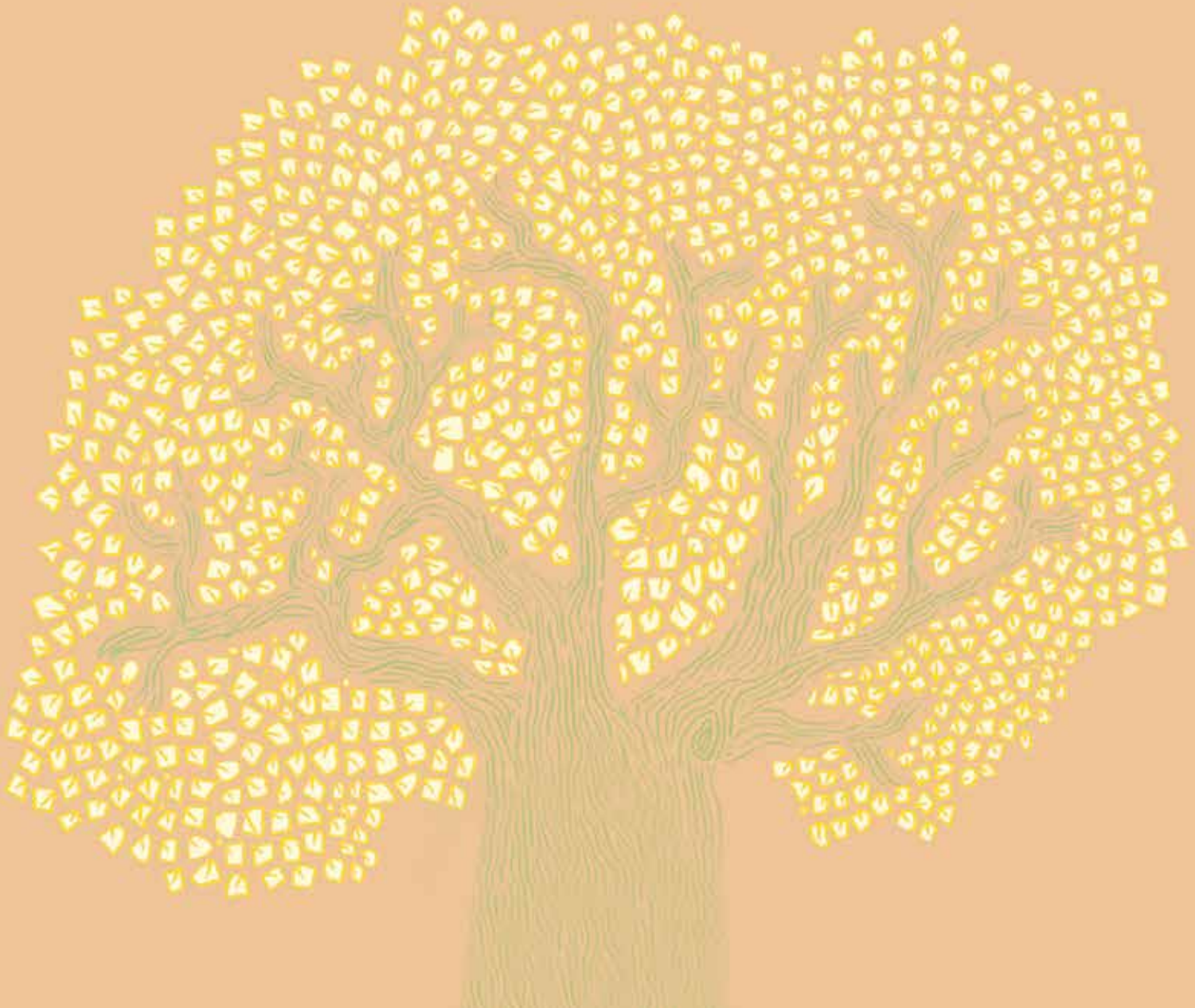


REIMAGINING SHELTER HOMES

Report of the National Sharing Meeting
of the
Five-State Action-Research on Female Survivors of
Violence and Shelter Homes



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action india



ಸಂಗಮ
Sangama



Vimochana
forum for women's rights

Nazarinya

A Queer Feminist Resource Group



Visthar
A Non-Formal Academy of Justice and Peace

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REIMAGINING SHELTER HOMES

**National Meeting Report of Five-State Action-Research on
Female Survivors of Violence and Shelter Homes**

Co-organised on Behalf of Lamlynti Chittara Neralu
(A National Network on Shelter Homes in India)

at

Vishwa Yuvak Kendra, New Delhi on 19 March 2019

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Opening Remarks

Mercy Kappen (Visthar, Karnataka) extended a warm welcome to all and invited Asha V. to begin the day on an inspirational note with a song that resonated with the vision of reimagining shelter homes. She noted that this meeting was an important milestone in the journey of Lamlynti Chittara Neralu (LCN) Network formed in 2016. Mercy took this opportunity to bid farewell to Geetha with a sincere acknowledgement of her contributions to the Network; she also extended a warm welcome to Jaya Velankar who joined Jagori as the new director.

Setting the context, Celine (Vimochana, Karnataka) recalled the struggles and successes of the women's movement in the past four decades in fighting against various forms of violence against women, engaging with the legal system and various other sectors like health, education and employment, advocating for gender-sensitive budgets and equal wages, etc. The 'personal is political' has been an important cornerstone of the feminist movement. In the past decades, various shelter homes have been established by the State as well as many NGOs for women in 'distress'. However, there has been an absence of a wider conversation on the state of these shelter homes meant for female survivors of violence. With this realisation, an informal national network was formed by organisations invested in the common goal of working towards safe spaces for women in 2016. The process was facilitated by Vimochana in Bangalore. The network was named Lam-lynti Chittara Neralu (derived from three different languages- Khasi, Telugu and Kannada).

