



# Madurai Symposium 2019

Women Empowerment for Sustaining Development

18-22 September, 2019



Bulletin

Day 1: 18 September 2019

## Madurai Symposium on Women Empowerment for Sustaining Development Inaugurated



### Women empowerment begins at home

'Women empowerment is not about the women who are coming out of home. It is about the women who are able to achieve by getting the support from home' said Ms. R. Vimala, IAS., Chief Executive Officer, Maharashtra State Rural Livelihood Mission, Mumbai. Speaking at the inaugural ceremony of Madurai Symposium 2019 in the City, she insisted upon gender equality and she also told that the women development is not economic empowerment only, but it is about the health, education, and opportunities across all endeavours where the women get empowered holistically.

Madurai Symposium 2019 has commenced with a grand global inaugural ceremony in Thamukkam Grounds today. While introducing the emphasis of 9<sup>th</sup> edition with the theme on "Women empowerment", Mr. M.P. Vasimalai, Executive Director, DHAN Foundation said that the Madurai Symposium bridges the tradition and future through a process of searching new knowledge. While remembering

the thoughts of Mahakavi Bharathiyar, he also spoke about seven virtues of women's power from the words of Vinoba Bhave. 'DHAN Foundation has commenced its efforts on women empowerment in Madurai which is known as land of Meenakshi; a legend of women empowerment by heritage' he further added.

In his presidential address Mr. B.T. Bangera, Chairperson, DHAN Foundation stated that 'India is one of the most vulnerable country in terms of disaster which ruined thousands of lives and women are the worst affected. DHAN Foundation has enabled more than 1 million poor spread across 14 states to combat risk and the women at grassroots are being nurtured as backbone of the family'. Connecting the relevance of women empowerment with UN agenda, he further stated that the five days programme in Madurai Symposium 2019 will give a platform for entire stakeholders to deliberate on women empowerment and provide space to ensure participation of women in all the development works in the days to come.

Subsequently, a book on ‘Celebrating Women Empowerment – A Dossier of DHAN’s Work’ was released. In this book, DHAN has compiled its efforts on women empowerment especially on the themes like women in governance, health security, women and water, women in small millet promotion, women empowerment beyond community banking, women and disaster risk reduction and social security.

‘In most of the districts the SHG movement is now assisted through digital banking called e-Sakthi. It helps them in recording transactions in a digitized form, and the women in remote areas are able to avail the financial assistance at a faster rate’ said Ms. Padma Raghunathan, Chief General Manager, NABARD, Chennai in her keynote address. She recalled the effective partnership between NABARD and DHAN Foundation across various development initiatives all over the country. She emphasized that the women empowerment will be at higher order if we pay due attention on protecting girl children, equal education, equal participation, avoid early marriage and facilitating livelihoods enterprise development for women.

While launching the new initiative on ‘Renovation of urban Ooranis’ by executing a Memorandum of Understanding between Hi-Tech Arai, Madurai Corporation and DHAN Foundation, Mr. S. Visakan, IAS, Commissioner, Madurai Corporation mentioned that Madurai is known for women empowerment by heritage wherein Meenakshi ruled. Quoting the 30 percent reservations in employment for women in Tamil Nadu government, he also complemented the initiatives of DHAN Foundation on women empowerment. He recalled our ancestor’s efforts in creating water bodies and called upon entire stakeholders to protect the water bodies. Out of 84 water bodies in Madurai, 34 ooranis belong to corporation which may need Rs.10 crore for renovation. The joint initiative of Hi-Tech Arai, Madurai Corporation and DHAN Foundation aims to renovate and bring back 10 Ooranis to the tune of Rs.1.04 crore.



A launch on ‘SHG–Bank linkage’ was another highlight in Inaugural ceremony wherein Syndicate bank and DHAN Foundation have executed a Memorandum of Understanding paving way to channelize a Revolving Online Credit of Rs.300 Crore to Self Help Groups in the coming three years. In his special address Mr. B. Savadamuthu, Regional

Manager, Syndicate bank, Madurai region stated that around 1600 SHGs within Madurai region alone will get a bank linkage of Rs.40 crores through this initiative and the target for first year is around Rs.100 crore in his special address. While complementing DHAN’s initiatives on financial inclusion, pension and insurance, he called upon members of various SHGs to make use of it.

Mr. R. Madhusudhan, Chief Executive Officer, Kalanjiam Development Financial Services (KDFS) has introduced a loan product from KDFS to carry Vishesh Microfinance Yojana, a scheme of Central Government to the differently-abled section. This loan product would address the requirements of differently-abled section on water, sanitation and livelihood promotion. Mr. Amrith, IAS, Additional Collector and Project Director (DRDA) has launched the loan product. Mr. Amrith acknowledged the contribution of women behind the success of ‘Swachh Bharat Mission’ and also recalled the prominence of Mahalir Thittam – Pudhu Vaazhvu’ scheme. He called upon everyone to work together, empower women and bring equality and justice to all during his special address.

