



IFES

India Women's Legal Rights Initiative

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	01
Key Achievements	01
Program Activities and Lessons Learned	
1. Research	03
2. National Advocacy Initiative – Women Power Connect	06
3. Muslim Women’s Initiative	12
4. Gender-Responsive Budgeting	21
5. Formal Justice Sector	24
a. Help Desks at Family Courts	
b. Rajasthan Public Prosecutors	
c. Karnataka Judges	
6. Legal Aid and Legal Literacy	26
7. Counseling Centers	29
8. Community-Based Responses to Violence against Women	31
a. Community-Based Response to Gender Equity	
b. Engaging Men and Boys	
9. Training of Medical Professionals on Domestic Violence	37
10. Dignity of the Girl Child	38
11. Leadership Trainings	47
12. IFES Efforts to Sustain Program Activities and Impact	48
Appendices	
A. Evolution of IFES-Supported CBR Groups: A Process Documentation	
B. Muslim Women’s Initiative Process Documentation	
C. Dignity of the Girl Child Process Documentation	

INTRODUCTION

The objective of IFES' Women's Legal Rights Initiative (WLRI) project in India was to support indigenous NGOs and research organizations by providing technical assistance and financial support to enhance the ability of women to protect their rights and increase their access to justice.

IFES working with Indian organizations met this goal through:

- (a) Expanding knowledge of and dialogue on rights violations as well as the societal and legal response.
- (b) Increasing availability of legal assistance through NGOs and community groups.

This USAID-funded program included legal aid, legal literacy, advocacy, public information, capacity-building and research components. While some activities were conducted at the national level, the majority of the interventions were in two target states – Karnataka and Rajasthan. At the end of the five-year program, WLRI interventions included 43 partner organizations working both at the national level and in 16 districts of Karnataka and 20 districts of Rajasthan.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Key ongoing initiatives of the project included:

- Anti-violence and rights counseling centers for women;
- Women Power Connect (WPC), a national coalition of over 700 members country-wide, united to professionally lobby Parliament;
- Community-based initiatives which address violence against women, female feticide and property rights of women;
- Work with boys and young men to promote gender equity in rural areas and urban slums;
- Gender trainings for doctors, judges, public prosecutors and religious leaders;
- Help desks for women in family courts;
- Networks of lawyers and paralegals to increase women's access to justice;
- Enhancing Muslim women's knowledge about their rights under the Qur'an and the Indian Constitution;
- Capacity building of key government officials at the national level and elected women representatives at the local governance level on gender-responsive budgeting.

Various resources/tools were developed and published under WLRI program including:

- Public Prosecutors Gender Training Manual
- Paralegals Guide to Gender and Law
- Medico-Legal Curriculum for Doctors
- Handbook on Gender Budgeting for Government of India (with MWCD and UNIFEM)
- Gender Sensitization of Men and Boys
- Legal Module for Health Care Providers
- Muslim Women's Rights Course Material
- Legal Activism on PCPNDT Law Implementation
- Help Desk Volunteers Manual (with Karnataka State Commission for Women)

- Facilitators' Guide to Community-Based Legal Education for Gender Justice.

The following gives a numerical snapshot of the outreach WLRI over a period of 5 years:

- Programs implemented in two states in 36 districts and at the national level;
- Partnerships established with 43 partner NGOs with significant capacity-building both in terms of issues and management;
- 55 NGO counseling, legal aid, and mediation programs created and strengthened including twenty eight dedicated anti-violence and rights counseling centers for women;
- 700 individuals and institutions joined a national advocacy coalition (WPC);
- 3538 community-based initiatives for gender equity started and strengthened;
- 157,430 women received legal information, advice or support directly from partners;
- 819,305 women, girls, men and boys participated in VAW programs organized by the various components of the program with a total outreach to 2,345,922 women, girls, men and boys; 29.5 million people were also reached through a TV serial.
- 164,948 people were trained in human rights protection which, in addition to community members, included:
 - 238 lawyers trained who supported women in need;
 - 118 paralegals trained who provided advice to women in need;
 - 260 prosecutors trained on VAW;
 - 2315 counselors, social workers and medical personnel trained on women's rights;
 - 4,158 traditional health workers trained on women's rights;
 - 3538 community based response (CBR) groups membership; and
 - 43 NGO partners received HR training for their field staff.

Research studies:

- Section 498-A
- Local Customs in Rajasthan – