

REPORT
“RETHINK” STAKEHOLDERS MEETING
WOMEN GAINING GROUND (WGG)
ON
“LEADERSHIP OF YOUNG AND DISABLED WOMEN LEADERS AND
THEIR POLITICAL PARTICIPATION”
17.11.2022
VENUE: HOTEL PANACHE, PATNA



Submitted to:
CREA, NEW DELHI
Submitted by:
ASS, MUZAFFARPUR
E-mail: ass.bandana@rediffmail.com
Web: <https://aakankshasevasadan.org.in>

On 17.11.2022, a “Rethink” Stakeholders Meeting was organized on the issue of “Leadership of Young and Disabled Women Leaders and their Political Participation” at Hotel Panache in Patna in a joint venture with **CREA, Akili Dada, IWRA, YUVA and SRUTI Disability Rights and Gramonnati Sansthan**. CREA is a feminist international human rights organization based in the Global South and led by women from the Global South. CREA’s work draws upon the inherent value of a rights-based approach to sexuality and gender equality.

Participants

Stakeholders and Network Partners-71.

Welcome to the Guests

The respected guests were welcomed by Bandana Sharma, Founder & Secretary of Aakanksha Seva Sadan, Muzaffarpur, Bihar. Throwing light on the subject, Bandana Sharma said that this “Rethink Meeting” is organized by ASS and supported by CREA, New Delhi. ASS and CREA worked in 17 Panchayats of Muzaffarpur district in Bihar through programs like WGG and MPMS.

She said that WGG aims to equip women and girls with the necessary tools and skills to be architects of a society free from violence and lead the political and social transformation to redefine, prevent, and eliminate SGBV.

She said that by law, 33% of all seats in the local governance systems at the village level (Panchayat) have to be occupied by women. This is an opportunity to raise women’s voices in local governments but, despite being enshrined in law, many elected women representatives are silenced in practice. The goal of MPMS program is to make Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) responsible and develop their leadership capacity so that they may maintain the dignity of their position, not that their husband or any other family members should work in their favour.

She further highlighted the need to work for the Leadership of Young and Disabled Women Leaders and their political participation. She emphasized that efforts should be put in from all quarters to achieve this goal.

She welcomed Shri Shyam Rajak, Former Minister of Bihar as Chief Guest along with other dignitaries like Shri Sanjay Paswan, MLC, BJP-Bihar, Shri Santosh Upadhayay, Convenor, Bihar Bandi Adhikar Andolan and Kumari Vaishnavi, Secretary, Bihar Viklang Manch.

After the lightening of the candle by everyone on the table, Shri Shyam Rajak, Former Bihar Minister along with other dignitaries-Shri Sanjay Paswan, Shri Santosh Upadhayay, and Kumari Vaishnavi sat on the dais and “Rethink Meeting” was formally started.

Ms. Shakshi was assigned as a sign language interpreter for this event.

Message from CREA

Babita Singh from CREA said that CREA is a human rights organization with feminist thought established in the year 2000. CREA works closely with all organizations whether they are government or non-government and envisions a just and peaceful world, where everyone lives with dignity, respect, and equality. We build feminist leadership, expand sexual and reproductive freedoms, and advance the human rights of all people.

In India, CREA is working in the states of Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal and partnering with Aakanksha Seva Sadan in Bihar, YUVA in Jharkhand, Gramonnati in Uttar Pradesh, and Shruti Disability Rights in West Bengal covering issues of Youth, Adolescents and Disabled. She said that all efforts should be made to eliminate violence against women. This

meeting is a “Rethink” on the issue. She further said that first, we have to understand the term- VIOLENCE. It is necessary to work for those who are standing on the margins and to work on the Leadership of Young and Disabled Women Leaders and their political participation.

All participants were given plant saplings by ASS and a video was shown on the work of ASS. A video of the 16 Days Activism Program was also shown during the event.

Messages from Key Dignitaries

Shri Sanjay Paswan, MLC, BJP-Bihar said that there is a lot of power in this word- “**Mujhe Nahi Mere Adhikaron ko Samjho**”. He congratulated Bandana ji for doing such good work.

Shri Santosh Upadhayay, Convenor, Bihar Bandi Adhikar Andolan said that he liked the book given to him by ASS. He said that there is indeed very little space for female prisoners in jails despite a good number of women prisoners in Bihar. The women prisoners face sexual violence and discrimination or whatever we say in our words is less. There is also no jail Minister in Bihar. He further mentioned a letter sent by him to the President of India narrating the woes of women prisoners in Muzaffarpur Jail.

Messages from Other Participants

(1) **Dr. Naval Kishore Sharma (Chairman, Netrahin Parishad, Patna)** expressed his gratitude to Bandana Sharma that her organization is working for Divyang/Viklang. Till now we had not heard about the rights of women with disabilities. India has also included in the issue of their participation in the political field. The population of Divyang/Viklang women in India is 9.87 Lac. To improve their situation and their true political participation- Doordarshan, Media, Journalism, and Newspapers have to work actively. Along with this, the support of the court will have to be taken, only then our Divyang friends may get their true participation from Panchayat to Parliament. “**तू खुद को बदल तभी तो जमाना बदलेगा.**”

(2) **Prof. Manita Yadav (Prof., Women’s College, Hajipur)** emphasized that education is the only means that help Divyang/Viklang women or physically abled women move forward in the right direction. Although all the organizations are working for their rights and it is good enough but first they need education and awareness. She narrated about some women who became Divyang at the age of 5 months but they never gave up. She said that Disability is not a weakness but a strongness. There is a lack of education among Divyang/Viklang, so all organizations have to work in solidarity to achieve this target.

(3) **Bandana Sharma (Secretary, ASS)** said that we all know that Anganwadi Kendra is for children of 6 years of age. But for Divyang/Viklang there should not be an age bar and only one center for them.

(4) **Kumari Vaishnavi (Secretary, Bihar Viklang Manch)** said that call them as they want to work deeply with Divyang/Viklang women and adolescent girls. She expressed concern over the ill-treatment meted out to the women of Beur Jail. She also threw light on the common education system and Kendriya Vidyalaya to provide education of equitable quality to all children irrespective of caste, creed, community, language, gender, economic condition, social status, and physical and mental abilities.

(5) **Vijeta Lakshmi (Praxis, Patna)** said that CREA has implemented WGG Program in Bihar, U.P., and Uttarakhand and she informed about the WGG-related data of different organizations and concluded that women always get very less opportunities. They also have to face hurdles put by their families and friends.

Lunch Break

After the lunch break, again 6 people were called onto the stage and they expressed their views as follows:

(1) **Sanju Singh (Lawyer and Convenor, Social Justice Adventure, Bihar & Jharkhand)** talk about gender-based violence and said that gender-based violence is a phenomenon deeply rooted in gender inequality, and it continues to be one of the most notable human rights violations within all societies. Gender-based violence is violence directed against a person because of their gender. Both women and men experience violence but the majority of its victims are women and girls. She said that efforts should be made from all directions to reduce gender-based violence and make the world safer for women and girls.

(2) **Pramila Kumari (Coordinator, One Stop Centre, Patna)** said that if a women make an application through the women's helpline then she cannot able to solve all of them. But we always try that 80% of cases of women violence should be solved. But, if there is no economic self-reliability the cases of women violence may not reduce. She emphasized that do not always teach daughters to tolerate.

(3) **Sharad Kumari (Action Aid, Patna)** put a step forward in the discussion on intersectional and said that they can be a man as well as a woman or a transgender too. They need treatment and we should look that how we treat them. In this sense, the name of the program is "RETHINK" which is an excellent idea.

She further stated that women are mostly affected by climate change and disasters and the change in cropping patterns is a worrying factor. The violence that happens to women puts chains on their feet. To tackle it, first, we have to change the environment. We also need to work on mental health issues as well.

(4) **Suman Singh (Secretary, Sakhi, Patna)** said that some violence makes noise and some remain silent. Child marriage can be treated as silent violence. Child marriages are encouraged by parents. She said that she had protected 72 children from child marriage in 7 districts of Bihar. Child marriage forces the physical and mental exploitation of children. We have to work with solidarity on silent violence that hampers the life of children to a great extent. We have to work on the economic self-reliance of women too.

(5) **Dimple Jasmin (Transgender and Bihar Kinnar Kalyan Board, Patna)** said that we have almost covered all points but no one has talked about the transgender community. No one tries to identify the pain behind their smiling faces. She is also transgender. in Bihar, transgenders are not enjoying any rights and somehow making a living. So, come forward to protect our rights.

(6) **Shyam Rajak (Former Minister of Bihar)** said that "Mujhe Nahi Mere Adhikaro Ko Surakshit Karo" is a very good demand. In our society, there is violence against women everywhere-family, society, politics, and also at different levels. To protect the Rights of women, we first have to sensitize them. We will also go to "AGITATION" to change this mentality of child marriage and women violence. Without agitation, it is not possible. If we change even one panchayat, it will be a big change. But, first, we have to change our mentality and become optimistic, not pessimistic.

(7) **Sneha (A.D., Samajik Suraksha Koshange, Samaj Kalyan, Patna)** said that under the Bihar State Disability Pension Scheme, a person with a disability of 40 percent or more of any income and age group belong to a BPL family is given a pension of Rs. 400 / - per month. There are very less pensions for the aged and widows too and this should improve. In our society, the divyang has no status.

(8) **Prabhakar Kumar Patel (ADS, Patna)** said that no one even talks with Divyang properly. Our attitude should change for them. More facilities should be given to them and should be properly implemented. In the countries of Europe, if a hotel has no Ramps, no one goes there. So it is required that we should change our attitudes first.

Under the social security scheme, a woman gets her property rights and it is a big achievement. But they are victims of violence even today in this modern world and this is very misfortunate. But changes may take place in the right direction if we keep up trying.

