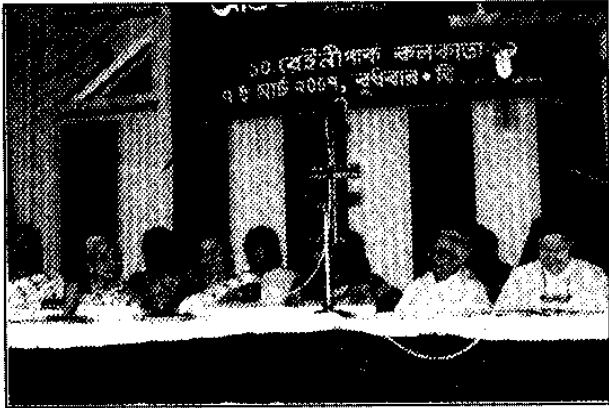
women on this auspicious occasion — theatre and film personality Smt. Shobha Sen, eminent gynaecologist Dr. Sobha Ghosh, Justice Smt. Manjula Bose, Founder-member of the West Bengal branch of National Alliance Women Smt. Shanti Chakraborty and distinguished social worker Sister Cyril.

Prof. Jasodhara Bagchi, Chairperson of West Bengal Commission made a brief welcome address. In her inaugural speech, Smt. Manjari Gupta said that it is very much necessary to have equal rights for women and men for the sake of world peace. She also said that in order to direct global development towards human good women's role is to be given special importance.

Smt. Gupta inaugurated the latest English issue of *Narikantha*, the Commission's newsletter and a poster against trafficking at this function.

Through narrating of their personal experiences, the felicitated guests discussed the issue of gender discrimination. The veteran actress Shobha Sen said that actresses are subjected to deprivation in their profession in various ways. She thinks that women themselves have to write about the deprivation of women, otherwise the truth of their lives will never come to the front.

Dr. Sobha Ghosh said that at the time when she started her career, it took her a long time to prove herself as a surgeon. The common people did not believe that even a woman can be a deft surgeon. Talking of the problem of gender discrimination, she said that till today the society has not been successful in making women understand the scientific truth that a mother is never responsible for giving birth to a boy child or a girl child. In regard to the present status of women in society and family she is of the opinion that state, religion and society are creating pressure on women in different ways. The organised and collective protest made by the women of Manipur against state terror has set an example for all women, thinks Smt. Ghosh.



*Sm. Sova Sen, Dr. Sova Ghosh, Justice Manjula Bose, Sm. Santi Chakroborty, Sister Cyril are sitting on the dias in an occasion of celebration of the International Women's Day 2007 by W. B. Commission for Women on 7th March, 2007 at Rainey Part, Kolkata-19*

The issue of gender discrimination in profession was also reflected in what Justice Manjula Bose said. At her time, women lawyers were not quite accepted. Of course, things have now changed much for the better. Granddaughter of Desbandhu Chittaranjan Das, brought up in an educated and enlightened family, wife of a compassionate and broad-minded person, Bose was never really under any kind of pressure in her family. So, she found it quite easy to establish herself in her profession. She clearly admitted that not all girls have such luck. So, she thinks, such women should be felicitated on International Women's Day who have achieved success in their profession fighting all kinds of adversities that came their way.

Because of her profession, Smt. Shanti Chakraborty, associated with the Department of Rural Development of Government of India, has come into contact with large numbers of women engaged in agricultural activities, and thereby seen gender discrimination in different ways. From her professional experience she said that a certain class of people find it difficult to admit that women too can achieve high positions in their professions. While working in government departments she has seen that undertaking any project exclusively for women poses a lot of problems in its implementation.

For many years now, Sister Cyril has been working towards the development of deprived and neglected children. Since 1973, she has devoted herself to making Loreto School, Scaldah an institution that would stand beside these helpless, hapless children. Bringing in the topic of the role of the mother in the overall development of a child, she said that we should pay special respect to the work of those women who always care for their home and family, who do not go out to work but remain housewives and always work to make the house a happy home. They do not get any reward for this, their work is looked down upon; whereas they deserve to be respected most for this labour of love of theirs. Regarding the position of working women in society and family, Sister Cyril thinks that even though they are economically independent, they do not enjoy this independence in all other spheres of life. A proper understanding of the fact that women and men complement each other, fulfil each others needs would do away with gender discrimination.

The thoughtful and extended presentations of each of the felicitated guests touched the hearts of all present. After this, Dr. Roma Das, Vice-Chairperson, West Bengal Commission for Women thanked all the guests present at the occasion.

*[The report on the Felicitation was received courtesy to Sayakbarta.]*

In the second part of the programme, there was a cultural event based on song-dance-recitation performance--- "Rakte mor jage rudrabina" presented by the group Suchhanda; concept and direction: Surangama Dasgupta, participants: Sramana Ghosh Modi, Lokeshwari Dasgupta, Debamita Gupta, Arpita Sen, Suramya Pusjan Dasgupta. This presentation, compiled from Rabindra Krishtir Jagat, captivated everybody with its dances, music and recitation.

This programme, in two parts, organised by the Women's Commission on the eve of International Women's Day was facilitated by its member Prof. Gairika Ghosh.

—Gairika Ghosh



## SEMINARS AND WORKSHOPS



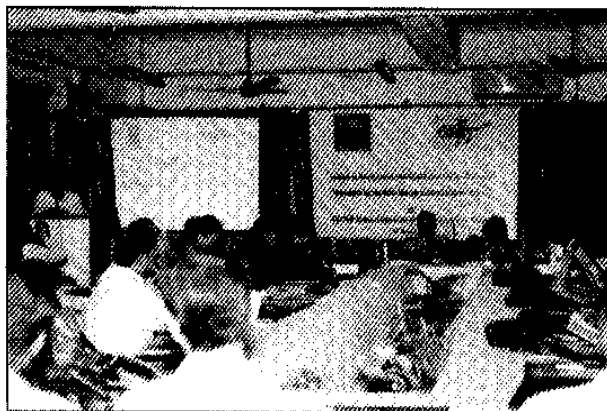
### "Family Courts, Matrimonial Laws and Access to Gender Justice"

#### Inauguration by Sri Rabilal Maitra

The solemn seminar was inaugurated by Sri Rabilal Maitra, Hon'ble Minister-in-charge of Law and Judicial Affairs. In his inaugural speech, Sri Maitra addressed the august gathering by lamenting that even though myriad laws have been enacted, yet 90% of the populace is unaware of their Constitutional rights. The object of Family Court is to settle disputes at initial stage. However, it too takes time. When he met the councillors, he was

told that just to find out the persons involved in the case, it takes more than one month. He lamented that we have been unable to provide assistance. He said that we should start training of councillors. He suggested that the Commission should consider whether to start Mediation Centres at initial level of disputes to solve them by negotiation through trained councillors. Under Family Court Act, no lawyers are allowed. But this is subverted in real practice. He said that as he is also a lawyer, he appeals to

the Bar Council that no lawyer should appear in Family Court. However, even if no lawyer appears, it is observed that frequently lawyers are sitting behind the litigants and advising them. So, in this way, the law is subverted. We should organize awareness program and make people aware.



*Sri Rabihlal Maitra, Hon'ble Law Minister of West Bengal delivering speech and Justice Samaresh Banerjee, Ms. Flavia Agnes are sitting on the dias in a seminar on Family Courts, Matrimonial Laws and Access to Gender Justice.*

He pointed out that 50 % of population is women. But nobody knows about Article 15 of the Constitution of India, which bans all forms of discrimination. Even men are not aware about their rights in remote villages, let alone women. He said that the way we are proceeding is all wrong. We are holding this seminar not at Panchayat level, but that is what we need to be doing. We should go to Panchayat level to spread awareness, and the Panchayat members should be involved—after all they are working at grass-root level. We should go to all people and make them understand, then only our object can be fulfilled.

He said that very recently the Domestic Violence Act has been enacted, but it requires a lot of money to implement it fully, and requires 200 new courts to be set up and we are suffering from financial constraints. He suggested opening more Lok Adalats, mediation centres, because it's a new innovation. In West Bengal we have been unable to set up Mediation Centres. But we must avail of Alternative Forum to settle disputes. He requested Madam Chairperson to give suggestions on this issue. He also requested NCW to give suggestions, because our government is eager to render justice, but is handicapped.

He also pointed out that a country cannot develop without participation of all its sections. In West Bengal, women are participating in administrative levels, particularly through Panchayat, but no law is as yet enacted for Women's reservation in legislature for upliftment of society. He hoped that this issue too would be discussed.

### **Justice Samaresh Banerjee**

After this inaugural speech, Prof. Jashodhara Bagchi invited Justice Samaresh Banerjee to speak. He said the emphasis on the day's topic was "access to gender justice". In his view meaning of Gender Justice was absence of discrimination on ground of Gender alone. If you discriminate on ground of gender, it is discriminatory. We must understand Gender equality. Law is a tool for gender justice. It might be political, legal, economical or societal. We need to

know that equality is a basic fundamental right. Articles 14, 15, and 16 of the Indian Constitution assure equality. In this way FORMAL EQUALITY may have been achieved, but not in reality.

Accessibility to justice is a mental process. We must remember the Sakshi Slogan: "Women and men are equal but different". This difference must be respected. This difference is due to centuries of discrimination leading to creation of difference. It needs to be reversed. We should understand, respect the difference and, as the Supreme Court has said, make special consideration, that is "SUBSTANTIVE EQUALITY".

### **Prof. Malini Bhattacharya**

After the speech by Justice Banerjee, Prof. Malini Bhattacharya spoke. She said that as a member of the National Commission for Women, she would refer to a visit she paid to some jails in Bihar. The Hon'ble Law Minister looked at these persons from victim's perspective, but she looked at it from the perspective of persons against whom the process of law has been started. She remembered Tagore's story "Shashiti". She said that in Bhagalpur, she found a woman in jail for many years for the charge of murder of brother-in-law, but she was convinced that the husband was the real killer. Similar was the situation of cases under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 304B IPC. People say that women are women's worst enemy, and that gender-friendly laws are misused. They say that we need gender-neutral laws. She did not agree with it as all laws are misused.