A subsequent national level consultation on services in and around shelter homes for female survivors of violence was held in Delhi (in October 2016) where it was decided to collect data and conduct action-research studies on the shelter homes for female survivors of violence in five states - Delhi, Karnataka, Assam, Meghalaya and Tamil Nadu. Active efforts towards raising funds for this endeavour were carried out and AJWS was brought on board as a funder. Participating organisations (Action India, Jagori and Nazaria in Delhi; Sangama, Vimochana and Visthar in Karnataka; Ekta in Tamil Nadu; North East Network in Assam and Meghalaya) underwent rigorous trainings in feminist methodology and research ethics. The findings of these studies intend to contribute to the body of existing research and analyses on the state of shelter homes done by various organisations in different parts of India, and provide for evidence-based policy advocacy and interventions.

Following this, all the five state reports were released formally.



Findings from Five - States (Part-I)

Moderator – Poonam Kathuria, SWATI

Poonam reiterated the need for positioning studies done earlier on the state of shelter homes, by different organisations like SWATI, AALI and others within the process for a stronger policy advocacy. She flagged the need to redefine custodial care. She also raised concern over declining share of funds for shelter homes in social sector funding.

Delhi

The study in Delhi was conducted jointly by three organisations—Action India, Jagori and Nazariya, with the team comprising Amrita Nandy, Surabhi Tandon Mehrotra and Ananya Basu also leading the overall research. Process.

At the outset, Amrita expressed feminists' reservations with terms like 'destitutes', women in 'distress' as they are victimising and disempowering in nature. She presented an overview of the ethical framework, methodology and conceptual objectives of the study. The research in Delhi was carried out by three organisations - Action India, Jagori and Nazariya as a collaborative effort. Gyanwati (Action India) shared how free and informed consent from survivor respondents was sought at every step of data collection and feminist principles of research ethics were adhered to.

Ananya shared the key findings of the study (comprising 28 IDIs, 17 KIIs and 18 FGDs) in Delhi. Key issues that she highlighted were:

- Lack of awareness among women survivors about the availability of State-run shelter homes
- Shortage of shelter homes particularly in western and northern parts of Delhi
- Very stringent criteria of admission of women survivors in the State run/ funded shelter homes
- Relatively larger number of women from socially and economically disadvantaged communities, in the shelter homes
- Disempowering experience in the shelter homes, where survivors feel incarcerated
- Patronising, negligent, and reformist attitudes of shelter home staff towards survivors
- Short and inadequate stay for rehabilitation, especially in case of women who are rape survivors or have mental health issues
- Funds for the homes are often low and delayed
- Poor delivery and convergence of support services - legal aid, medical services, counselling, etc.
- Shelter home staff members are paid very low salaries and often do not receive their payments on time which leads to lack of motivation, poor performance and stress among them
- Inadequacy in respect of specialised human resources in the shelter homes

Rituparna (Nazariya) brought everyone's attention to the double marginalisation of queer women survivors of violence (lesbian and bisexual women, trans individuals, among others) who do not fit in the conventional idea of womanhood. Lesbians are stereotyped as hyper-sexual beings, stripping them of any other identities and thereby needs they may have. In such a situation, staying in shelter homes after sharing their identities in absence of sensitive and empathetic

staff and other residents is a major challenge. Another issue pertained to the sheltering of trans men assigned woman at birth in homes meant for women survivors.

Keeping all these issues in mind, the research partners also made some interventions, an important goal that the action-research had set out for. Ritambhara (Nazariya) shared experiences of a self-care and burnout prevention workshop for shelter home staff that was conducted by Nazariya. More such workshops are in the pipeline in some of the states in South India. A day-long training on perspective-building on gender and sexuality issues was also conducted for the staff of a Delhi-based shelter home. A study by TARSHI and Nazariya (funded by AJWS) on self-care of human rights defenders is also in the offing.

North Karnataka

The study in North Karnataka was conducted jointly by two organisations-Visthar and Sangama. Data was collected from 9 shelter homes spread across 5 districts. Asha V (Visthar) shared the key findings of the study (comprising 18 IDIs, 8KIIs and 3 FGDs).

- Devadasis, women belonging to Madiga community, and transwomen are denied admission in the shelter homes.
- Older Devdasi women, abandoned by their children, are forced to take shelter in temples.
- The caste and class intersection is very important in the context of North Karnataka where most of the shelter homes are run by the upper caste Lingayat community and Devdasis face discrimination while accessing shelter homes.

In some districts, researchers couldn't get access to State-run shelter homes in the absence of written permission from the government. There was a lack of privacy during interviews of survivors due to the constant presence of wardens/ caretakers of the homes. Another challenge was the lack of transparency with respect to sharing documentation and case records of current and former residents.

Rajesh Srinivas (Sangama) shared that trans women are not even thought of when government shelter home schemes are evolved. They are systematically discriminated against and denied shelter. Transwomen who identify as hijras, disowned by their families, also face violence within the hijra community. They have nowhere to go as the shelter homes do not admit them due to social stigma. They are judged and often told, "This is not a place meant for 'people' like you." Their struggle begins from their recognition as women by the state. In exceptional cases, they are allowed to take shelter in the compound for a night in undignified conditions. Their access to safe space is limited to NGO-run shelters. In light of this, he re-emphasised the need to re-envision shelters for the queer community. He also raised the issue of forced incarceration of sex-workers who are seen as people indulging in 'immoral' activities and are deprived of their right to choice.

South Karnataka

The data was collected from 11 shelter homes spread across 6 districts. Asha Ramesh (Vimochana) shared the key finding of the study (comprising 23 KIIs, 15 IDIs and 8 FGDs).

- Most women stated trafficking, an abusive and alcoholic father, early marriage, sexual harrassment etc. as the reasons behind seeking shelter in the homes.
- In Mangalore and Udupi, psychiatric problems were very common among the survivors.
- The homes were evidently space constrained.
- Survivors were offered stereotypical and non-viable options for vocational training.

- Only one self-financed shelter home, run by two men for adult female survivors of human trafficking, appeared to have adopted a feminist approach.
- One shelter home functioned as a transit home for survivors by providing employment opportunities for those who decide to start living independently.