Ms. Chandra Narasimhan, Regional Manager, LIC Zonal Office, Chennai addressed the gathering about various products of LIC and how it is contributing to the finance sector and also in offering social security to the society at large.



Padmashree P. Chinnappillai, has called upon entire women to support for de-addiction programme and placed invitation to all to bring prosperity to the women at grassroots spread across various parts of the country. Subsequently, Ms. Annette Houtekamer, DHAN International, The Netherlands, has recalled previous edition of Madurai Symposium 2007 which was on ‘Advancing Development’ and connected it with the current theme on Women Empowerment. She called upon experienced Kalanjiam women leaders to educate, empower, and groom the younger generation to get shaped on their leadership areas.

With the vote of thanks from Ms. A. Umarani, Chief Executive, DHAN Kalanjiam Foundation the global inaugural ceremony has come to an end. The entire event was compered by Mr. A. Gurunathan, Director, The DHAN Academy – the secretariat of Madurai Symposium 2019.

### Workshop on Women in Grassroots Governance

People institutions such as SHG federations are owned and governed by communities themselves. It is proved well over three decades of Self-Help group movement in the country, governance played a vital role indeed in survival and sustainability of the groups and their federations. The role of effective and efficient governance is not only inevitable, but it also creates space for grooming community leadership in large scale. The group and federation leaders when got with opportunity to become local body members they could exhibit their leadership calibre in governance, setting vision, strategies, establishing structures and systems thereby deepening the scope of local body governance.

Mrs. Rajalakshmi, Regional co-ordinator in her lead address highlighted the purpose of workshop is to build uniform understanding on governance in people institutions and take stock of the best practices. She also enlisted the challenges in governance of people institutions so as to strengthen the grassroots governance to empower women further.

Mr. A. Ramesh presented a lead paper by citing Mr. Kofi Annan former Secretary General of UN that “Good governance is perhaps the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting sustainable development”. He told that, women are 50% of the total population, but there is huge gap in women representation in Parliament and assembly. They are disproportionately affected by development challenges and leadership position as it is almost men dominated one. Therefore empowerment of women socially, economically, politically and legally would bring new social order and transformation in the society at large.

Only women could understand the problems being faced by other women and can also understand their needs in a better manner than men. Women leaders indeed could make the faster and sustainable growth. Women should start enterprise from small size and grow in to big level. This warranted the necessity to identify promising women leaders and provide systematic training for commencing livelihood enterprises.

Mr. Ramesh also mentioned seven important principles of governance namely, Participation, Collective decisions, Rule of law, strategic vision, accountability and transparency, Equity and fairness, and Self-regulation. This characteristics are intended and need to be expressed in their actions. He opined that leaders have to build capability according to local context in order to promote different financial and development product to empower the women and eradicate poverty.

Mrs. Thiyagarani, Kalanjiam leader, while sharing her experience in Kalanjiam movement over two decades, said that. She came to know about savings and Kalanjiam through Vaigai Vattara Kalanjiam. Her experiences highlighted her role evolution from member to graduation of different leadership role in Kalanjiam Nested institutions.



The best practices followed in governance aspects as part of her leadership role were weeding away exploitation of money lender in Urban slums of Madurai, provide insurance safety net to both member and their spouse, disbursement of loan through cheques, but not hard cash, addressing alcohol addicts by convening de-addiction programme and so on. She proudly told there were no single case of suicides in Kalanjiam families of her federation, which used to be one of the issues in the urban poverty and slum dwellers.

Build value based society, strengthen grassroots governance all through, capacity building programs, facilitate participation in governance and for entitlements access, to build ecological and environmental friendly society are the resolutions emerged in the workshop.

### Convention on Women in Agriculture - Practices, Perspectives and Challenges

Agriculture is the primary livelihood of rural India. Approximately 65 percentage of the Indian population still depends on agriculture. Role of women and their contribution to Indian agriculture, beyond doubt is very vital and integrated part of agriculture growth. It is found that about 80 percent of the agricultural activities in India are being carried through women labour from seed to seed. In absence of men, many prominent women farmers are getting into agriculture profession due to migration for employment, death or other reasons. Yet, the society hardly recognize the invisible role of women and their contributions in agriculture. The convention as part of Madurai Symposium 2019 made systematic attempt to take stock of the current practices of women in agriculture and the best practices in the field which need greater attention.