Prof. Bhattacharya said that even when a woman is accused, there's double discrimination. It is not enough to have gender-just laws, we also need gender-just procedures as it is the procedures which are causing all the problems. She pointed out that we have National Legal Service Act, but in spite of the Act, legal aid is not forthcoming. It's easy to blame lawyers, but there's question of infrastructure and budget and allocation.

Another issue is do people have knowledge of their rights? Even the concerned authorities are not aware. Information is the first stage. Sensitivity is the second stage. Sensitivity comes in later, but the first stage—that of dissemination of information about the legal rights—is absent.

### **Sm. Bharati Mutsuddi (Mukherjee)**

Sm. Bharati Mutsuddi (Mukherjee) said that the perspective of West Bengal Commission for Women was not there earlier. It comes under Article 39 (a) of the Constitution. Although the mandate of Article 15 is there, but was not taking shape. The mandate of the Constitution was there that none should be denied justice. So law was enacted to set it up. Cases of Deprivation of Rights are taken up at the Conciliation Centres. The Commission favours Conciliation. Through counselling, they also try to get back property rights of women. Women's Commission is also going to field to implement the Gender laws like Domestic Violence Act.

### **Ms. Flavia Agnes**

Ms. Flavia Agnes said that everyone says the Court-System is not working and we need alternative systems. People say laws are not working, but still ask for more laws. This is extremely contradictory. And why is the system not working? Many say it's due to lawyers and their high fees. Legal Aid is not working. But

why? Judges are not Sensitized. Lawyers are corrupt. So many complaints are being heard. But the pertinent question is WHAT ARE WE DOING? With a lot of anguish she said that the West Bengal Family Court is the worst ever. Even infrastructure is not there. She pointed out that at this meeting the Family Court Judges were not there. Next she spoke about lack of coordination in jurisdiction.

Access to justice is important. There must be a waiting room in the Court for litigants to sit. When children are brought in, there must be a place to keep them and to supervise them. There is need to reform the Family Courts.

### **Prof. Jasodhara Bagchi**

Prof. Jasodhara Bagchi, Chairperson of West Bengal Commission for Women said that situation was not so bad as Ms. Flavia said. Two more Courts are coming up. It is important to have a mechanism. Maharashtra has set up an example. It would be best to follow it.

#### **Discussion on Recommendations regarding Family Court**

Ms. Flavia Agnes made the following recommendations before the House :

- There should be a Judge's chamber, a ladies room, an Access Room and an Information Desk.
- There should be proper appointment, supervision and training of Family Court Judges. Only a good sensitized judge ought to be appointed who is thorough with procedures and sound on law.
- In a simple case no lawyer should be allowed, but in complicated cases, lawyers should be allowed. This can be done in different ways. Either lawyers should be allowed or appointed as amicus curie. Even law professors, or law students can be appointed to assist the court.
- Vacancies ought to be fulfilled and fully trained councillors ought to be appointed properly.
- There should be provision of support mechanisms like stress management, psychologists, legal aid clinic, family clinic, stress management clinic.
- Setting up a Helpdesk.
- In-camera proceedings particularly for the Hearing stage.
- Family Court is civil, but the Police is not under its supervision. So Chapter IX must be re- looked into.

## **Protection of Women against Domestic Violence Act and the Role of Police A Meeting at Lalbazar**

West Bengal Commission for Women has taken up various plans of action for implementation of the laws for preventing exploitation of women and protecting women's rights. It is also working to create awareness among women about various laws and amendments. There has been confusion about the role of Police in the implementation of Protection of Women against Domestic Violence Act 2005. A meeting was organised on 16.07.2007 at Lalbazar as a joint effort of the Commission and Kolkata Police to discuss the issue.

On behalf of the Commission, Chairperson Prof. Jasodhara Bagchi, Vice-Chairperson Dr. Roma Das, members Smt. Shyamashree Das, Smt. Bhagabati Mondal, lawyer member Smt. Bharati Mutsuddi (Mukherjee), Prof. Gairika Ghosh and Member-Secretary Sri Sailajananda Halder were present in the meeting.

In his introductory speech, Police Commissioner Sri Prasun Mukherjee said that everybody, particularly the police department, should have a clear idea about this civil Act PWDVA 2005. Only then could it be properly implemented and success achieved. He also talked about the large scope of the Act.

Prof. Jasodhara Bagchi said that there should be extensive discussion on this Act at all levels. She said that the scope of utilizing PWDVA in eliminating gender discrimination should

be considered. Earlier Domestic Violence did not fall under the scope of legislation. This Act has come to be formulated as a result of many social movements. Now we should try to make the most of it. Prof. Bagchi recommended training for the Police with regard to PWDVA.

Smt. Bharati Mutsuddi, lawyer member of the Commission, elaborately discussed the role of the Police in implementation of the Act. She also distributed a note on the salient features of the PWDVA and a guideline on the expected role of the Police in regard to the Act among everybody.

Judicial Secretary Sri Shyamal Kanti Chakraborty made a detailed analysis of PWDVA. Sm. Anuradha Kapoor, Director, Swayam, Sm. Ambalika Roy, lawyer and member of HRLN and Sm. Nupur Sanyal, General Secretary, Institute of Social Work discussed the topics of the role of the Police vis-à-vis this Act, practical problems in its implementation and the necessary method of implementation.

It was a very timely and relevant discussion in the present situation. The meeting was very successful with the active participation of all who attended, their important speeches and thoughtful suggestions.

—Gairika Ghosh

## **A Draft Report on Workshop on Ensuring Safe Migration**

Migration and Trafficking are both complex phenomena and need to be tackled with a systematic approach. Migration and trafficking are distinct but interconnected and intertwined. Elements of both historical structural theory of migration and individual theory of migration are heaved out in order to conceptualize the trafficking issue. Prof. Jasodhara Bagchi, Chairperson, West Bengal

Commission for Women, facilitated the workshop on Ensuring Safe Migration, held on 17.07.2007, with this objective.

Prof. Malini Bhattacharya, member, National Commission for Women, stated in her speech that Jabala is working against child trafficking and are able to bring back the trafficked children and provide rehabilitation to them. It is evident from recent facts

that they could track the details of two rescued girls from Medinipur and give feedback on their status in a very short time. Prof. Bhattacharya observed that one of these two girls protested and thus her family appealed to the Governor. On the basis of that the police went to Delhi. The Panchayat Pradhan initially supported the family but it was not perpetual. But all this information was not known as there are no coordinated efforts. Trafficking is a serious problem in West Bengal. To combat it, the organization needs to work in a coordinated manner with the village members as well as with the Panchayat.

Sm. Baitali Ganguly, Secretary, Jabala, began her speech saying that trafficking is becoming a major problem and it involves many issues. By nature it is so complex that many issues are cross-cutting ones. At first, Jabala started its pilot Safe Migration initiative in some Panchayats of West Bengal. Later on the work spreaded out in various parts on the request of the Panchayats. She also stressed upon the fact that the 'Safe Migration Card' is giving an identity to women migrants and this is a positive step towards confidence building and empowerment.

A documentary followed by a presentation was made to make understand the Safe Migration programme in various Panchayats. Along with this, the other necessities are :

1. Cooperation from Panchayat and village committee.
2. Panchayat is already issuing certificates; further extension of the aspect to registration can help a lot regarding the issue.
3. Relation between Migration, Trafficking and HIV/AIDS.
4. Issues regarding the social aspect of the rescued girl child.
5. Vulnerability to Trafficking remains if Safe Migration is not ensured.

Sm. Ganguly observed that Panchayat offered cooperation. Tracking centre in Delhi played a pivotal role in this 'Safe Migration' programme. Now it is time to reinforce the programme by converging it with Government initiative.

According to Sm. Sarbani Bhattacharya, member of West Bengal Commission for Women, the safe migration issue is being raised since four to five years and a sample study is being conducted by the Commission in 6 districts. Jabala has done an appreciable job working on the same and is creating a model showing the process to other organizations as well as to the government. Unfortunately, there is no government guideline for the same, and it is the duty of the government to maintain a cordial relation or communication between the states. To make the process more systematic, a national level coordination is evidently required. There are certain problems which are faced by the government:

1. Meeting with public, social welfare department and NCW is required.
2. Panchayat should have much more information and the staffs are also less in number.

Sm. Bhagabati Mondol, member of the Commission, shared her experience about working women (maids) commuting from Canning Sub-Division. She observed that as lots of women commute through Sealdah station everyday, the chance of trafficking is quite high out there. Other co-passengers, at times, befriend them, put sedatives in their food, steal their belongings and many a times traffic them off to other places. She also said that in order to lodge a FIR, a person has to pay Rs.2000 to the police station

Points mentioned by the Principal Secretary Sri S. N. Haque :

1. He appreciated the work of Jabala but added that the process needs to be further fine-tuned.
2. The card will carry better weightage if it gets a government

seal and the card must also carry the signatures of Panchayat and block development officers.

3. If a letter is written along with the first phone call, that would make a better evidence, and the copy of the letter may be sent to the police station.

4. The process should be backed by Government.

5. All the departments should be strongly interlinked making the total system more constructive.

6. There are certain places which are sources of trafficking. Special strategy needs to be adapted to enforce self help group and vocational training.

7. Department of Social Welfare has lots of procedures to combat the social evil but it needs support from the NGOs, people and administration.

8. Department of Social Welfare has done work on trafficking with the help of UNICEF and the report has been sent to DMs/ Sabhapati; a framework to combat the same has been given.

9. State level action plan has been taken to restrict trafficking.

10. Since long back, the Women's Commission has wanted to prevent trafficking. Thus seminars, lectures, workshops were conducted at various levels. But no plan of action was framed.

11. This Card can be used by girls as identity card or job card. This shows the value of the card.

12. Migration should be related to labour laws as both are inter-related.

Other Recommendations :

1. When a person is getting a card, 2 copies of the same should be kept — back one with the Panchayat and the other with Jabala.

2. The card holder should call up Jabala stating her whereabouts. The frequency of the call should be once every month. Jabala should keep a note of the same.

3. The frequency of the call is to be monitored and the whole process needs to be tagged by the police administration.

4. If any person fails to call up for a period of 2 months or more, a missing diary must be registered.

5. If possible, Jabala can have a toll free number or helpline with CLI (to record the numbers).

6. Identifying the nodal NGOs who can coordinate and contribute in the process. Jabala can take the sole responsibility of 4-5 districts.