The limitations broadly mirrored those as in the other states. The presence of the shelter home staff hindered survivors from speaking freely. Those who left shelter homes and got reintegrated with their families or started to live independently couldn't be contacted and interviewed.

Celine (Vimochana) Gave Some Recommendations:

- Give special attention to minor girls who are nearing adulthood and are removed from shelter homes (meant for minors) as soon as they turn 18 years of age. There is a need to run an extended program for their skill development.
- Given that a wide range of mental health conditions fall in the bracket of mental illness, there is a need for provision of separate centres for survivors with mental health issues with specialised medical support. She also raised concern over lack of subsidised respite care facilities in our country.
- Need to channelise a part of corporate funds (under the CSR) towards shelter home development - creation of new homes and strengthening the existing ones.

Remarks of the Respondent, Prof. Renu Addlakha (CWDS)

Prof. Addlakha said that the various issues like lack of privacy, limited access etc. that have been highlighted as limitations of the study can be understood as institutional constraints arising out of the conceptualisation of shelter homes due to deficits in policy. There is a need for a very critical analysis of the policy structures on the basis of which these institutions are formulated. Secondly, we need to explore why shelter homes run by NGOs have similar limitations as those in State-run or funded ones. It comes as a surprise because unlike government institutions, homes managed by NGOs are expected to be more liberating and sensitive to human rights. Thirdly, highly developed states like Karnataka and Delhi that are reporting rise in mental health issues and child marriages are also witnessing a transformation in family institutions. The growing need for shelter homes in these contexts requires further exploration. We also need to recognise the need for specialised institutions for people with diverse needs. Finally, there's a need to delve into the semantics and question if 'shelter home' is really the right term to use.



Findings from Five - States (Part-II)

Moderator – Shubhangi Singh, AALI

Shubhangi shared that AALI has also conducted research studies on shelter homes in Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand and Haryana, especially for women trying to escape forced marriages. The findings have been similar in terms of the State's restricted perspective of the structure of shelter homes as a measure of tackling destitution and the absence of a rights-based perspective.

Assam

Anurita (North East Network) shared that the report of the findings of the action-research study that covered 11 shelter homes spread across 11 districts (comprising 33 IDIs, 16 KIIs and 5 FGDs).

- The staff had a narrow understanding of different forms of violence that force women to seek shelter. This leads to inaccurate case documentation, with a tendency to label everything as domestic violence.
- An overwhelming majority of the survivor residents were Hindus; this has impacted their secular nature.
- Further probing is required on factors that hinder tribal women and religious minorities from availing their entitlements.
- Given the specific socio-political context of Assam, FGDs were conducted in certain conflict affected areas of the State with internally displaced women. It was found that women were divided in their opinions about the shelter homes or relief camps. While some found these shelters as safe spaces in times of conflict, others were reluctant to live in shelter homes due to earlier experiences of physical assault by wardens, theft of their belongings, etc.
- The role of the government is very passive in addressing the issue of internal displacement and there is a policy deficit in this aspect. During times of conflict, relief camps are set up but the strategic gender needs of women are not addressed.
- The National Urban Livelihood Mission (NULM) meant to provide shelter with basic amenities to homeless urban women has been poorly implemented and there is a lack of awareness among women about the existence of such schemes.
- There is a malpractice of putting survivors of domestic violence in Ujjwala homes meant for survivors of human trafficking in order to get more funds.
- Other vulnerable groups of women such as the street vendors, migrant workers, tea plantation workers, and adivasis face difficulty in accessing the shelter homes.
- Character assassination, moral policing was very common in the shelter homes. In the name of counselling, staff tries to 'correct' the behaviour of persons with queer identities.
- The vocational trainings are not integrated with other skill development programs of the State.

The overwhelming presence of staff while interviewing survivors posed a huge challenge in ensuring privacy. In many instances it was felt that the staff tried to tutor survivors on how to respond which caused difficulty in getting accurate data. The action-research team also conducted various capacity-building workshops for the staff of these homes.

Meghalaya

Balarisha (North East Network) shared that until mid-2018, Meghalaya had no State or NGO run shelter homes specifically for women. The State at present has 2 Swadhar Greh homes in 2 districts that were covered in the study (comprising 16 IDIs, 15 KIIs and 5 FGDs).

- Service providers registered under the PWDV Act didn't have proper case documentations of survivors.
- Admission of survivors in Swadhar Grehs is done only on court referrals.
- Restrictions are imposed on the mobility of the residents.
- Most of the children homes that give shelter to women temporarily are faith-based and not secular spaces. Male children above the age of 6 years are not allowed to stay with their mothers.
- Interviews with young girls revealed a clash between the POCSO Act (that criminalises all sexual activities of teenage) and customary practices of consensual non-abusive relationships. Young girls are robbed off their right to choice and forcefully separated from their partners and incarcerated.
- The State witnesses a high incidence of VAW and normalisation of domestic violence with considerable under-reporting of such cases.
- Most government officials and shelter home staff didn't cooperate to participate in the study and share data.
- Data on budget allocation for shelter homes couldn't be accessed.

Balarisha pointed out that a matriarchal society doesn't necessarily guarantee gender equality.

Tamil Nadu

Tamil Moni (Ekta) shared the findings of the research conducted in 19 shelter homes spread across 9 districts (comprising 35 IDIs, 12 KIIs and 9 FGDs). Key points included:

- Social context of the State: Increasing alcoholism among youth, normalisation and under-reporting of violence against women
- Lack of awareness among women about shelters homes
- Most of the women in shelter homes were Hindus and belonged to the disadvantaged caste groups
- Most women were survivors of domestic violence; possibly due to pervasive alcoholism among men in the State.
- Relaxed conditions in terms of allowing children with women
- Shelter homes of various types are mostly clustered in the southern part of Tamil Nadu.
- Shortage of government-run shelter homes
- Poor funding (Rs 22 per day per woman) and irregular/ delayed disbursement of funds in State-run shelter homes
- Existence of Janatha Hostel as an alternate shelter model: It provides paid accommodation for women who are ready to move out of shelter homes and live independently.
- Existence of two model shelter homes – run on feminist principles – that conduct gender sensitisation workshops for the residents and help them with their livelihood prospects.