This convention attracted more than 250 farmers including women farmers across many districts of Tamil Nadu involved in tankfed, rainfed and coastal agriculture. The deliberations ascertained the women’s participation and contribution from sowing to harvesting beyond doubt. Vermicompost preparation, Azolla cultivation, seed treatment and dairy farming etc. are focussed by Krishi Vigyan Kendra and many NGOs wherein women farmers attend in significant numbers and got benefitted. The participants mentioned that climate change phenomenon and water scarcity for irrigation pushed men farmers out of



agriculture and made them to switch to alternative livelihood and in lieu the percentage of women in agriculture is getting increased by 20-30 percent.

The invited guests namely Joint Director of Agriculture and Scientist from Krishi Vigyan Kendra highlighted that, 83 percent of agriculture asset like lands are in the name of men. Women Farmer’s participation and contribution to GDP is more than 60 percent, however, it is not measured with any statistical monetary terms. It is a very pathetic situation that, farmer suicide in Maharashtra is high, and 20 percent of them are women. Noted agriculture scientist Dr. M.S. Swaminathan, has described women as the root cause for the birth of agriculture, during the stone age, women were the one who collect seeds and started cultivation to meet domestic and livestock needs.

Women farmers from Jawathu Hills, shared their experience in the convention and mentioned, girls from childhood are encouraged and equipped in agriculture even today. They don’t want to leave the agriculture. Women farmers from Ramanathapuram shared their experience on ploughing with Ox in the past and worried that agriculture witnessed sharp decrease in animal draught power.

While sharing her experience, another woman farmer expressed that there are lot of women specific agriculture schemes available to give benefits but there exist inadequate awareness about them. Few women farmers from Sedapatti in Madurai district expressed women have shown more interest in agriculture than the men farmers. It was vivid from their experience that more than 20 members have enrolled them in crop and pension scheme of the government during the current year.

There is a specific Farmer entitlement bill which talks more about women’s role in agriculture and entitlement for the women farmers. It is the role of the NGOs to take the information of the bill to the targeted women farmers. Most of the women farmers are now getting enrolled in primary producer group as members. Women farmers are evinced interests to know more farmer friendly technology and use of ICT as well as farm equipment to overcome the drudgery.

The convention brought out the experience of DHAN in ensuring women participation in Agriculture, DHAN is

working with more than 3.75 lakh farmers of which 70 percent are women. Many women farmers have done kitchen garden and gained yield of 150 kg-200 kg of vegetables. Beside consumption, they also sell the vegetables and gets income. The discussions revealed that terrace garden is the distinctive farming initiative of urban women that is gaining popularity now a days.

This convention has stressed and resolved that women farmers should be entitled to equal remuneration as that of men as wages. The declaration also reiterated that enough policy amendment shall come out to create agriculture asset in the name of Women. Besides, women farmers should be encouraged to participate in agriculture grievance day meetings to place their demands with line departments. The convention declared to give specific focus for equipping women on recent technologies in Agriculture and ensuring facilitation to avail the agriculture inputs in an easiest way for women farmers. It is also declared to customize the agriculture implements for the easiest operation of women. Collective farming should be encouraged to ensure more participation of women in Agriculture.

At the culmination of the convention, women farmers vowed and made solid pledge about their willingness to involve next generation adolescent girls into farming profession and create a vibrant agriculture in the country.

### Workshop on Women Leadership for strengthening Democracy

Presently Tamil Nadu state is not having panchayat leaders for the local bodies because the elections are due for the past 3 years. This is the first time elections will be likely to happen with 50% reservations for women. In Symposium, a workshop is convened by DHAN Panchayat Foundation to sensitize SHG members about the leadership and Panchayat governance and make them to get interested to take part in Panchayat Raj System in the near future.

Mr. V. Malairaj, Joint Director, State Planning Commission (SPC) addressed the participants most of them leaders from Self Help groups and former Panchayat women leaders. His address highlighted about SPC’s role and works on Sustainable Development Goals and the State Balanced Growth Fund. Among the 115 aspirational districts for



development in the country, Tamil Nadu has Ramnad and Virudhunagar districts and also 115 Blocks spread across various districts. Out of these 115 blocks, one block is located in Madurai district He was all of praise to women reservation with 50% quota in the state as part of 73<sup>rd</sup> amendment. He opined that the reservation to women showed the exemplary works done by the previous Panchayat Women Presidents and ward members. He also said that whenever women take responsibility of a Panchayat, that village develops well comparatively. One such village namely Michael Pattinam in Thiruppuvanam block supplies water throughout the year, and has become a model Panchayat in Sivagangai district. This was possible because of the local women leaders.

Mr. S. Singarayar, Programme Leader, DHAN Foundation shared that most of the women leaders emerging from rural areas are less educated. So, they have no confidence and clarity on their roles. This has been misused by the Government officials and also by their family members especially male. He stressed that government should invest on capacity building of women leaders especially during first 6 months of the tenure. This will build their confidence level and effective governance at gram panchayat level.