7. Formation of village committees is important regarding the issue

8. To resume safe migration along with destination the journey should also be safe.

9. Safe staying of the person should definitely be ensured.

10. A comprehensive order or circular is required to implement this Programme.

11. Thana level police officers should be designated so that they can interact with other police officers of different states to ensure the process of safe migration.

12. The Commission can use the model constructed by Jabala to proceed further.

13. ITPA has certain authority; yet the provision for punishment regarding the concerned issue should be further intensified.

14. The modification of JJ act is necessary.

15. The Programme should have included interstate labour migration. The Labour Department does not have any infrastructure to implement the same.

## MEETINGS

### **Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act and Marriage Registration Meeting of West Bengal Commission for Women with Hon'ble Law Minister Sri Rabibal Maitra**

On 23.03.2007, Chairperson Prof. Jasodhara Bagchi, Vice-Chairperson Dr. Roma Das, members Prof. Gairika Ghosh, Prof. Uma Basu and Sm. Shyamasree Das had a meeting with the Hon'ble Law Minister, Government of West Bengal, Sri Rabibal Maitra in his office. The topics of discussion were (a) future plan of action and method of implementation regarding Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act and (b) Marriage Registration.

Sri Maitra said that all pertinent responsibilities are vested with the Ministry of Social Welfare. Despite this, with the Law

ministry looking into the matter, the High Court asked for 200 new courts to be opened, which is impossible in the present situation. The Commission recommended taking steps to see into how the Act could be implemented with the existing infrastructure.

In discussing the issue of Marriage Registration, the Commission said it is essential to make Marriage Registration compulsory. The rules and regulations regarding the registration fees need to be completely changed. The necessity of taking legal steps for the appointment of Marriage Registrar was also discussed.

—Roma Das

### **Meeting at WBCW Office on Marriage Registration with Hon'ble Law Minister Sri Rabibal Maitra**

On 11.04.2007, Hon'ble Law minister Sri Rabibal Maitra and representative of the Registrar General attended a meeting at the office of West Bengal Commission for Women. The topic of discussion was Compulsory Marriage Registration. The Commission recommended that marriage registration of people enlisted in BPL should be done for small amount of fees or for free. It also said that the matter of receiving the Certificate 15 days after getting Notice should be considered. People working abroad cannot wait for so long. This also acts as a cause for the harassment and deprivation of women. Since the Certificate is immediately available in our state, it often becomes a place of harassment for women. Hindu marriage registration was mainly

discussed in discussing Compulsory Marriage Registration. But in course of the discussion Sri Maitra and the representative of the Registrar General raised questions regarding Muslim marriage registration—under which Registration Act should registration be done? In Muslim customary marriage there is the 'Qawil Nama' and Muslim marriage is a contract marriage. So, the registration procedures could not be same for Hindu marriage and Muslim marriage.

The Commission recommended appointment of Marriage Registrar in the Panchayat.

—Roma Das

### **Meeting with Director-General and the Commissioner of Kolkata Police at the WBCW Office**

On 8 May 2007 Sri A. B. Vohra, Director-General and Inspector-General, Kolkata Police and Sri Prasun Bandyopadhyay, Commissioner of Kolkata Police at that time visited West Bengal Commission for Women on the invitation of the Commission.

In a general discussion on the exploitation of women in the state, the members of the Commission emphasized the fact that despite getting many kind of help from the top level administration of Kolkata Police, women usually get no help or very little help in the police stations. It would be very helpful if every police station has a certain place for hearing complaints in cases of exploitation of women and also a list of guidelines for these women in front of the police station. Sri Bhora said that it becomes easier to combat assault on women in areas where the police gets the help of voluntary organisations. But when would necessary steps be taken

to change the attitude of the police in the police stations towards common women? This was the question strongly raised by Prof. Jasodhara Bagchi, Chairperson of the Commission.

There was a long discussion on Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005. Since this is a Civil Act, the role of the Police in its implementation is a little different. Smt. Bharati Mutsuddi (Mukherjee), lawyer member of the Commission, handed a short guideline to Sri Bhora and Sri Bandyopadhyay. The Police Commissioner assured that an elaborate guideline would be prepared for the police and a workshop would be held at the Kolkata Police headquarters.

Shortly after this, two officers from the Lalbazar women's cell contacted us. This was undoubtedly a step towards making fruitful the meeting of 8 May.

—Jasodhara Bagchi

## Meeting with student and youth front leaders

The West Bengal Commission for Women convened a meeting with youth front leaders of major political parties in West Bengal on 28 May 2007 in its office. The meeting was called to urge youth front leaders to come forward and treat women's issues as important political issues and to devise campaigns for bringing down crimes against women in the state. Representatives of Progressive Students' Union, All India Students' Bloc, All India Youth League, Democratic Youth Federation of India (DYFI), All India Students' Federation (SFI), Samajbadi Yubajanasabha and BJP attended the meeting.

The Chairperson of the Commission, Prof. Jasodhara Bagchi, welcomed the participants and briefed them about the multifarious activities of the Commission. She said that according to the 2005 records of the National Crime Records Bureau, West Bengal was the fifth-most crime-prone state for women, next only to Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. Though city-wise the position of Kolkata is much better compared to Delhi, Hyderabad, Bangalore etc. because it ranks thirteenth in the list of unsafe cities, there is no cause for complacency. Rather, the youth front leaders should become more aware of the types of discrimination and crimes that women face in the state and be more vigilant in preventing such crimes. The Vice-Chairperson Dr. Roma Das, members Smt. Bharati Mutsuddi (Mukherjee), Prof. Debjani Sengupta (Deb), Prof. Gairika Ghosh and Smt. Sarbani Bhattacharya requested the young leaders to utilize their

network among the masses and organize area-specific campaigns. They were also urged to give more space to such issues in their party bulletins and newsletters.

The representative of Progressive Students' Union, Sri Rajib Banerjee, said that most youth groups are lacking in awareness about gender issues. There is an urgent need for information kits and leaflets on various aspects of violence against women and legal awareness camps. Block-level awareness camps are necessary to make youth groups across the state more vigilant. The All India Students' Bloc leader, Sri Debabrata Roy, felt that just as literacy was once part of a political campaign, similarly resisting violence against women needs to be made part of a political campaign today. A women's grievance cell should be opened in every single police station of the state. The DYFI representatives Sri Pratim Ghosh and Sri Abhas Roychowdhury suggested that the Commission take up a common minimum programme involving members of the student, youth and women's front of political parties. The BJP representative Smt. Nupur Ghosh thought door-to-door campaign was necessary to make women more aware of such issues so that they take a pro-active role in their families.

Representatives of all parties felt that it was necessary for the Commission to have more power for effective intervention in cases of violence against women in the state. The meeting ended with most leaders promising to get back to the Commission with concrete proposals for a plan of action.

## CID Unit to Combat Human Trafficking

Since May 2007 a workshop on ways to combat trafficking was held by the police stations in the office of the CID in collaboration with UNODC. The workshop started in the CID office on 28 May 2007, with giving training to the police at different levels. The inaugural speech at the workshop was given by the Prof. Jasodhara Bagchi, Chairperson of the West Bengal Commission for Women.

On 28 June 2007 the Chief Minister, Hon'ble Sri Buddhadeb Bhattacharya inaugurated an anti-trafficking unit in the Kolkata office of the CID. After the inauguration, Sri Nayar, officer-in-charge of UNODC in India, talked about the need for sensitization programme for the highest authorities of the Police. Prof. Bagchi talked about the expectations of the society from the Police authorities to combat human trafficking.

—Jasodhara Bagchi

## NANDIGRAM

West Bengal Commission for Women reiterates its deep anguish and condemnation of the brutal firing by the police especially on the women of Nandigram on 14<sup>th</sup> March. This had been communicated by us to the administration on 15 March, 2007, the very next day after the shameful event took place. Since then we have visited the women who are recovering from their injuries in the S.S.K.M. Hospital and the Tamluk Hospital and have been struck by the suffering of the victims and their families, some of whom, they said to us, have been uprooted since the date of the firing. We demand a compensation package for the victims and their families for the physical and mental trauma that they have had to suffer.

The Commission also condemns in no uncertain terms, the suffering that has been caused to the women and children living in the camps at Tekhali and other places for over eleven months because they have been ousted forcefully from their homes, often separating the children from their mothers. Incidents of gang rape and murder that the residents of the camp and their families had

faced, had reached the members of the Commission over the months together. The Commission members express their deep sorrow and anger at being actively obstructed from investigating these charges, particularly the case of Sumita Mondal whose murder after sexual assault was confirmed by medical report.

West Bengal Commission for Women demands that the persons who will be found guilty after due process of inquiry into such incidents, should be brought to exemplary punishment.

There have been other such interventions of the Commission in Nandigram. Several members were present in the inauguration of the Centre established for helping the women and children in Adhikarpara, Gokulnagar, Nandigram by Kasturba Trust under the leadership of Yasmeen Sen Gupta on 6 June 2007.

On hearing about a rape case, several members of the Commission led by the Vice-Chairperson visited the area and met the victim Akhreza Bibi in the hospital on 19 November 2007. They recommended to the Government that the case be properly investigated and the two missing daughters of Akhreza

Bibi, who were allegedly raped, be recovered. Recently there was report in the newspaper that they were recovered from their relative's house in South 24 Parganas.

The final intervention took place when, on the basis of a newspaper report about torture upon the local women by the C.R.P.F. on 16 December 2007, members visited the area on 20 December 2007, talked to the victims and sent out detailed recommendations to the Government. Incidents of gangrape and

brutal physical assault upon women who stayed back at Nandigram during those eleven months were reported to the members.

The West Bengal Commission for Women urges upon all conscientious forces in the country to join hands in getting Nandigram back to normalcy. We expect all possible co-operation from everyone, including the media, social and political organizations irrespective of their affiliations.



## COMPLETED PROJECTS



### Sexual Harassment at Workplace : Experience of Department of Health

A meeting was jointly organised by West Bengal Commission for Women and Sanhita to discuss "Sexual Harassment at Workplace: Experience of the Department of Health" on 26 March 2007 at Swasthya Bhawan. This discussion was mainly on the basis of a recently completed research on the same topic. The survey for this research was mainly carried out in two government and two private hospitals. The main aim of the research, done with the help of the Department of Health, Government of West Bengal, was to find out the nature and extent of sexual harassment and the degree of effective implementation of the Supreme Court orders, 1997. The discussion aimed at :

- Making workers of the Department of Health aware about Sexual Harassment
- Making the workers aware of the orders of the Supreme Court regarding Sexual Harassment at Workplace

- Throwing light on the issues of health of women workers and improvement of health services
- Creating awareness among male and female workers about their rights of work in the Department of Health.

Prof. Malini Bhattacharya, member of National Commission for Women, Prof. Jasodhara Bagchi, Chairperson of West Bengal Commission for Women, Sm. Soma Sengupta, Director and Sm. Paramita Chowdhury, Senior Programme Officer of Sanhita were among the speakers in this meeting. The Chief Guest was Sri S. K. Sen, Chief Director, Health and Family Welfare Samity.

A total of 113 representatives from different government hospitals, health departments, voluntary organisations and different forums like IMA, FOGSI and Nurses Union attended the meeting.

—Diplekha Sengupta

### Safe Motherhood Project : A Report

West Bengal Commission for Women has undertaken a project for preparing an advocacy material on safe motherhood for MLAs and MPs of West Bengal. This project is funded by UNICEF. Sm. Rajashree Dasgupta, Journalist and Health activist and Sri Atanu Thakur, Social Science Researcher are working as technical consultants on this project under the guidance of Prof. Jasodhara Bagchi, Chairperson of the Commission.

Safe motherhood as a concept talks about a social conditioning where motherhood remains safe. It advocates in favour of changing different aspects of the social which directly or indirectly contribute in bringing safe motherhood. So, safe motherhood as a concept is very complex in the sense it involves many different issue like economic, political, gender, culture, caste, religion and also many other processes within the social and there also exists some cross currents among those factors. So, though it is a general impression among people that safe motherhood is an absolutely medico-technical problem, but this is clearly a simplification. Not only that this type of simplified reductionist approach clearly dampens the multilayered potentiality of the concept, it is also unethical and unjust. Keeping this in view, West Bengal Commission for Women conceptualizes the safe motherhood concept as a social phenomenon. It tries to find out different social issues which are directly or indirectly responsible for safe motherhood. The Commission also tries to understand the existing situation in respect of some chosen social indicators like the existing status of Public Distribution System, number of households existing under poverty line, the number of pregnant

women getting full ANC, number of institutional deliveries, maternal mortality rate, percentage of girls married under the age of 18, the condition of working women in terms of wage, hours of work, the nature of work etc. So, it can be said that the Commission has adopted a more comprehensive approach. The analysis has been done at the State level — here, West Bengal — and also at the district level to know better where do we stand and what is needed to be done in the future for making the State a safer place for motherhood. On the basis of the findings at the State level some actions for MLAs and MPs are proposed. These are mainly macro-level actions. In the district level analysis it is tried to capture the specificity of the particular district and its specific needs. To do that, some district level survey in the form of group discussion has been already carried out and also there are plans to do some more in-depth survey. This is necessary because each district is constitutionally different from the other and so for safe motherhood each district needs an action plan addressing the specific problems of that particular district.

West Bengal Commission for Women tries to look into the safe motherhood issue from different angles, as much possible, and also tries its best to propose a comprehensive plan of action for the betterment of the situation which will ensure every mother a degree of safeness, in terms of care and services, in terms of certainty, respect, accessibility to different medical facilities, etc. The Commission also suggests some actions, which are subdivided into long term and short term ones, for MLAs and MPs for the betterment of the existing situation.

A draft report on the basis of work done so far has been presented in a seminar organized by the Commission on 12 January 2006 at the Institute of Development Studies, Kolkata. The seminar was presided over by Prof. Amiya Bagchi, Director, IDSK. Eminent personalities were present in the seminar. Sm. Rajashree Dasgupta and Sri Atanu Thakur presented their findings in the seminar. After that, a lively discussion was carried out and everyone rendered their valuable suggestions. The whole discussion session was conducted by Prof. Jasodhara Bachi. Everyone praised the approach West Bengal Commission for Women has adopted and the findings regarding safe motherhood. Two very important suggestions had come out from the discussion:

(i) as it is an advocacy material it should be brief and specific, and  
(ii) the material should pin down some five to six specific immediate actions for MLAs and MPs, keeping their capabilities and constraints in mind.

In the process of doing this huge work, the Commission has received cooperation from different persons as well as from different institutions. But it is also true that it has to bear some pains as well, specifically in case of collecting data from different institutions. However, the Commission bears this pain with a smile for its commitment to deliver a better and more equal world to women.

### Activities to Prevent Sex Determination of Foetus

A project on the PC & PNDT Act has been jointly started in March 2007. The main aim of this project is to investigate and find out the nursing homes and hospitals involved in sex determination of foetus. This is done through collecting and analysing form 'F' submitted by different hospitals and nursing homes to the Health Department. It is essential to send these forms to the concerned

department. The Commission hopes that the nature of female infanticide would become clearer with the help of the analyses of the committee. On behalf of the West Bengal Commission for Women, Sm. Debatri Banerjee analysed form 'F' and gave her opinion. The work of this project has been finished recently.

—Debatri Banerjee

### Self Help Group Movement in West Bengal : A Report

The major concern of the study is to bring out the present status of Self Help Group (SHG) movement in West Bengal. The study has included both the rural and urban areas of West Bengal under its scope. Here we will focus on functioning of the SHGs in rural Bengal. The study has covered seven blocks in rural areas spreading over four districts of West Bengal. The selected districts are South 24 Parganas, Hoogly, Purulia and Jalpaiguri. Other than Kalchini block in Jalpaiguri, two blocks from each of the other three selected districts have been selected. Of the two blocks selected from each district, one is performing better while the other is lagging in this respect. Depending upon the information acquired from the District Rural Development Cell (DRDC) of the respective districts, this selection has been done to have a comparative knowledge base about the fundamental factors leading to the successful functioning of the SHGs. Following this, the blocks Mandirbazar and Baruipur from South 24 Parganas, Panduah and Purshura from Hoogly, Kashipur and Jhalda - II from Purulia district have been selected. The principle of interval sampling has been adopted in selecting the respondents. But as the study is primarily focused on the SHG movement in particular, so, at times, the principle of random sampling had to be compromised with other non-random techniques to improve its representative character. A sample of 1341 women SHG members from the above mentioned four districts has been taken.

SHG movement in West Bengal is at an early stage of maturity, hence it is not expected that its impact on empowerment of women will be very prominently felt right now. However, a trend can be

revealed from some of the major findings of the ongoing study (2007-08) conducted by the West Bengal Commission for Women. Majority of the SHG members in selected areas have somehow managed to avoid going to moneylenders in cases of exigencies and get loans from their groups. As high as 80.5% of the total sample population received loan from their groups, while only 2% went to the moneylenders. In regard to the economic improvement of the SHG members, the study reveals marginal improvement. It has been reported that the income of almost 46% of SHG members has increased by Rs.200 to Rs.500. It has also been stated that about 69.5% of the SHG members have received institutional loan.

Another important trend set by the movement here is that overwhelming majority come from the depressed communities—depressed socially and economically. Almost 69.3% of the SHG members belong to depressed communities (SC 38%, ST 22.2%, OBC 9.1%). The rich, as expected, are excluded. Majority of the SHG members belong to the poorest and poor strata. About 31.6% of the SHG members represent the 'below-Rs.1000' income group. The corresponding figure for the next category (Rs.1000 to Rs.2000) is 54%. Illiteracy seems to be a deterrent to SHG membership. Only 19.9% of SHG members are illiterate. However, almost 40% of the rural SHG membership comes from 'Just Literate' category. More and more women from SHG groups have started joining the activities of the local self government. Participation in Gram Samsad meetings has remarkably improved for the SHG members. It is 65.6% of our sample population as against 12.5% of the state average.

## Publication of Survey Report together with the Release of a Documentary Film on the Prevention of Women and Child Trafficking in West Bengal

With the initiative of the West Bengal Women Commission a Survey Report on women-trafficking in six districts of West Bengal was published on 29.11.07 and a Documentary Film in this connection was also released on the same day. The problem of women cum child trafficking came to the notice of the commission



*Hon'ble Minister Sri Biswanath Chowdhury, Smt. Sarbani Bhattacharya, Sri Debananda Sengupta and Dr. Rama Das are sitting on the dias in an occasion of releasing the Publication "Paschimbanga Nari O Sishu Pachar" and Documentary film on the prevention of Women and Child trafficking in West Bengal*

while the members of the commission were on tour in different districts for observation of the present position of women-trafficking which already assumed a serious dimension in these districts. The

commission observed that in different districts specially in trafficking-proned areas, trafficking of women and children is on an increasing trend, but virtually an effective check in preventing this problem is yet to be feasible due to socio economic reasons. The problem has been aggravated for other reasons too, such as legal complications, abundance of consumer and luxury goods, influence of global market economy etc. As a result, the International Gang in trafficking which has already spread its long hand in remote corners of the state is a formidable force to be fought out. Under these circumstances the Commission decided to publish a Book and to release a documentary film wherein the present position and seriousness of the problem of trafficking would be focussed as well as it was to bring to the notice of the Government which measures they would undertake immediately and urgently in preventing trafficking Accordingly the book "Paschimbanga Nari O Sishu Pachar" was published and a Documentary Film was also released by Mr. Biswanath Chowdhury, Honourable Minister, incharge of Social Welfare Govt. of West Bengal at Nandan in Assembly No. 2 on 29.11.07. Side by side in order to increase the awareness among the ordinary people, women and adolescent boys and girls wide publicity measures should be undertaken with the help of this Documentary Film. Project work on trafficking has already been completed in six districts in North and South 24 parganas, Nadia, Murshidabad, West Dinajpur, Jalpaiguri. Based on such project work in trafficking, if the women commission can play a positive role even to a little extent their sincere venture would be reckoned with.

—Diplekha Sengupta



### Legal Workshop in Meghalaya with NCW

On 5 and 6 February 2007, a two day workshop was organized in Shillong, Meghalaya by the National Commission for Women on the laws stating the duties and powers of the National Commission for Women and the State Women's Commission's.