Bimla (Ekta) brought in the complexity that arises due to migration and added that since the women in the shelter homes in Tamil Nadu come from four different States, they also face difficulty in adjusting to an unknown culture struggling with the new language and food habits.

Challenges shared by the team included lack of access to shelter homes, or vigilance homes as they are called. The research team also found it difficult to gain the confidence of the women survivors, who sometimes withdrew their consent in the middle of the interview. Lack of privacy due to presence of the wardens was another challenge because of which women couldn't speak freely.

As a follow-up measure, the report on the research findings was also sent for peer-reviews.

Remarks of the Respondent, Dr. Barnali Das (Dibrugarh University)

Dr. Das substantiated the findings of these studies with her own research findings on shelter homes with respect to inadequate infrastructure, moral policing, poor counselling, gendered vocational trainings etc. She flagged the need to delve deeper into the organisational and operational differences between shelter homes run and funded by the government and ones that are self-financed. She highlighted issues of re-marginalisation of survivors and emphasised the need to extract narratives of exploitation of women within the shelter homes. The disempowering nature of shelter homes under the garb of 'rescue and rehabilitation' reinforces notions of victimhood and deters the agency of women.

Synthesis of the Five - State Study

Amrita encapsulated the key and common findings of the action-research study on the basis of first-hand accounts of 147 survivors, 89 key stakeholders and 32 FGDs from 78 shelter homes across five states. The major findings were:

- Little or no access to shelters for researchers/ women's rights workers
- Low numbers and uneven distribution of shelter homes
- Survivors mostly young (18-45 years) and belonging to socially and economically vulnerable communities
- Pervasive domestic violence (both at natal and marital homes)
- Poor or lack of knowledge about their rights and entitlements among survivors
- Shelters are the last resort for survivors for reasons of curbs on their mobility, communication, separation from children, and alienation.
- Non-inclusiveness of admission
- Inadequate and slow disbursement of funds
- Poor infrastructure and living conditions
- Insensitive behaviour of the staff towards survivors
- Lack of uniformity in definition and practice of counselling
- Stereotypical and financially unviable vocational training

Gouri Choudhury, founder director of Action India, was felicitated on successfully highlighting the myths around menstrual hygiene through the film 'Period. End of Sentence'. The film won an Oscar for the Best Documentary (Short Subject) at the 91st Academy Awards ceremony in February this year. Remarking that it was an important step towards de-stigmatising menstruation, Gouri said that this was only the beginning of a revolution and there is a long way to go before menstrual hygiene gets the centre stage.

- Little or no reintegration follow-ups
- Issues regarding the shelter home staff include: poor or dated knowledge of laws and provisions, patriarchal mindset and lack of motivation due to low and irregular remuneration

The outcomes of the study include:

- Five-states action-research reports and a collective national level synthesis report
- Range of action interventions; enhanced resource capacities of partner organisations
- State-specific resource directories of shelter homes
- Further as an extension of this study, the LCN network plans to write a chapter in the shadow report for India's 6th periodic report to the CEDAW that will include the concerns of survivors of violence and reinforce shelter homes as key sites for redressal, service provision, healing, rehabilitation and reintegration.

Survivor Speak

Note: This session was designed to bring forth fundamental schisms in the understanding and architecture of shelter homes, and have it speak to policy. This was done by listening to women survivors of violence who lived in shelter homes and on the streets. The session helped foreground the convergences and departures of their respective experiences. This was also one of the important findings of the Delhi-based research study—the conceptual disconnectedness between violence against women and homelessness and the practical silos between shelter homes for the 'homeless' and those for 'women in distress / difficult circumstances', especially in terms of service provision to survivors of violence. Dr. Amita Joseph's intervention emphasised the disregard of the fundamental rights of street-dwelling women and complemented the research findings about the multiple inter-linkages and overlaps between (temporary and permanent) homelessness and violence as structural violence.

Dr Amita Joseph (BCF and Delhi Homeless Women's Collective) spoke about their 20 year long struggle for the rights of the people living on the streets. The struggle started 20 years ago when Justice AP Shah took suo-moto notice of demolition of shelters in the middle of winter. The matter has been sub-judice ever since and is now being heard in the Supreme Court. Initially the thrust was towards pressurising the State to establish and run shelter homes for the homeless, however the long-term goal is for their right to permanent housing. Given the huge deficit of 24.5 million economically weaker and low income housing, there is still a long way to go before achieving this goal. Amita pressed upon the urgency to fight for the right to a dignified life for the homeless people who live on the streets and subsidise our cities with their labour; who are so poor that they can't even afford a room in the slum. Various schemes have been instituted for the urban homeless like the National Urban Livelihood Mission (NULM), Shelter for Urban Homeless (SUH) program but their implementation is poor.

Recently, SPYM (Society for Promotion of Youth and Masses) has been mandated to manage over 65 night shelters by the Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board. The collective has collaborated with SPYM in mobilising women living in these shelters to lobby with political parties for inclusion of promises for their housing, skill development, livelihood generation, education, child-care and many such issues in the election manifestos.

Four survivors, who are either living in shelter homes at present or have lived there in the past, shared their experiences of living in a shelter homes.

Sharnaz lives in the night shelter at Jama Masjid. She goes to college (School of Open Learning) and works as an educator at an NGO, Jamghat that engages with street children. She was born in a night shelter and received support by an NGO, Butterfly for her schooling. She highlighted the challenges faced by women in night shelters in Delhi like unhygienic, poorly lit toilets; lack of privacy due to broken doors. Women are unaware of their rights. Caretakers of these shelters stifle their voices and prevent them from opening up about their issues and challenges. Girls are deprived of education and are married early. Many girls lose their lives due to early pregnancy complications. There is a strong need for mobilising women in these shelter homes to fight for their rights.