(9) **Prof. Satish Kumar (Prof., Patna University, Patna)** said that Divyang should possess leadership qualities for their true progress. He said that despite all problems **“Lamps can be lit in darkness and light can be brought”** for PWDs.

(10) **Sudarshna Chakraborty (SDRC, Sruti Development Resource Centre, Kolkata)** said that economic independence is a necessity to protect against violence against women. Try to first understand the velocity of the violence that a Divyang woman is facing at a moment and create a FORUM for them so that their political participation may be assured. viklang

(11) **Babita Singh (CREA)** emphasized that the time has come to “RETHINK.” If the family does violence to our women, then there is a need to get out of it. There are many types of violence. Violence big or small is violence. A slap is also treated as violence. We all have to come forward and Rethink women's issues.

Conclusions Emerged

- All efforts should be made to eliminate violence against women and we have to “Rethink.” We all have to work for the Leadership of Young and Disabled Women Leaders and their political participation.
- The women prisoner face sexual violence and discrimination and there is less space and facilities for women prisoners in Bihar.
- Doordarshan, Media, Journalism, and Newspaper have to work actively so that Divyang/Viklang may get their true participation from Panchayats to Parliament.
- Education, awareness, and change of attitudes are the only means that help Divyang/Viklang women or physically abled women to move forward in the right direction.
- No age bar for divyang/viklang Children of 6 years of age in the Anganwadi and there should be only a center.
- To provide education of equitable quality to all children irrespective of caste, creed, community, language, gender, economic condition, social status, and physical and mental ability.
- Women always get very less opportunities. They face more difficulties from their family and friends, and lack leadership. Gender-based violence is a phenomenon deeply rooted in gender inequality and continues to be one of the most notable human rights violations within all societies.
- Violence put chains on women's feet. Changing the environment and working on the mental health issue is needed.
- Child marriage forces physical and mental exploitation of children.
- Transgenders should have access to govt. welfare programs and facilities.
- Women are facing violence everywhere. We need agitation to change this situation.
- Pensions for divyang/viklang, aged, and widows should improve.

Future Strategies

- Rethink and take action to eliminate all types of violence against women.
- Preparing a platform for Capacity building, Leadership of Young and Disabled Women Leaders, and their political participation.

Vote of Thanks: Santavana Bharti gave a vote of thanks to all guests and participants in the Rethink Meeting. She praised the support of CREA, ASS, and all its network partners and supporters for the organization of this wonderful event with an assurance of continuing the fight ahead.

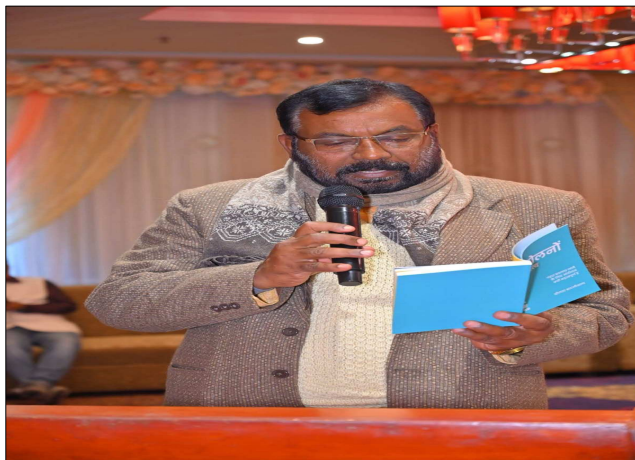


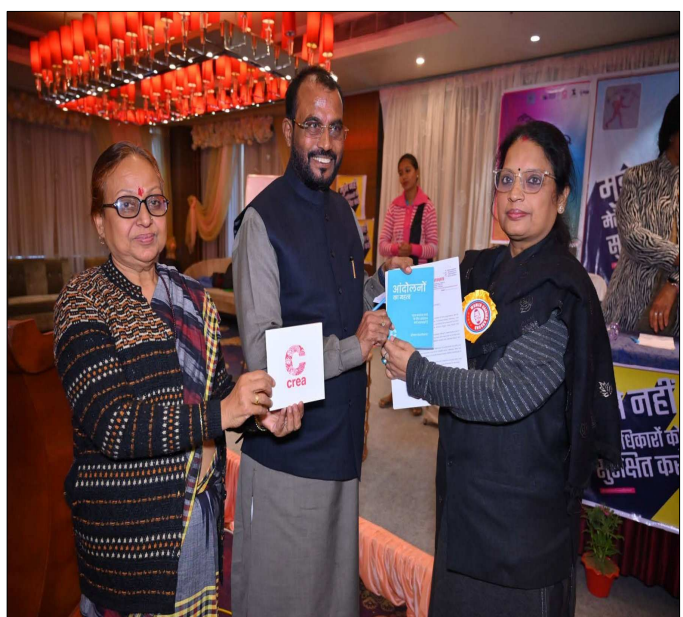
PICTURE GALLERY



PICTURE GALLERY









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