The Women's Commissions of seven states, including Meghalaya, of North-Eastern India, and Sikkim and West Bengal were invited to this workshop. From West Bengal Commission for Women, Chairperson Prof. Jasodhara Bagchi and lawyer member Smt. Bharati Mutsuddi (Mukherjee) attended the workshop.

According to the directives of the Constitution of India, State Commissions were formed at the national and state levels under special law. The prime area of discussion in this workshop was the powers vested with the Women's Commissions for the establishment of legal rights of women and the protection of these rights in the society and the family. It was inferred from the discussion that such powers of the Women's Commissions are limited in nature.

The law has given them the rights to investigate into a case on receiving an appeal or a complaint with the aim to ensure safety and protection of women's rights so that welfare of the family

and the society can be established. The Commission, according to the Criminal Procedure Act, also has the right to issue summon and ask any person concerned to appear before the Commission in the interest of the investigation. But there are no provisions for Counselling to solve the different kinds of problems of women. Because of this, no summons can be issued even if needed for counselling. The West Bengal Commission for Women recommended immediate incorporation of the right to counselling in the existing law in order to implement the aims and objectives of the Women's Commissions. The special provision given in the Criminal Procedure Act giving the Court the right to counselling for solving family disputes was also mentioned.

The West Bengal Commission for Women also brought to the notice of others that the law has provision for issuing arrest warrant in order to ensure that a person who did not appear before the Commission even after receiving summon is brought before it.

At the end of the discussion in the workshop, it was proposed, among other things, that it is essential to incorporate Counselling in the functioning of the Women's Commissions for protection of women's legal rights and settlement of family disputes.

—Bharati Mutsuddi (Mukherjee)

## Workshop at Tripura by Tripura Commission for Women

A workshop was organised by Tripura Women's Commission on 6 October 2007 on Protection of Women against Domestic Violence Act 2005.

Dr. Tapati Chakraborty, Chairperson, Tripura Women's Commission, Prof. Jasodhara Bagchi, Chairperson, W.B.C.W. and

Prof. Malini Bhattacharya, Member, N.C.W. were presented in the meeting.

Some recommendations regarding the Act. were taken in the workshop and the commission have sent a copy of the recommendations to the Government of Tripura for implementation of the Act well in the sate.

## PWDVA Workshop : A Report

On Saturday 9 February 2008 the National Commission for Women organized a one-day workshop for discussing the Implementation of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act. In organizing this workshop the Law Officer, National Commission for Women had been in constant touch with this Commission. So we were named as a collaborator, along with the Lawyers' Collective. The form prepared by the Lawyers' Collective about the Implementation of this Act was circulated. A useful presentation by Smt Asmita Basu on behalf of the Lawyers' Collective presented the salient points of their Monitoring and Evaluation Report of the first year of the enactment of the PWDVA.

In the absence of the Chairperson, National Commission for Women, Professor Malini Bhattacharya took the Chair and gave her Chairman's address. Hon'ble M.I.C., Department of Social Welfare and Women and Child Development, Govt. of West Bengal, Sri Biswanath Chowdhury, Hon'ble M.I.C., Law and

Judicial Affairs, Sri Rabibal Moitra and the Chairperson, West Bengal Commission for Women addressed the inaugural session. Sri S. Chatterjee, Member-Secretary, National Commission for Women welcomed the participants.

The day-long seminar was divided into three sessions. In the first session, the different states made their presentations. The Chairperson is thankful to the Director, Dept. of Social Welfare (and Special Secretary) Sri K. P. Sinha for his painstaking filling out of the form on the action taken in the State. Apparently the most successful implementation of PWDVA is going on in Andhra Pradesh under the leadership of the Police. There was an interesting presentation on how it was working.

There was a session devoted to the Commissions. Smt. Bharati Mutsuddi made a presentation on behalf of this Commission. The Chairperson chaired the concluding session with questions from the floor and Prof. Malini Bhattacharya wrapping up by bringing together the recommendations.

—Dr. Jasodhara Bagchi



## LEGAL WORKSHOPS



### Legal Workshop, Nadia

On the initiative of the District Magistrate of Naidia, a one-day workshop was held on 29.08.2007 in the Conference Hall of the district office of Nadia with focus on "Protection of Women against Domestic Violence Act, Child Marriage prevention Act and dowry prevention Act".

The workshop was facilitated by the DM, Sri Onkar Singh Mina. The meeting was attended by: Zilla Sabhadhipati Sm. Rama Biswas, Additional Superintendent of Police, Superintendent of Police, members of West Bengal Commission for Women Sm. Bharati Mutsuddi (Mukherjee) and Sm. Shyamasree Das, Additional District Magistrate (Zilla Parishad), District Social Welfare Officer, District DPO (ICDS), Public Prosecutor Sri Sadhan Mondal. OCs of 19 police stations of the district, SDPOs and BWOs of 19 blocks, and leaders of various women's organizations.

—Shyamasree Das

### Legal Training Camp, Bankura

Paschimanga Mahila Samity, Bankura organized a legal training camp in the hall of Padmaja Naidu Arogyabasan at Nabajibanpur, Junbedia. The camp was inaugurated by Prof. Uma Basu, member of West Bengal Commission for Women.

The other speakers at the camp were Smt. Shyamasree Das, member of the Commission, Sri Swapan Kumar Mukherjee, District Social Welfare Officer, Sri Ashok Banerjee, Superintendent of Padmaja Naidu Arogyabasan, Sri Banerjee, member of District Legal Services and Sri Indrajit Tangi, MLA, Idupur.

Prof. Uma Basu talked about the objectives and activities of the Commission. She also discussed the prevention of dowry Act. Smt. Shyamasree Das thanked the organizers of the camp for their effort and called upon the women present to be self-confident in all their activities.

—Shyamasree Das

### Meeting of Protection of Women's Rights Committee, Purba Medinipur

A district level meeting of the Protection of Women's Rights Committee was held in the office of the District Magistrate, Tamruk on 9.08.2007. The meeting was attended by : (1) Sri Anup Kumar Agarwal (2) Sri N. N. Burman, Additional District Magistrate, Department of Social Welfare (3) Sm. Mira Pradhan Superintendent, Department of Women & Child Development and Social Welfare and Relief, Zilla Parishad (4) Sri Gopal Chandra Dutta, District Project Officer, ICDS (5) Sri Jahedul Islam, District

Social Welfare Officer (6) Public Prosecutor (7) District CMOH (8) Prof. Gairika Ghosh, member of West Bengal Commission for Women (9) Smt. Shyamasree Das, member of the Commission (10) Ganatantrik Mahila Samity (11) Paschimbanga Mahila Samity (12) Agragami Mahila Samity (13) Nikhil Banga Mahila Sangha and (14) headmistresses of quite a number of girls' schools. The meeting was presided over by the DM.

The DSWO said a "complaint committee" has been formed in the DM's office for prevention of sexual harassment. Under the supervision of the BDO, every block has organized video shows with the help of voluntary organisations and ICDS staff in order to increase awareness about the social evils of dowry system, child marriage and trafficking. A plan of action under *Jago Nari Gram Jagao* project had been drawn on 13.07.2007 for being carried out at the sub-divisional, district and Gram Panchayat levels. But it could not be implemented due to paucity of funds. The DSWO discussed what method could be adopted to legalise

any marriage done in the temple. Besides this, a certain proforma is being distributed in the blocks through Block Welfare Officers. The common people are being requested to give a list of gifts given in marriage in this proforma.

Sm. Shyamasree Das of the Commission pointed out the need to be alert about the illegal use of USG machines in sex determination of foetus. She also asked for the 'F' forms to be sent on time by the centres. Prof. Gairika Ghosh requested the administration to check if the complaint committees in workplace are functioning properly.

Many of the pre-litigation assistance centres in the police stations have gradually closed down. Prof. Ghosh requested the DM to take necessary action in regard to this.

The meeting had turned out to be a very lively one through the active participation of all who attended. The SP or any representative of his was not present at the meeting.

—Shyamasree Das and Gairika Ghosh

## Annual Report of the Complaints, Pre-litigation and Counselling Cell

The West Bengal Commission for Women runs a complaints, pre-litigation and counselling cell from 21st January 1999 for the women suffering from injustice and gender discrimination. The cell is run for the Commission's office with the help of two

qualified counsellors and a clerk cum typist.

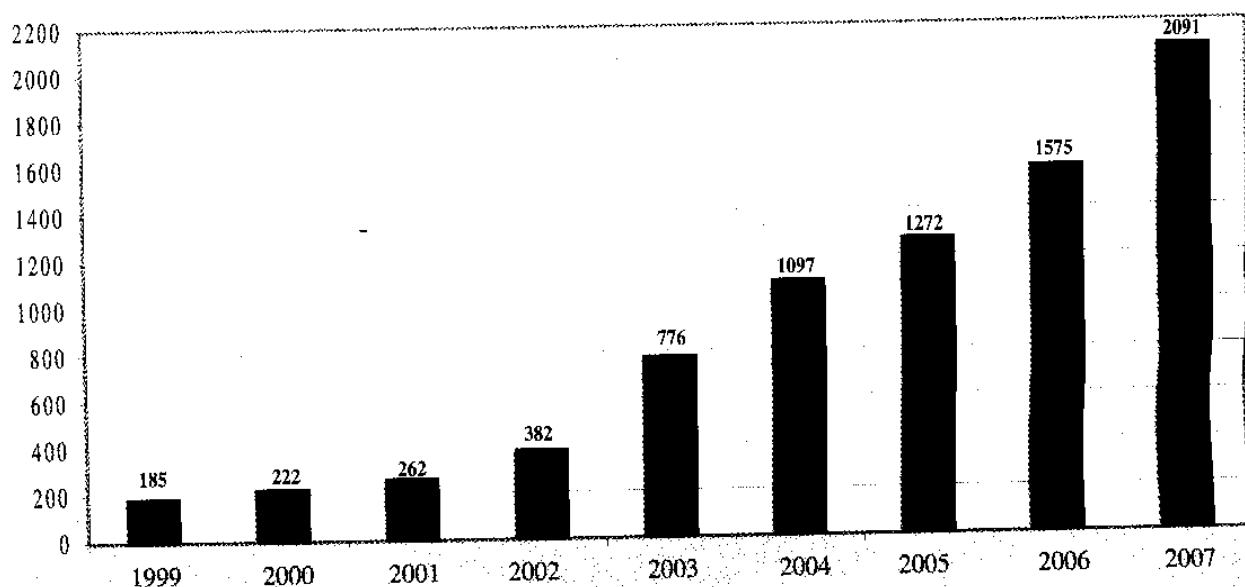
In the beginning the number of complaints were few but the number is increasing rapidly day by day.