Seema from Khadar is a survivor of domestic violence and had to take shelter for a short duration in 2012. She was admitted in a shelter home with support from Jagori and found the experience utterly unpleasant. There was a lack of support services in terms of medical facilities, counselling etc. The behaviour of the caretaker was very insensitive. She found the environment at the shelter extremely repulsive and wishes to never have to go to a shelter home in future.

Tarannum lives in the night shelter at Jama Masjid and works as a fieldworker with SPYM. She flagged the difficulties parents living in the shelter homes face in raising their children in these homes due to lack of facilities for child-care, schools etc. She raised an important demand for schools, creches and Anganwadis in the near vicinity of the shelters. She also raised concern over poor sanitation and drinking water facilities, unhygienic living conditions etc in these shelters. Complaints to improve the living conditions seem to fall on deaf ears and caretakers often blame the lack of hygiene on the residents themselves. She thinks the homeless poor should be given proper housing instead of shelter by the government. Besides, there is an urgent need to help the homeless living in shelters get their identity documents like voter ID card, PAN card etc in order to enable them to claim benefits they are entitled to.

Rukhsar lives in a shelter home run by an NGO, Shakti Shalini. She has had a positive experience at her shelter home. She has received love and support that she missed even at her natal home. The counselling services have been very fruitful for her. She has received skill development training and now runs her own business with initial financial support from the NGO. Her experience was a stark contrast to the experiences of women living in State run and funded shelter homes and underscores the operational differences between the homes managed by NGOs and those that are state-run.

Remarks by Respondent, Dr. Shobha Raghuram (Development Policies Consultant)

Responding to the experiences shared by the survivors, Dr. Shobha brought everyone's attention to the inter-generational injustice, dispossession, systemic poverty, eviction and incarceration of women. There is a need for people's commissions, citizen charters, and an inclusive platform of solidarity and citizenship. She highlighted the extreme need for reform of the State in a democracy and the need to hold elected representatives accountable. She flagged the wide disparity in rural and urban services that leads to increased violence against women in rural areas, including through incarceration, eviction, forced distress migration, involuntary trafficking, sale as bonded labour etc., also leading to their loss of culture and sense of self. Moreover, if the state of shelter homes in the middle income or advanced States covered in the study is so poor, one can imagine the condition of these institutions in low-income States like Bihar, Odisha and others. There is a need to collect good quality data in the next round of Census on all sorts of homelessness prevalent in the

country. It should be of particular interest to the socialist feminists to examine the quality of existence for people who have to transit through the State-run institutions of shelter.

Commenting further on the role of the State, she said that there is a need for the State to understand why women leave their homes and seek shelter in non-family institutions, from a historical perspective. Besides, while measuring quantitatively the non-performance of public institutions, one must be careful to integrate and not displace the narrative of loss and suffering. It should be the survivors who suggest the reforms. Increasing privatisation of the State is pushing NGOs to take the responsibility of providing essential services and it is doubtful that leaning on corporate funding will solve the problems this poses as donors seldom give the autonomy to freely use the funds. There is a need for a stronger judiciary that would respond to the cruelty in shelter homes. On the issue of restorative justice programs, Shobha noted that it is very hard for survivors to mediate with people who have violated them sexually. Moreover, she said that model shelter homes may be a utopia but we must not allow the dystopia of the present times to curb the idea of the future. She concluded by reiterating the importance of a clear articulation of the problem of homelessness of women in the submission to CEDAW.



Round Table: Key Remarks and Recommendations

Moderator - Madhu Mehra (PLD)

Panellists: Bharti Sharma (Shakti Shalini), Dr. Nimesh Desai (Institute of Human Behaviour and Allied Sciences), Tarique Mohammad (Koshish, TISS Mumbai), Subrat Das (Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability), Catherine (Medecins sans Frontiere)

Madhu set the tone for the discussion, by emphasising how a focus on criminal law amendments has pushed therapeutic processes for women survivors of violence to the periphery. And therefore there is an urgent need to reinforce the importance of shelter homes within our systemic measures of access to justice.

Bharti Sharma from Shakti Shalini began by foregrounding the agency of the resident/survivor as the primary pivot around which homes should be imagined. She recommended that shelter homes shouldn't act as custodial homes. The space should be more autonomous where residents have agency, decision making power and can exercise their right to choice. Survivors should be recognised as empowered women who possess the courage to leave their homes and thereby cannot be treated as helpless and hopeless once they reach the home. She also highlighted the crucial piece of mental well-being of residents and emphasised that mental health and well-being of survivors should be a priority of the shelter homes. Most importantly, shelter homes should not be isolated and need to be integrated with the community.

Dr. Nimesh Desai, Director, IHBAS remarked that in a study conducted by IHBAS and Ashray Adhikar Abhiyan on mental health issues of homeless women (Delhi 2007), it was found that an overwhelming majority suffered from some form of mental health illness, most common of which was depression. The study also found that homeless mentally ill women faced sexual exploitation on an everyday basis. The most common sites of these exploitations were temples and gurudwaras where they took shelter and the perpetrators were mostly the police or other service providers. He noted this trend of 'protectors becoming predators' as particularly alarming and urged upon the need to address this issue. The women's access to legal and health rights were negligible.

Dr. Desai mentioned that Ashray Adhikar Abhiyan's draft minimal standards go beyond basic needs and can be referred for policy advocacy. He raised concern over the fact that the shelter homes fall under the purview of DUSIB (Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board) and not the Department of Social Welfare or Women and Child Development; also that contracts for running shelter homes are awarded through commercial tenders, thereby questioning the final intent of those who will run the shelter. Use of commercial tenders defeats the purpose whereas the State is supposed to provide for its citizens. Finally, he drew everyone's attention to define and lobby for the institution of a multi-level counselling system in shelter homes by trained professionals. There is a need to bring more people from the State in these discussions and advocate for a rights-based framework.