Mr. N. Janakiraman, Programme Leader, DHAN Foundation stated that, “Women have no leadership capacity is a wrong assumption, because in SHG movement the women are able to manage more than Rs.1.5 lakh crores worth of money. Obviously, the women have immense potentiality to perform in social and political space, when encouragement and training are ensured on time”. Without reservation women participation in Panchayat is not possible. The 1993 constitutional amendment bill proposed for 33% reservation for women which was the greatest landmark in ensuring women participation. Still many women panchayat leaders are behind their husbands. Now, 15 states including Tamil Nadu have announced 50% reservation for women in local bodies. Technically women can contest in 100% seats and men can contest in 50%. So, it is a great opportunity.

A documentary about three Panchayats belong to different terrains in Tamil Nadu was shown in the workshop. The documentary portrays about the development of 3 Panchayats through unique approaches of the respective leaders.

Three Kalanjiam leaders shared about their experiences in fighting for the rights of people and challenges they faced in Panchayats during the workshop. The women who was the Panchayat President of Theni from 2011-2016 has openly confessed that she contested in the election due to her family pressure; but she faced many challenges after winning. She gained capacity to work with officials in a short time and started fulfilling demands of the community. She prioritized her works on sanitation, water, street light and strengthening of bunds. She says that, “I never show my fear to others, I will observe everything silently. That only made me to overcome my hesitations to reach goals.”

Devamani from Theni has acknowledged the way

Kalanjiam built her skill. Now, she is ready to contest in upcoming election. Poomalai from Palamedu went ahead with some steps further than others. She played a role of an activist to fight in all the way to send back a wine shop from her Panchayat. She is an emerging leader. She shared, “When I heard about that a new wine shop is proposed in our vicinity, I gave petition but it was of no use. So, I gathered all our Kalanjiam members and blocked the road. The wine shop was closed on the first day itself.” She also added, “The current scenario favours only for the rich people, unless people rejects money for vote. In this way democracy can’t be uplifted”.

Mr. M.P. Vasimalai, Executive Director of DHAN Foundation told that, “Many use the opportunity to become a leader, many create the opportunity to become a leader. Leaders never declare themselves as a leader.”

Most of the members are interested to participate in the forthcoming elections of women Panchayats and they seek guidance on the procedure for contesting elections. Already they are participating in the Gram Sabha meetings and raise voices for their village needs that they would like to continue in future.

Finally the event was concluded with the lead action points of Women SHG leaders to use the opportunity of 50% reservation in Panchayat and contest in forthcoming elections at large and DHAN will study the best performing Panchayat leaders and bring case studies about them.

### **Convention on Women Empowerment for Healthy Society**

DHAN Foundation, in its two decades of development work is known for its model on people institution building towards sustainable institution in the long run. The Kalanjiam and Vayalagam, a brand of Women SHG and tank water users association, promotes nested community institutions from primary group at village level, cluster association at Panchayat level and Federation at block/panchayat union level. Among the nested institutions, federation is registered as a legal entity and having focus to work with various mainstream organisations to leverage the services for the betterment of poor community.



SUHAM Trust, a community health initiative of DHAN Foundation promoted people institutions across the states, convened a convention during Madurai symposium. The symposium seeded the concept on SUHAM Federation as part of Federation Collective with the community leaders, people functionaries and professionals. The SUHAM Federation will have indent to enable the women empowerment on healthcare and building healthy society. During inaugural address Mr. R. Rajapandian, Chief Executive of SUHAM Trust spoke that SHG is a good platform to integrate all development interventions. There is a need for establishing intensive linkage for other development interventions like health, livelihoods and education etc. The collective institutions would bring expansion and intensity on the particular development interventions towards sustaining it. There was in depth interaction with the community and professionals to have clarification about SUHAM collective.

Padmashree P. Chinnappillai expressed that, whatever the decision taken by SUHAM is always working towards the upliftment of the health of the poor, do implement as early as possible for the betterment of the community.

Mr. M.P. Vasimalai Executive Director, DHAN Foundation gave ten commandments towards the initiation of SUHAM Federations utilizing the existing social capital with a consolidated data base of annual health expenditure towards the chronic diseases at the household level with mainstreaming activities addressing the issues of vulnerable of the family especially women, adolescent girls and children. He also insisted to register twenty five SUHAM federations by the end of January 2020.

The key declarations are towards integration of SHGs and Health needs have to be done across the country where SHG platform has successfully demonstrated the significant change in health, nutrition and sanitation status among poor households towards impacting livelihood. The model on Federation Collective have to be disseminated across the country where effective convergence with mainstream linkage for accessing services in an effective manner would get established.

### **Workshop on Social Capital for mainstreaming Women Empowerment**

Social capital plays an important role in empowering women as well as sustain the development process. Exchange of experiences through showcasing the success stories of social capital is the core agenda of the workshop. The organizers of the workshop in Madurai Symposium aimed at enhancing the perspectives of women on sustainable development through building social capital and also assimilate the institutional experiences as key objectives.