Statistics are as follows

Year	Number of Petition
1999	185
2000	222
2001	262
2002	382
2003	776

Year	Number of Petition
2004	1097
2005	1272
2006	1575
2007	2091

Bar Chart shows the number of received applications



This cell runs with the supervision and guidance of our Hon'ble Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and a counselling cell committee consisting of members of the Commission.

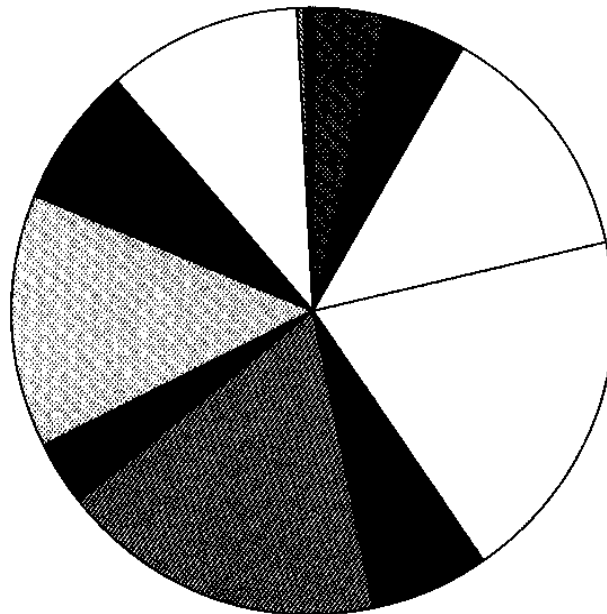
We have also equipped ourselves with a panel of nine lawyers expert in different fields of law and they render free legal aid by the West Bengal Legal Service Authority are distributed to the women in need.

The Commission for women has to deal with all kinds of offences/oppression/victimization of women and children. We also pay special attention to SRC (Senior Citizen) candidates and proceedings marked 'urgent' are expected to start at the earliest opportunity. The usual categories are as follows.

Category	Number
1. Dowry Death	82
2. Murder/unnatural death	93
3. Dowry torture	273
4. Physical and mental torture	392
5. Rape/Molestation	138
6. Family dispute	362
7. Property dispute	73
8. Harassment/security	281

Category	Number
9. Kidnapping/Missing	105
10. Sexual Harassment at work place	53
11. Miscellaneous	222
12. Suo-motu	6
13. Referred	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>2091</b>
<b>Rejected</b>	<b>281</b>

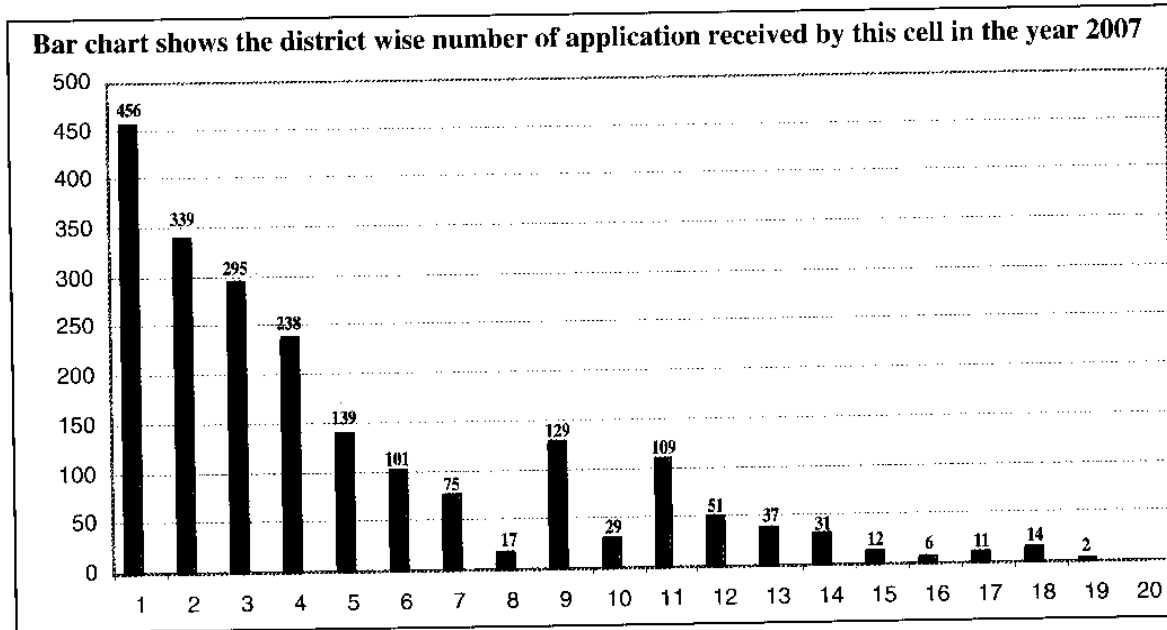
**Pie-Chart shows the category of the application received by this cell in the year 2007**



- 1. Dowry Death
- 8. Harassment/security
- 2. Murder/unnatural death
- 9. Kidnapping/Missing
- 3. Dowry torture
- 10. Sexual Harassment at work place
- 4. Physical and mental torture
- 11. Miscellaneous
- 5. Rape/Molestation
- 12. Suo-motu
- 6. Family dispute
- 13. Referred
- 7. Property dispute

Due to rapid increase in the number of petitions the Counselling Cell Committee scrutinizes all the petitions received. Lastly according to the order of the Hon'ble Chairperson the file is opened and procedure starts. After that counsellors categorize all

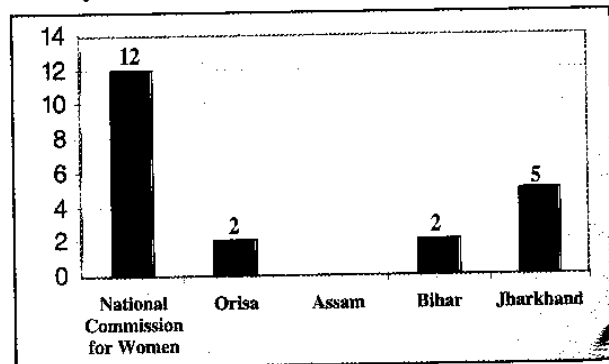
the files according to the content of the application. We receive petitions from all the districts of West Bengal as well as from other states in India.



1. Kolkata	456	8. Bankura	17	15. Uttar Dinajpur	12
2. South 24 pgs.	339	9. Burdwan	129	16. Dakshin Dinajpur	6
3. 24 Pgs. (N)	295	10. Purulia	29	17. Jalpaiguri	11
4. Howrah	238	11. Nadia	109	18. Cooch Behar	14
5. Hooghly	139	12. Birbhum	51	19. Darjeeling	2
6. Purba Medinipur	101	13. Malda	37		
7. Paschim Medinipur	75	14. Murshidabad	31		

**Referred Cases received by the Cell**

(1) National Commission for Women	12
(2) Orissa	2
(3) Assam	—
(4) Bihar	2
(5) Jharkhand	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>



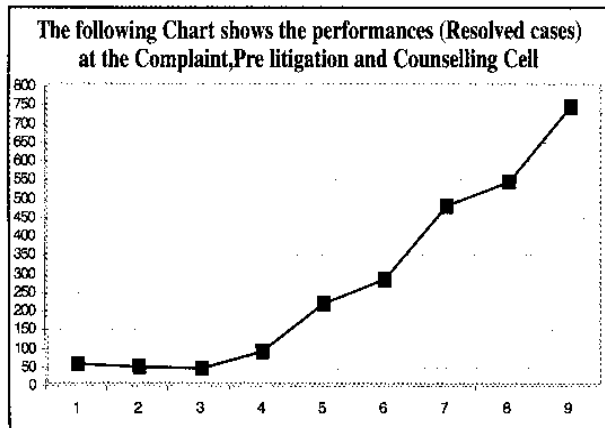
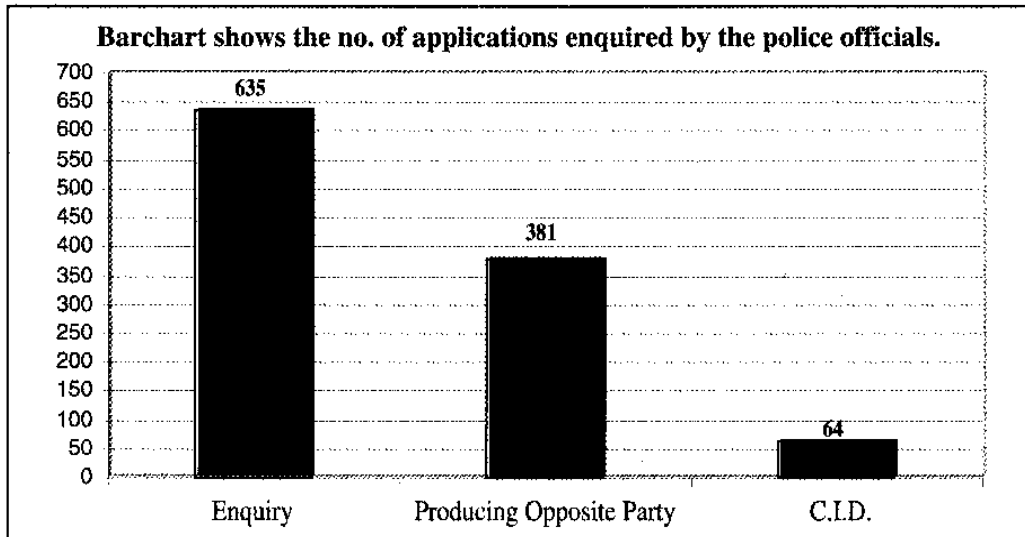
In several cases due to our intervention D.N.A. tests had been done, Government authorities have started pension under social security measures some cases were investigated under proper sections, some accused were arrested, recovery of Stridhan, getting monthly maintenance, mutual divorce with one time alimony.