Tarique pointed out that in State-run shelters, which are custodial in nature, entry may be voluntary but exit is not, which discourages women from seeking shelter in these homes. Shelter homes are opaque institutions and there is a need for a potent monitoring mechanism. He raised concern over the State's indifference and inaction in reviewing and reforming the policy even after the Muzaffarpur Shelter case, which gained wide attention of the media and civil society, and highlighted the dismal state of shelter homes. There is a need to push for a strong system of independent social audits with attestation of the findings by users

in a fearless environment. There is also a need to institute a system of rating the shelter homes on the basis of a set of criteria including rehabilitation. He stressed upon the need to create active networks and strong support systems for human rights' defenders who work in difficult and challenging circumstances.

Subrat highlighted the budgetary issues regarding shelter homes. The BJP in 2014 highlighted women's issues at the 'core of the core' in their National Development Agenda. However, this commitment didn't translate into increase in budgetary allocation for shelter homes schemes; this has remained stagnant (50-55 crores) over the years. Responding to parliamentary questions on Swadhar Grehs raised in January 2019, the Ministry of Women and Child Development put the blame on State governments for not demanding more funds for these schemes. However, he explained, this is due to strict policy conditionalities that require staff salaries and infrastructure building costs to be borne by the States and not the Union Government across social sectors. The unit cost for skilled service providers in the shelter homes, approved by the MWCD is lower than the minimum wage set for unskilled labourers. This acts as a deterrent in developing human resources in the shelter homes. Moreover, welfare schemes like shelter homes are also not receiving as much attention by the State governments as development projects like flyovers etc. are. It is, thus, a dual neglect by the Union as well as the State governments that the social welfare schemes are in a dismal state. Low budget allocation is coupled by the problem of under-utilisation of funds and corruption. There should be more transparency and accountability in terms of comprehensive online MIS with real time updates on digital platforms.

Catherine (MSF) made important recommendations like the need to promote health seeking behaviour. With her experiences of working with survivors of sexual and gender based violence, she also highlighted the need to ensure that counsellors in shelter homes are sensitive, empathetic, and skilled professionals.

Recommendations from the Floor:

- Need to advocate for right to shelter of survivors of violence, even after they move out of shelter homes
- Minimum standards should be set keeping in mind the socialist feminist ethos
- Shelter homes should be audited not only by neutral organisations but also by a survivors' network
- In addition to CEDAW submission we need to push for realisation of SDGs 5 and 16.
- Need to replicate the research study done in Bihar by TISS in other parts of the country and create resource directories on the number and types of shelter homes that exist
- Need for constant engagement with and sensitisation of shelter home staff to have a rights-based perspective
- Shelter homes located on the outskirts of the city are more neglected and need to be improved.
- Sentiments of the community are negative towards the shelter homes that were regarded as the 'society's dustbin'. There is a need for community awareness and sensitisation.
- In some State-run shelter homes, the levels of security and surveillance are set keeping in mind women who are in conflict with law; the same standards are then applied to all other residents as well. This needs to be addressed.
- The average length of stay of survivors range from a few days to more than a year. Thus, there is a need for smaller facilities (15-20 bedded) at block levels with skilled

counsellors and low level of security in addition to larger facilities at the district level to cater to the different needs of the survivors who need shelter.

- Inclusion of rate of rehabilitation as a performance indicator of shelter homes needs to be carefully examined. It may increase the vulnerability of destitute women who have nowhere to go as authorities will be discouraged to keep them for very long.
- There should be demands for social security schemes for the homeless women.
- Need for deliberations on strategies to organise a struggle against the ever decreasing budgetary allocation and public expenditure across the social sector
- On the one hand there are people (queer and transgenders) who seek shelter but can't access the institutions. While on the other hand, there are people (like sex workers) who are forcefully made to stay in the homes without being given the choice to choose their profession. These two issues are different and shouldn't be mixed but be given equal importance. Imposition of State's connotation of rehabilitation on people who choose against it should be resisted.



Moving Forward - Key Recommendations

Moderator: Suneeta Dhar (Senior Advisor, Jagori)

Key Respondent: Ruth Manorama (National Alliance of Women)

In light of the day's discussions the last panel consolidated the key concerns and recommendations that emerged from the LCN network members and other stakeholders. A continuing thread that flowed through all the conversations was the role of the State in matters concerning not just provision and access of survivors to safe spaces but redefining these terms towards a truly inclusive approach. The State's role in managing and running these spaces also needs to be revisited to explore the structural barriers in survivors' access to justice when the State withdraws its responsibilities towards provisioning and running of services.

Amrita presented key recommendations that have emerged from the multi-state action-research study:

- Public knowledge building and monitoring of the implementation of pro-survivor laws such as the PWDV Act (2005)
- Re-envisioning and imbuing schemes with humanitarian principles, dignity and respect to make survivors feel valued and empowered.
- Relaxing identity proof-based admission process
- Customising Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to suit the respective needs of residents. SOPs of shelter homes need to be reconceptualised with a rights-based outlook towards survivors.
- Increasing budget allocation and regular disbursement of funds
- Facilitating dialogue/ interface with select publics, for example, artists – to help in healing process.
- Investing into creche/ Balwadi services for survivor residents with dependent children.
- Ensuring accessibility to quality healthcare
- Enhancing transparency and effective functioning through regular monitoring and evaluation, periodic audits for shelter homes, setting up of advisory committees with members from NGOs, human rights activists, and women's groups
- Mandating inter-sectoral trainings, workshops for staff/ management to develop human resources in the homes
- Developing state-specific and comprehensive policy for rehabilitation and re-integration of survivors
- Supporting survivors who are ready to live independently with access to low-cost housing and hostels. Building half-way homes for those who need assisted living

Suneeta Dhar said that it is important to unlearn conventional audit processes and move towards a feminist process of researching that is based on expanding our learning from the experience. She drew everyone's attention to the trend where most of the women survivors are accompanied by daughters rather than sons – yet another manifestation of women and girls' marginalisation – and this requires further probing. Different studies conducted in different parts of the country need to be positioned together and the evidence used for strong policy advocacy for multi-ministerial efforts towards improving the shelter homes in all respects. Suneeta highlighted opportunities where demands can be raised internationally, such as Beijing+25, CEDAW, SDGs 5 and 16. To further highlight the issue of shelter homes, politicians can be approached to raise the concerns in their election manifestos.