There is immense need for building social capital to help poor so as to avail the entitlements at a faster rate. Social capital or organizing the unorganized in an institutional framework envisages not only members coming together to avail bank loans, but also to facilitate a holistic development of women



at grassroots. More importantly, addressing health issues of women especially the adolescent girls is a vital agenda. In fact, the growth of future generations depends on the nutrition status to combat health disorders.

In order to achieve women empowerment, there is a necessity to reach more number of women through inclusive approach. In any livelihood activity or where production takes place women plays a vital role in it. Though they are master in production, they are sidelined during marketing. The get least priority in decision making. However, this can be very well addressed through nurturing social capital along with a value based enabling process. In this workshop about 100 SHG members/leaders from Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka took part and assimilated the benefits of becoming part of SHGs or Social Capital of women for economic and social empowerment.

The dignitaries of the workshop mentioned that nowadays the women are able to get financial assistance through Self Help Groups and they are able to focus more on livelihood, education and social security. As stated in Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) the poverty eradication and making grassroots free from hunger is possible only through social capital along with structured graduation processes.

Ms. A. Umarani, Chief Executive Officer, Kalanjiam Foundation reinforced the purpose and importance of groups, clusters, and federations as a vehicles for women empowerment. The institutions like FPOs, SUHAM hospital have emerged through the demand and efforts of the community and now gives immense opportunity for women to grow further by creating identity to them. Obviously, these vertical institutions enhances the leadership traits of the women members and they are able to negotiate with the government institutions to a greater extent. The social capital built with unbiased and value based leadership always gives positive results in the life of poor women.

The declarations of the workshop envisaged few key areas like integrating vulnerable and differently abled streams in social capital, ensuring systematic graduation processes for the institutions across different contexts, and mainstreaming collaboration with government and banks to build viability for people institutions.

### Workshop on Rehabilitation of Urban Ooranis: Community perspective



Water is elixir of life. In Indian context women and water are inseparable. Women play critical role in ensuring quantity and quality of water used by the family members. During water scarcity, women are more stressed compared to men to meet out their domestic water demand. Women who was highly engaged in fetching domestic water has immensely contributed in the restoration of waterbodies through ‘Kudimaramathu’ even in the Sangam period. Madurai, the oldest city has excelled in ‘water security’ by creating irrigation tanks, domestic ponds and drinking water ponds (ooranis). Linking Vaigai river basin with Ghridhumal river basin through cascade of tank system is an excellent example of our ancestors’ wisdom on ‘water management’. The present Madurai Corporation was an agglomeration of hamlets established around 90 ooranis. Due to urbanization, the number of waterbodies has declined to almost half. This is basically due to paradigm shift from surface water bodies such as ooranis to centralized integrated water projects and ground water. The ooranis that have lost their purpose were subjected to encroachments, solid waste disposals, sewage contamination, Prosopis invasion, etc.

Centre for Urban Water Resources (CURE), a unit of DHAN Foundation is working on ‘Redesigning the waterbodies for redefined future’. It has organized this workshop on ‘Urban oorani Rehabilitation’ in lines of the oorani restoration initiative taken up by Madurai Corporation. with the Corporate Social Responsibility of Hi-Tech Arai Pvt. Ltd. 10 ooranis have been selected for the restoration which will be implemented by DHAN Foundation.

Communities representing Silayaneri, Milagaranai, Paaloorani, Kottankulam, Semboorani, Uthangkudi, Kaluvadiyan, Kalthar oorani, Suravalimedu and Kamban oorani were invited for the stakeholder consultation to share their views on oorani restoration. The communities residing around 9 ooranis participated and presented on the current challenges, opportunities and priorities in the implementation. Following are the gist of the workshop,

- Almost all the ooranis have lost their feed therefore restoring feeder channel is the topmost priority of the restoration activity.

- All the ooranis have been subjected to encroachment at diversified degree. Therefore, the boundaries should be demarcated.
- List of activities proposed by the Madurai corporation are highly focusing on converting the oorani as a recreational space through setting up walker space, fence, street lights, retaining walls etc.
- In contradiction, the perspectives of the local communities were towards harvesting storm water, accessing it and recharging the groundwater.
- Since there is a dispute over the ownership on oorani, communities and temple authorities from Kaluvadiyan oorani resisted against the restoration.

Except Kaluvadiyan oorani, communities from rest of the ooranis shown greater interest on restoration. Two women SHGs came forward to restore Semboorani and Kalthar oorani. This shows the strong connect between women and waterbodies.

As there is a gap between community perspectives and Corporation’s proposal, a revised blue print will be prepared in consultation with the local communities. Post Madurai Corporation’s approval on the revised blue print, the community owned implementation will be initiated. This workshop served as a platform to initiate the process of bridging the broken relationship between waterbodies and communities which is women inclusive.