This year we have had many successes. Through counselling 125 cases were reconciled, 62 cases were amicably settled for mutual divorce, 32 women returned to their matrimonial home, 179 wife are getting monthly maintenance from their husbands, In case of harassment at work place, due to our intervention respective offices formed "Sexual harassment committee" according to

Vishakha guideline. Some women employees getting justice from their respective offices also.

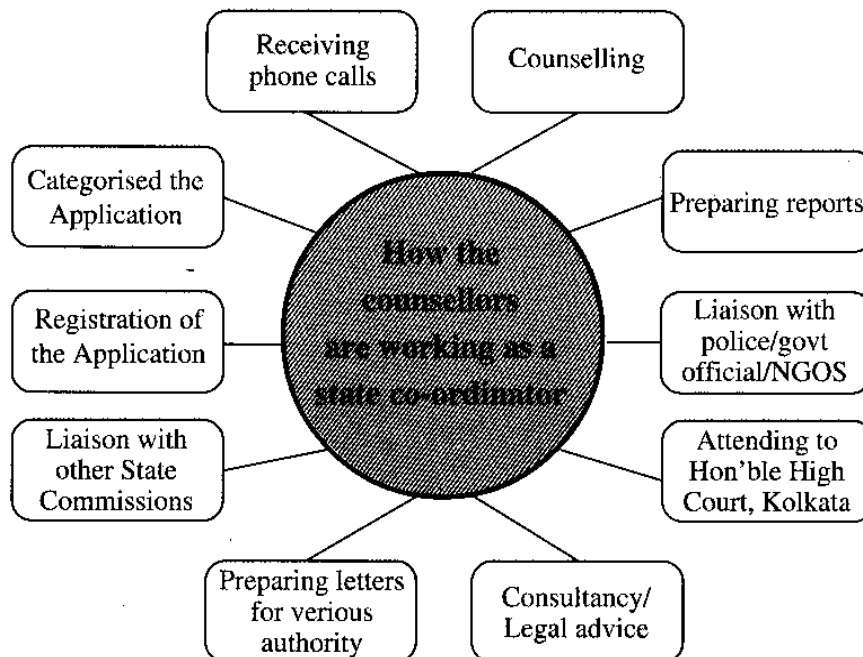
For enquiry we mainly depend on police authorities but sometimes we also ask for enquiry from D.M's, other Govt. offices and non-government offices.

Police have submitted charge sheet in 101 cases according to the nature of the application of the commission 635 cases asked for police enquiry report. 37 applications are sent to higher authority for necessary action, 20 Nos. cases were settled due to police intervention, 64 Nos. application were sent for C.I.D. enquiry.



The role and responsibilities of the Counsellors are increasing tremendously day to day indifferent ways. In the beginning the counsellors mainly did counselling (10 in a week). But due to success of the counselling cell and the activity of the Commission for Women and awareness of the people more people have started to come here to solve their problems though we cannot intervene all the matters. But we try to find out their problems and advise them in a proper way.

Though we try overcome all the limitations. We have faced new type of crimes against women and children. Most of these crimes were done in a very organized manner. In order to face these challenges we tried render optimum service/help to the victim women and we were also ready to accept all types of new challenges.



### How you Reach to W.B. Commission for Women

- You write your application in Bengali/Hindi/English script addressed to the Chairperson, W.B. Commission for women, 10 Rainey Park, Kol-19 with full communication address.
- Commission deals with the problems of women and child only.
- You can lodge your application through our e mail : wbcw@vsnl.net.
- You can get free legal advise by our panelist Lawyers.
- You can get free legal aid forms by the W.B. Legal Service Authority in pre-litigation counselling cell.
- To get any type of help you contact with the counsellors.

### Future Plans

- Computerised Registration
- Better setting arrangement
- Information Desk.
- Receiving section
- Separate room to meet with their child.
- Display Board

## Summary of Some Cases

### Original Name has been changed

(1) **One Smt. Shabritri Nath** had sent an application on the murder of her daughter at the in laws house in front of her. But the police started the u/s 306 I.P.C. The applicant letter supplied us the xerox copy of the post mortem report. We consult with our empanelist lawyer along with the postmortem report. In that report the doctor clearly mentioned that "death is due to the cause grievous injuries".

Then we directly informed Shri A.B. Vohra, I.P.S., D. G. & D.I.G. W.B. will detail irregularities made by I.O. & O/c. of respective PS. After completion of inquiry Shri Vhora informed us that they detected the irregularities and additional charge sheet has submitted 302 I.P.C. by the I.O.I.O & O/C. also been cautions by the higher authority.

The applicant also informed us that within few months trial will be started.

(2) **One Shariful Islam** informed us that his daughter has been kidnapped & raped by some miscreants but the police station did not take any cognizance of that offence.

After our intervention case has been started and police gave charge sheet u/s 376 I.P.C. along with some allied sections against the accused when trial has been started at the court again the victim has been abducted by the accuseds and an allegation that police station is not taking initiative to rescue the victim.

With our intervention victim has been rescued from another place and the police returned the victim to her parents. Police is claiming that applicant refused to lodge any complaint against the accuseds about this incident.

We are aware that some times the accuseds are so powerful that the victims are keeping themselves away from any kind of legal Proceedings. But we are keep watching in this incident.

(3) **One Dr. (Smt) Vasundhara Lal** informed us that she was working as Medical Officer at Primary Health centre for 9 years. On medical ground she applied for two months leave to the Chief Medical Officer of Health as per Government rule. ultimately she went on leave. But the C.M.O.H. issued a show cause letter and she was without pay from that date. Where as she gave the reply within stipulated period.

We have gone through the whole documents and asked the C.M.O.H. to give a proper clarification for his findings. But he did not comply. Ultimately we requested our Hon'ble Minister in Charge to inquire into the matter and the applicant should be allowed to join in P.H.C.

Hon'ble Minister allowed the applicant to join in another P.H.C. but the department has kept silent on the matter of non payment of salary. We are again thankful to the Hon'ble Minister for new appointment but we have asked them to release her due salary at an early date.

(4) **One Smt. Bishakha Jana** informed us that there was warrant of arrest issued by the Ld. Court and the husband flew away from India and was staying at U.K.

We informed the Deputy Commissioner of Police, Kolkata to pray before the Ld. Court for Extradition Request. But no fruitful action has been taken by the said officer. Ultimately we informed the Commissioner of Police, Kolkata to initiate Extradition Request against the

accused along with the Extradition procedure. We are waiting for an positive reply from the Commissioner of Police, Kolkata.

(5) **One female employee of State Bank of India**, who has been subject to sexual harassment at work place by a male collegue.

As per Vishakha Guideline a Committee had been formed and that Committee enquired the incident. After completion they identified that petitioner was victim of sexual harassment at work place and they submitted their report to the S.B.I. authority in the year 2005. But due to an unknown reason Bank authority did not initiate any disciplinary action against the accused till date.

We have asked S.B.I. authority what were causes behind non action and that they should appear before the commission with proper clarification.

(6) **One aged widowed lady** informed us that her near relatives have evicted her from the house with a motive to grab her landed property. She made several general Dairy against the accuseds but the police did not initiate any action against the accuseds.

We have gave through the whole incident and informed the Inspector General of police, South Bengal area about the activity of the P.S.

After the intervention of I.G. the aged lady now staying at her own house and accuseds are not disturbing her at present. But we are keeping eye over the whole situation.

Now we are dealing with some cases where the husbands are N.R.I. which are very challenging to us. In these cases we are taking the help of the National Commission for Women, Ministry of overseas affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs to render justice to the victim.

Not only that we are also able to trace out the whereabouts of husbands in various country by our Ministries.

We are also trying to build up a network between the other State Commission's through which we could render justice to the victim's.

**Kaushik Sen Gupta, Gopa Majumder (Paul)**

*Counsellor*

The West Bengal Commission for Women, in collaboration with the National Commission for Women and the Human Rights Law Network, an NGO, has won a clear victory in securing several protection orders for Smt. Aparna Bharati, using the Protection for Women from Domestic Violence Act.



### Library of the W.B. Commission for Women : A Report



The library of the West Bengal Commission for Women is an integral part of this commission devoted to promotion of research and documentation in the overall domain of women's development was established in November 1998.

**Staff Strength :** Two librarians—(i) Sr. Librarian Cum Research Officer. (ii) Junior Librarian.

The Commission has engaged two catalogues since September 2006 to expedite the work of cataloguing. A library attendant has also been engaged for the library cell from the Group D Staff of the Commission since June 2007 to help the librarians in their work.

**Holdings :** The library contains many important documents the number of which crossed 9000. These documents may be divided under two broad headings,—  
(i) Purchased documents (ii) Donated documents.

The total cost of purchased documents since November 1999 to March 2008 is near about Rs. 4,00,000/- only. Prof. Jasodhara Bagchi, the Hon'ble Chairperson of this Commission has gifted a considerable number of books, journals, articles, reports and posters of different government and non-government organizations.

The subjects on which the books are kept in the library are as follows, Education, Politics, Economics, Law, Police, Culture, Health, Violence against Women, Sexual Harrassment, Dowry, Trafficking, Rape, Witch Hunting, Population Policy, Human Right & Women's Rights, Women's Movement, Empowerment, Muslim Women, Media, Widow, Tribal Women, Panchayat, Self-Help Group, CEDAW and so on.

**Journals/Newsletters :** Some remarkable journals procured by this library regularly are,—

- (i) Combat Law
- (ii) Communalism Combat
- (iii) Paschimbango etc.

The library also contains many donated Journals some of which are,—

- (i) Journals of Population Council—Studies in Family Planning, Population & Devellpment review.
- (ii) Lawyers Collective
- (iii) Frontier
- (iv) Economic & Political Weekly
- (v) Eksathe
- (vi) Chalar Pathe and so on.

'Narikantha' the newsletter of this Commission is preserved in this library from the 1st releasing month i.e. August 1998.

**Reports :** There are many valuable reports of different Govt. & non. Govt. organizations most of which has gifted by Prof. Jasodhara Bagchi. e.g.