Ruth Manorama gave recommendations on how to further our advocacy. She said that the studies must be shared with other NGOs, State governments and Women Studies centres, National and State Commissions for Women, etc. to change the understanding of ways to provide support to women. One of our demands must be that in every ward of the country there must be a safe 'shelter' for women with libraries and recreational facilities, that women can access even for a few hours in a day. There is a need to closely engage with Human Rights Commissions and help them unlearn their protectionist attitudes. She drew parallels between forced mass eviction of women and displacement of Dalit and tribal women as acts of State cruelty. She finally gave a brief outline for drafting a report for CEDAW submission on the vulnerabilities of women and need for shelter vis a vis setting the context with supporting data, defining the problem, analysing initiatives by the government and NGOs to see what works and what doesn't; followed by sharp recommendations for action and advocacy.

Responses from the Floor

Ayesha (National Network of Sex Workers) said that sex workers are deprived of their right to choice and are disempowered. Raids and rescues often violate privacy and force those in sex work by choice to leave their profession against their will. She said that the State continues to be in denial and refuses to recognise that some people voluntarily enter sex work. In a research study by the National Network of Sex Workers on 243 'trafficked' adult women who were subjected to raids, 193 said they were sex workers by choice. Some women, whose entry was through human trafficking, also chose to stay in sex work voluntarily with no wish to be rescued and rehabilitated. There should be strong resistance against the forcible incarceration of sex workers in State-run shelter homes in the name of rescue and rehabilitation. Kusum (NNSW) added that sex workers who are forcefully detained in shelter homes are separated from their families. Often there is no one to take care of their children and elderly parents.

Tripti raised concerns over the possibility that the recommendations made for voluntary shelter homes would be used to justify the need for custodial homes. Poonam added that the recommendations in the CEDAW submissions should incorporate all state-specific studies and evidence. Other suggestions included organising meetings of the LCN network with the National and State Commissions for Women; to reasonably advertise shelter homes without hampering the privacy and security of these homes, so that more women know about them; and to expand research to other states for more state-specific data.

A virtual working group was formed for the CEDAW submission with members from different organisations having diverse expertise (Amrita, Anurita, Ayesha, Poonam, Tripti), to prepare a set of recommendations to be submitted to the CEDAW Committee during the year.

The meeting was concluded with a vote of thanks by Geetha Nambisan, Director Jagori.



REIMAGINING SHELTER HOMES

Key Findings from the Five-State Action-Research Study on Female Survivors of Violence and Shelter Homes, and Way Forward

Co-organised on behalf of

Lamlynti Chittara Neralu – A National Network on Shelter Homes in India

by

Action India, Ekta, Jagori, Nazariya, North East Network,
Sangama, Vimochana and Visthar

Vishwa Yuvak Kendra, New Delhi; 19th March 2019

Time	Sessions and Speakers
9.30 am - 10.00 am	Registration and Tea
10.00 am – 10.30 am	Welcome: Mercy Kappen, Visthar Setting the context: An introduction to the LCN network on shelter homes for women: Celine, Vimochana Participant introductions
10.30 am - 12.30 pm	Findings from five states (part I) Moderator – Poonam Kathuria, SWATI Presenters: Delhi – Amrita Nandy and Ananya Basu (Jagori) with Gyanwati (Action India) and Rithambhara, Rituparna (Nazariya) North Karnataka – Asha V, Mercy Kappen (Visthar) and Rajesh Srinivas (Sangama) South Karnataka – Celine, Asha Ramesh (Vimochana) Respondent: Prof. Renu Addlakha, Deputy Director, Centre for Women’s Development Studies
	Findings from five states (part II) Moderator – Shubhangi Singh, AALI Presenters: Assam – Anurita P. Hazarika (North East Network) Meghalaya – Balarisha Lyngdoh (North East Network) Tamil Nadu – Tamil Moni, Bimla Chandrasekar (Ekta) Respondent: Barnali Das, Assistant Professor, Centre for Women’s Studies Dibrugarh University

Time	Sessions and Speakers	Page. 2
12.30 PM – 1.30 PM	Lunch	
Round Table: Moving Forward		
1.30 PM – 2.15 PM	<p>Synthesis of the five-state study: Amrita Nandy</p> <p>Survivors speak (Sharnaz, Seema, Tarannum, Rukhsar) with Amita Joseph (BCF and Delhi Homeless Women’s Collective)</p> <p>Respondent: Dr. Shobha Raghuram, Development Policies Consultant & Independent Researcher</p>	
2.15 PM – 3.30 PM	<p>Moderator – Madhu Mehra (Partners for Law in Development)</p> <p>Key Remarks:</p> <p>Bharti Sharma (Shakti Shalini), Dr. Nimesh Desai (Institute of Human Behaviour and Allied Sciences), Tarique Mohammad (Koshish, TISS Mumbai), Subrat Das (CBGA), Catherine (Medecins sans Frontiere)</p> <p>Further discussion and remarks</p>	
3.30 PM – 3.45 PM	Tea break	
3.45 PM – 5.00 PM	<p>Moving forward (contd) – Key recommendations and Way Forward</p> <p>Moderator – Suneeta Dhar, Senior Advisor Jagori</p> <p>Key response</p> <p>Ruth Manorama, National Alliance of Women (NAWO)</p> <p>Vote of thanks: Geetha, Jagori</p>	

List of Participants (49 Organizations, 11 States)