### Workshop on Women Well-being through Access to Safe Water and Sanitation

The Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6) calls for ensuring clean water and sanitation for all with sustainable management. Women and girls are the vulnerable groups and hence, addressing their health issues would alone ensure their well-being. This workshop envisaged to capture overall experiences on safe water and sanitation and also to evolve ideas in generating new products to ensure 100% access.

Mr. Amrith, IAS, Additional Collector and Project Director, DRDA, Madurai is the chief guest of the event and he highlighted the declaration of Open defecation Free status across the country and also about sustainability in its achievement through ODF+ and ODF-S. The major driving



force behind this significant achievement is women at grassroots level, he applauded the Kalanjiam women or their campaign to make the non-members to construct and use toilets in their respective villages. Solid and Liquid Waste Management is considered to be the major issue in the country which will be feared as a conflict between two states in the near future.

He demanded women in our society to play a vital role to address the issues as volunteers. He emphasized on menstruation hygiene awareness among women and adolescent girls to make greater strides in health attributes. He mentioned the contributions of DRDA to identify and empower 436 women ODF+ motivators and who in turn works in 420 villages so as to achieve higher health standards. They work on Safe Water and Sanitation practices, will also campaign against single use plastics from 02<sup>nd</sup> October 2019 to further 'Swachh Seva' initiative of the central government.

Additional Director welcomed all women to join hands with government to take up the renovation of ponds, tanks and rivers, clear encroachments to retrieve them. Nearly 318 small tanks and 1576 Ponds are proposed for renovation to catch water during rains. Women participation in large numbers would help revive all of them. He appreciated DHAN for the construction of Rain Water Harvesting structures in the rural schools.

Mr. B. Saravana Kumar, Project Executive, SUHAM Trust shared the success of Rain water harvesting structures constructed in households, six corporation schools, and eight schools in Usilampatti block. This has catered the drinking water demand needs at the schools and ten more schools will

have rain water harvesting structures this year with HCL support.

Ms. Camillus S. Juliana, Senior Team Leader, SUHAM Trust, shared about the role of women and adolescent girls in providing nutrition food, sanitation, drinking water, and usage of toilet. She told that cost effective models on sanitation and Rain Water Harvesting have enthused communities interest. As world over 2.3 billion people lack basic sanitation and large number of them are in India, Civil societies and gram panchayats need to involve women in large number to have wider safe water and sanitation reach.

Mr. S. Ponnuraj, WES Consultant, Gandhigram, in his Special address interacted with the participants who don't have toilet in their home, and received response from them over the reasons. Few in urban attributed non availability of space and rental home without toilet as reasons. On his explanations on the health hazards women and child faces issues due to open defecation, they pledged to have a 'Toilet build in their home within a year'.

Dr. Rajaratnam Abel, Public Health Consultant told that though Govt. of India declare open defecation free, yet from few sources brings out the fact that 30 percent of India is still practicing open defecation. He added that the change should start from the individual and the household and then the national goal is certainly attainable.

The workshop called for real assessment of ODF status, demonstration of cost effective affordable models and large scale sensitization for school children to make India open defecation free.

## 12<sup>th</sup> Development Film Festival on Women Empowerment

The twelfth development film festival was inaugurated on the side line of Madurai Symposium 2019. The theme of this year's film festival is on Women Empowerment 'Empower Women! Empower Nation!' and also 'Women and Water'. Twenty-one films have been received of which 16 films in different languages including Tamil, Telugu, Hindi and English have been shortlisted for screening. Three films got screened during the first day.

### 1. Aasha

Language: Hindi  
Direction: T. Haneesh Ashok  
Duration: 3:34 Minutes

### 2. Ezhukathir

Language: Tamil  
Direction: T. Durga Devi  
Duration: 3:09 Minutes

### 3. The Reflection

Language: Tamil  
Direction: Surya (Fathima College)  
Duration: 1:26 Minutes

*For more details, please contact*

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**Bulletin**

**Day 1: 18 September 2019**

## KNOWLEDGE BRIEF

### Workshop on Women in Grassroots Governance

The grassroots governance is most essential and pre-requisite to empower women and thereby eradicate poverty. Though the women population is 50% of total population, they are not getting even 7% representation at all levels of governance. In this context, it must be appreciated that only women leaders are able to understand the problems faced by other women and also their needs better than men. Again it is seen that the faster and effective growth would be achievable only by the women leaders. Because women only are able to start any enterprise from small level to big level and take the appropriate decisions for better outcomes. Therefore we have to identify, promote and nurture good leaders among women at grassroots level to sustain the people institutions.