- Reports of UNICEF
- Human Development Report
- West Bengal Human Development Report 2004
- Annual Report of W.B. Human Rights Commission Reports of N.C.W. '
- Crime in India
- Health on the March West Bengal, 2001-02
- National Family Health Survey.
- Trafficking in Women & Children, Child marriage and Dowry : a Study for action Plan in West Bengal.
- Census Reports and so on.

Regularly Published six-monthly reports of this Commission are also preserved in this library.

**CDS :** Recently the library has started collecting CDS which will be of great help for research workers.

**Newspaper Clippings :** The daily newspapers procured by this Commission are eleven in number. News-Clippings on 45 kinds of different subjects relating to women and children are kept in the library. The Commission conducts suo-motu investigation on the basis of these clippings which they find necessary.

**Posters :** This Commission has prepared three kinds of posters of its own. Besides these different types of posters on women and children are a special attraction of this library.

**Photographs :** Photographs of different seminars/ workshops organised by W.B.C.W. are kept in this library.

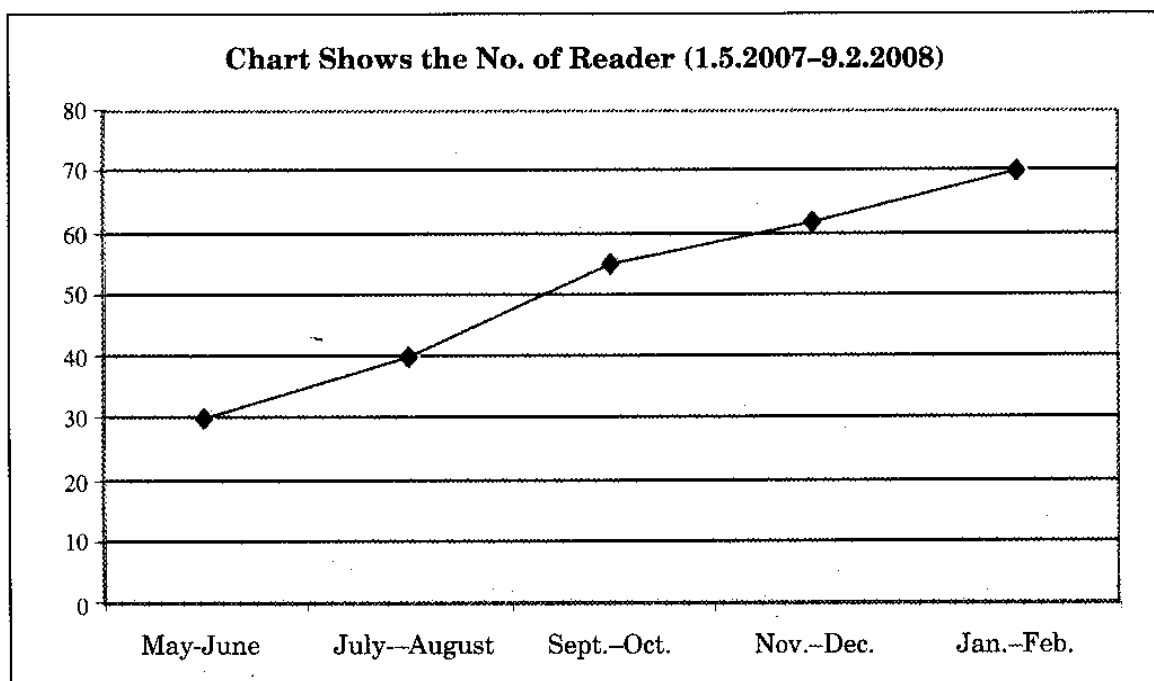
**Publications of W.B.C.W. & Some Other Organisation :** All the publications of this Commission as well as some other organizations are kept in the library for sale.

### Services rendered by the librarians

The two librarians always try their best for rendering best services to the readers not only by supplying informations from books or journals but they also supply informations from relevant newspaper clippings according to the need of the readers.

Three Survey-based reports have been undertaken by the Commission recently one against trafficking of Women and Children in West Bengal, the other on the self-Help Group Movement in West Bengal and another is on safe-motherhood project. The documents including newspaper clippings have been used to a large extent in preparing these projects.

The documents of the library are used more extensively as the number of readers in the library are increasing day by day. Following chart shows the increasing number of readers in the library.



Documentation relating to the publications of the newsletter and six-monthly report of this Commission are done by the two librarians.

'Narikantha' the newsletter of this Commission publishes quarterly in Bengali and once in a year in English. The newsletter is regularly despatched through this library to the Hon'ble ministers, District Magistrates, Sabhadhipatis, D.S.W.O., D.I.O., different N.G.O.s, other state Women's Commission, different Women's studies Research Centres, Television channel and All India Radio, free of cost.

The six-monthly report is also sent to the Hon'ble Governor, W.B., Ministers and officials of the Social Welfare and Women and Child Development Dept. Govt. of West Bengal.

The Publications of W.B.C.W. and some other organisations are sold through this library.

Besides the above mentioned work the librarians do many other works relating to seminar or workshop.

The meeting of the Library Committee holds once in a month. The Committee is headed by Prof. Jasodhara Bagehi. All the members always help the librarians at every stage by giving their valuable suggestions for the betterment of the library.

### Improvements

- Library has got a computer of its own.
- Space Problem has been solved. Now there is a spacious reading room where at least twelve readers may read at a time.

- Due to regular Poest-control and antitermite treatment it becomes possible to preserve the documents well.
- Many Bengali books were purchased from the Kolkata Book Fair 2007.
- One Periodical rack, one poster rack, one catalogue cabinet box, one display board, and five almirahs are recent additions to the furniture of the library.

### Future Plans Programmes

- Like every year this year also the librarians will visit the Kolkata Book Fair 2008. Here special emphasis will be given on purchasing of books on gender studies written in Bengali.
- Computerising the documents through CDS/ISIS software.
- Repairing the roof of the Commission as well as the Library.

### Library Rules & Regulations—at a glance

- Library remains open from Monday to Saturday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- Reading hours—12.30 p.m. to 4.30 p.m.
- No entry-fee is required for using the library, what is required is to fill up an application form.
- Lending facility is available only for the Staffs and members of this Commission, not for outside readers.
- Xerox facility is available for the readers with a cost of Rs. 1/- per page.
- To Purchase any publication of this Commission, it is necessary to contact the two librarians.



Library of WBCW

### Some Recent Additions in the Library of the Commission

Author	Title	Publisher	Price
1. Lisa D. Brush	Gender and Governance	Rawat	495/-
2. P. K. Mohanty	Cultural Heritage of Indian tribals	Rajat	450/-
3. Darlene M. Juschka, <i>ed.</i>	Feminism in the study of religion : a reader	Continuum	25.00
4. M. Rajamanickam	Behavioural problems in adolescent period	Authorspress	750/-
5. Intiaz Ahmed, <i>ed.</i>	Women, Bangladesh and international security : methods, discourses and policies.	The University Press ltd.	290/-
6. Firdous Azim & Niaz Zaman, <i>ed.</i>	Infinite variety : women in society and literature	The University Press ltd.	300/-
7. Hameeda Hossain, <i>ed.</i>	Human rights in Bangladesh 2002	Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK) Dhaka	290/-
8. Nongbri, Tiplut	Development, ethnicity and gender : select essays on tribes in India	Rawat	525/-
9. Yashodhara Dalmia	Amrita Shergil : a life	Penguin	695/-
10. Maitrayee Mukhopadhyay & Navsharan Singh, <i>ed.</i>	Gender justice Citizenship and development	Zubaan	495/-
11. Mythily Sivaraman	Fragments of a life : a family archive	Zubaan	395/-

It may also be mentioned here that the following books are kept in the library for sale. If anybody wants to purchase these books, he or she may contact with the library of the commission.

Name of the Book	Author	Publisher	Price
1. Meyeder Chokhe aine O ainer chokhe meyera	Jasodhara Bagchi & Anindita Bhaduri, <i>ed.</i>	West Bengal Commission for Women	Rs. 30/-
2. Sexual violence and law	Malini Bhattacharya & Smita Khator	-Do-	Rs. 20/-
8. Aini adhikar janun-1 : Pon debo na pon nebo na (Ponpratha nirodhak aine)	Bharati Mutsuddi	West Bengal Commission for Women & Abobhas	Rs. 20/-
4. Aini adhikar janun-2 : chele ki meye? (Bhruner Lingo nirnoy birodhi aine)	Malini Bhattacharya	-Do-	Rs. 25/-
5. Implementing Vishaka : a status report	—	West Bengal Commission for Women Sanhita	—
6. A study of family courts	Flavia Agnes	West Bengal Commission for Women	Rs. 100/- (Institution) Rs. 30/- (Individual)
7. Sishukanya : Ai Samaye ai muhurte —Samosya O Sahay	Gairika Ghosh	West Bengal Commission for Women and Ababhas	
8. Pathe Bipade : Meyeder Nirapatta	Bhaswati Chakroborty	West Bengal Commission for Women & ebong alap	Rs. 60/-
9. Bortika : Maitreya Ghatak (1941-2003)	Mahasweta Debi, <i>ed.</i>	Mahasweta Debi, <i>ed.</i>	Rs. 120/-
10. Prachin Bharote nari	Ratnabali Chattapadhyay & Prita Bhattacharya	School of Women's Studies, Jadavpur University & Ababhas	Rs. 20/-
11. Swasther adhikar nijer hate nebar pathe	Krishna Bandopadhyay	School of Women's Studies, Jadavpur University	Rs. 35/-
12. Services for girls and young women with disabilities in kolkata	Jeeja Ghosh	-Do-	Rs. 25/-
13. Expanding dimension of dowry	—	AIDWA	Rs. 40/-
14. Women and Security	—	Indian Association for Women's Studies	Rs. 10/-
15. In Retrospect : War-time memories and thoughts on Women's movement	Vidya Munsii	Manisha	Rs. 200/-
16. All India Women's Conference	Reba Roy	A.I.W.C.	Rs. 25/-
17. Paschimbange Nari-O-Sishu Pachar	Sarbani Bhattacharya	W.B.C.W	Rs. 40/-

Reported by : *Diplekha Sengupta & Shuvra Bhadra*