S. No	Name	Organization	State
1	Aanchal Singh	Lawyers' Collective	Delhi
2	Aarushi Mahajan	Lawyers' Collective	Delhi
3	Ambika Pandit	Times of India	Delhi
4	Amit Kumar	All India Network of Sex Workers	Delhi
5	Amita Joseph	BCF India	Delhi
6	Amrita Nandy	Independent Researcher	Delhi
7	Ananya Basu	Independent Researcher	Delhi
8	Anurita Hazarika	North East Network	Assam
9	Arti Zodpe	National Network of Sex Workers	Delhi
10	Asha Ramesh	Vimochana	Karnataka
11	Asha V	Visthar	Karnataka
12	Ashni Tyagi	Action India	Delhi
13	Ashwin Parulkar	Centre for Policy Research	Delhi
14	Asif Iqbal	Dhanak for Humanity	Delhi
15	Ayeesha	National Network of Sex Workers	Delhi
16	Balarisha Lyngdoh	North East Network	Meghalaya
17	Barnali Das	Dibrugarh University	Assam
18	Bharti Sharma	Shakti Shalini	Delhi
19	Bimla Chandrashekhar	EKTA	Tamil Nadu
20	Bitasta Basu	Asian News International	Delhi
21	Bulbul Das	Advocate	Delhi
22	Celine	Vimochana	Karnataka
23	Chaitali Halder	Individual	Delhi
24	Dolly	Shakti Shalini	Delhi
25	Dr. Nimesh Desai	Institute of Human Behaviour and Allied Sciences	Delhi
26	Farhat Ali	Majlis	Maharashtra
27	Geetha Nambisan	Jagori	Delhi
28	Gitanjali Prasad	Centre for Equity Studies/ Aman Biradari	Delhi
29	Gouri Choudhury	Action India	Delhi
30	Gyanvati	Action India	Delhi
31	Hasina Khan	Bebaak Collective	Maharashtra
32	Jahnvi Andharia	ANANDI/ ISDM	Delhi
33	Jayashree Velankar	Jagori	Delhi
34	Juhi	Jagori	Delhi
35	Katherine	MSF - Doctors without Borders	Delhi
36	Kusum	All India Network of Sex Workers	Delhi
37	Laxmi	Jagori	Delhi
38	Madhu Bala	Jagori	Delhi
39	Madhu Mehra	Partners for Law in Development	Delhi
40	Magdleen Marin	All India Women's Conference- Bapnu Ghar	Delhi

41	Mahabir Singh	Jagori	Delhi
42	Manav Gupta	Ashray Adhikar Abhiyan	Delhi
43	Manisha Kamal	YUVA	Delhi
44	Meenal Manolika	Jagori	Delhi
45	Megha Sharda	Ambedkar University	Delhi
46	Mercy Kappen	Visthar	Karnataka
47	Mona	Society for Promotion of Youth and Masses	Delhi
48	Monika	Centre for Equity Studies	Delhi
49	Nastasia Paul Gera	Jagori	Delhi
50	Neetu	Jagori	Delhi
51	Nusrat Parveen	Society for Promotion of Youth and Masses	Delhi
52	Poonam Kathuria	SWATI	Gujarat
53	Prarthana	Nirantar	Delhi
54	Pritarani Jha	Peace and Equality Cell	Gujarat
55	Promila Gupta	Delhi Commission for Women	Delhi
56	Purnima	Nirantar	Delhi
57	Rabbu Nisha	Individual	Delhi
58	Radha	Society for Promotion of Youth and Masses	Delhi
59	Rajesh	Sangama	Karnataka
60	Ram Pyari	Action India	Delhi
61	Ranjani Murthy	Independent	Tamil Nadu
62	Ranu Kalra	RCI-VAW, TISS	Delhi
63	Renu Addlakha	Centre for Women's Development Studies	Delhi
64	Richa Jairaj	Researcher	Delhi
65	Richa Rastogi	Humsafar Trust	Uttar Pradesh
66	Rinky	Jagori	Delhi
67	Ritambhara	Nazariya	Delhi
68	Ritu	All India Women's Conference	Delhi
69	Rituparna Borah	Nazariya	Delhi
70	Rukhsaar	Shakti Shalini	Delhi
71	Ruth Manorama	National Alliance of Women's Organisations	Delhi
72	Sabyasachi Puhan	Ambedkar University	Delhi
73	Sahiti Kachroo	Jagori Grameen	Himachal Pradesh
74	Saila Sri. K	Ambedkar University	Delhi
75	Sangeeta	Action India	Delhi
76	Sanjay Kumar	Ashray Adhikar Abhiyan	Delhi
77	Sanjukta Bhuyan	North East Network	Assam
78	Saroj	Action India	Delhi
79	Seema	Jagori	Delhi
80	Serena	Vimochana	Karnataka

81	Shalini Bajpai	TV9	Delhi
82	Shehnaz	Jamghat	Delhi
83	Shobha Raghuram	Independent researcher	Karnataka
84	Shreya Banerjee	Jawaharlal Nehru University	Delhi
85	Shruti	Ashray Adhikar Abhiyan	Delhi
86	Shruti Batra	Jagori	Delhi
87	Shubhangi Singh	Association for Advocacy and Legal Initiatives	Uttar Pradesh
88	Sreeja P	Anweshi	Kerala
89	Subrat Das	Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability	Delhi
90	Sudha Tiwari	Shakti Shalini	Delhi
91	Suneeta Dhar	Jagori	Delhi
92	Sunil	IDEAL Youth	Delhi
93	Sunita	Jagori	Delhi
94	Sunita Chauhan	AB Foundation	Delhi
95	Sunita Thakur	Jagori	Delhi
96	Surabhi Tandon Mehrotra	Independent researcher	Delhi
97	Surbhi	MSF- Doctors Without Borders	Delhi
98	Sushila	Action India	Delhi
99	Tamil Moni	Ekta	Tamil Nadu
100	Tarannum	Society for Promotion of Youth and Masses	Delhi
101	Tarique Mohammad	TISS Koshish Team	Maharashtra
102	Titas Ghosh	Jagori	Delhi
103	Tripti Tandon	Lawyers' Collective	Delhi
104	Vaibhav	Independent researcher	Delhi
105	Vijaya Usha Rani	Bhumika Women's Collective	Telangana
106	Vipin Yadav	Ashray Adhikar Abhiyan	Delhi
107	Yashoda	Jagori	Delhi

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