The important seven principles of leadership are to be borne in mind: (1) participation, (2) collective decisions, (3) rule of law, (4) strategic vision, (5) accountability and transparency, (6) equity and fairness and (7) self-regulation. Keeping these broad characteristics in mind, women leaders have to build their capability according to local context so as to promote different financial and development products that would lead to empower the community at large and eradicate the poverty to a greater extent. Challenges in leadership emerge from (i) family level, (ii) society level, (iii) institution level, and to overcome these challenges, women leaders must be sensitized and also empowered. There needs to be exclusive organisations for women at grassroots to capacitate their leadership and provide good governance, connect with local panchayat governance to access the entitlements from government institutions and participate actively in water governance, health governance, environment governance and any other development forums for holistic development of the large society.

### Convention on Women in Agriculture - Practices, Perspectives and Challenges

Women play a vital role in agriculture for ages. In the agriculture sector, women whether through traditional means or industrial, for subsistence or as an agricultural labourer, represent a momentous demographic group. Over the years, there is a gradual realization of the key role of women in agricultural development and their vital contribution in the field of agriculture, food security, horticulture, livestock development, dairying, processing, nutrition, sericulture, fisheries, and other allied sectors.

In rural India, the percentage of women who depend on agriculture for their livelihood is as high as 8%. Women make up about 33% of cultivators and about 47% of agricultural labourers. Rural women perform numerous labour intensive jobs from seed to seed.

State and central government are providing adequate focus for supporting women in agriculture. The National Food security mission, Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana and ATMA are the flagship programmes of government provide space for women. 15th October is celebrated as National Women Farmer's Day or Rashtriya Mahila Kisan Diwas' in India. Every year, on this day many activities and programmes, are organised – mainly to empower women in the field of agriculture.

It is heartening indeed to hear that Kamala Pujhari is one of the Padmashree awardee of 2019, who conserved hundreds of local varieties of paddy and promotes organic farming in Koraput district of Odisha. Another winner, Rajkumari Devi, has been popular for her expertise in assessing the soil quality to ensure successful harvest. She is popularly known as 'Kisan Chachi', which translates to 'Farmer Aunty' and hails from Muzzaffarpur district in Bihar.

Despite their dominance of the labour force women in India still face extreme disadvantage in terms of pay, land rights, and representation in local farmers organisations. Furthermore, their lack of empowerment often results in

negative externalities such as lower educational attainment for their children and poor familial health.

Though there was the realization of the importance of women in agriculture by Government, Research stations and Non-Government organisations, there are gaps in the practices, policies and perceptions. There exists an imminent need for improving skill, knowledge and attitude for the women to perform better in agriculture.

### **Workshop on Women Leadership for strengthening Democracy**

Two significant revolutions related to women empowerment that happened after independence are (i) Democratic practices by women in Self-Help Group Movement have led to financial freedom and (ii) Through 73rd and 74th Amendments women participation in Local Government institutions has been made as Constitutional mandate. More than 12 lakhs women leaders have performed their leadership roles in local Panchayat institutions in India. Both these experiences have brought to light that women have immense leadership capacity in social and political space in building governance. There are two kinds of leadership evolution – (i) from the internal drive by which women compete with men and emerge as leaders which is occasional and (ii) when the opportunities are provided through reservation or exclusive programmes, women are able to learn and emerge as leaders, learn and provide good governance in their institutions.

The women institutions such as SHGs and their Federations across the nation have contributed in nurturing women leadership by the way of capacitating them and mutually helping through various financial development initiatives. So, a woman who is part of an SHG starts her leadership journey as a benefit receiver and overtime she becomes a leader and graduates to various levels in Federation as well as in Panchayats. There need to be exclusive projects and strategies to provide opportunity and time for women to perform their leadership roles.

Even though Indian society is seemed to be the gender balanced society in recent years, the data shows there are gender gaps such as low under 6 child sex ratio which is a concern across the nation which shows there are invisible threats to girl children. The women Panchayat leaders and SHG leaders have to get sensitized in such issues and address the same by influencing the mainstream institutions for changing the policies and acts to promote safety, security and rights of girl children and for themselves.

### **Convention on Women Empowerment for Healthy Society**

The Self-Help Groups provide good platform to integrate development interventions such as healthcare, education, etc. The intensive linkage between SHGs and mainstream institutions would bring significant health outcomes. The SHGs have great potentials to promote own hospitals, generic pharmacies, laboratories for early diagnosis and promote health seeking behaviour among the poor women and their families. There is a need for legal entity to take care and sustain the initiatives and handling tax formalities. The registered SHG federation which is a charitable trust cannot handle tax formalities. An exclusive governance involving leaders, staff and systems are needed to implement, review and monitor the health interventions. It has been found that there is a huge scope for leveraging services and funds from mainstream system for health interventions. Health expenditure is a critical indicator for poverty where 20% of poverty exists due to high health expenditure. There is a need for exclusive institution to facilitate access to health, nutrition and sanitation services among 4000 to 5000 families at block level. The commandments are to be followed to promote and sustain SUHAM (healthcare) Federations which majorly focus on leveraging resources from mainstream institutions, establishing health linkages for accessing services, creating complementary health structures for sustainability, raising funds from donors, promoting exclusive health governance and health insurance, advancing credit portfolio and design contextual health interventions. Pilots can be taken up by promoting health federations under SHG federations to advance health interventions.

Integration of SHG and health has been successful in creating significant changes in the health outcomes. The effective convergence between women and mainstream institutions would help the poor to access at least one crore worth of services. The scope is high for empowering women, girls and children through physical, mental health, nutrition, sanitation and hygiene.

### **Workshop on Social Capital for mainstreaming Women Empowerment**

Across the globe, when women, more particularly from the poor segment are organized as a group – formal or informal, they are able to meet the legacy challenges of marginalization and charter their own way with confidence. Self-Help Group movement of poor women, for instance, is the best example of how Social Capital has played vital role in women empowerment in multi-dimensional ways in different contexts.

Women Empowerment is the process and it enables their participation socially, economically, politically and academically for ensuring the sustainable development at national level. Empowerment calls for equitable space for women without disparity. But still there are a lot of gaps in mainstreaming these processes which need to be addressed.

Inadequate opportunity for women in workplaces, gender inequality in wages, domestic violence on women etc. are some of the issues that need to be addressed in the process of women empowerment.

As said earlier, social capital developed in the forms such as Self-Help Groups, Farmers Producer Organisations (FPOs), People Organisations (POs) etc. brings bountiful synergies towards empowerment of community and it is very conspicuous in case of rural women.

Keeping this in mind, social capital has to be appreciated and acknowledged towards the constructive development process on women empowerment. The collaboration of these people organisations with the mainstream institutions have to be streamlined not only with the banks and insurance companies alone but also need to be extended with other stakeholders like health, legal departments, business and civic institutions etc. for a holistic development.

**Workshop on Rehabilitation of Urban Ooranis:  
Community perspective**

Water security is the basic need of any civilized society. Madurai is an ancient city established as an agglomeration of hundreds of waterbodies which include tanks, ponds and ooranis. As men are working with green water, they get engaged themselves in restoration of tanks. But women are working for blue water i.e. domestic water, they are using the ponds and ooranis for fulfilling their domestic and drinking water demands. Yet, they never enjoy ownership over those waterbodies (ponds and ooranis). These days due to civilization, women were able to access their domestic water demand from the corporation tap connections. It reduced their drudgery of fetching water from ponds. Urbanisation also resulted in encroachment of feeder channel and thus the supply for the ooranis has been completely stopped. The ooranis have been ignored by the community, who have lost sight of ground water depletion. These communities slowly realised that ground water resource is not ‘atchayapatra’. Whenever there is water scarcity, women are the first to be hit. Recent acute water stress scenarios has seeded the need for reviving traditional waterbodies to restore depleted ground water. But there is no ownership existing among the communities around the waterbodies. As the

onus of fetching domestic water for the family is still with the women, they are now coming forward to restore the ooranis. Experiences of women organised as a group in SHGs have given them the confidence to work as an association to restore the ooranis. Women have strongly expressed that the dysfunctional urban ooranis are grounds for drunkards who create lot of nuisance to the communities. This oorani restoration process is thus seen as a welcome measure for the well-being of households. This will lead in building the capacity of women population to move towards ‘water security’.

**Workshop on Women Well-being through  
Access to Safe Water and Sanitation**

The benefits of having access to an improved drinking water source can be fully realized only when there is provision for access to improved sanitation and adherence to good hygiene practices. Beyond the immediate, obvious advantages of people being hydrated and healthier, access to water, sanitation and hygiene – known collectively as WASH – has profound wider socio-economic impacts, particularly for women and girls. The fact that WASH is the subject with dedicated targets within the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 6) is testament to its fundamental role in public health. Across the country millions of people lack access to safely managed drinking water sources and sanitation services. Unsafe hygiene practices are widespread, compounding the effects on people’s health and also child mortality. In many households, even if the original source of water is safe, the water is frequently contaminated by unhygienic conditions and practices in homes posing adverse health impacts.

Women play a vital role to address these issues as volunteers. Women may join hands with government to take up the renovation of ponds, tanks and rivers, clear encroachments to retrieve them. Women participation in large numbers in the construction of Rain Water Harvesting structures in the rural schools is also gaining momentum. Development of cost effective models on sanitation and Rain Water Harvesting has escalated communities’ interest. Challenges in Open Defecation Free (ODF) are non-availability of space and rental home without toilet and such challenges are to be addressed for improving sanitation in rural areas by evolving an innovative mix of grant and loan products. To achieve 100% ODF status the change should start from the individual and the household and then the national goal of Clean India is certainly attainable.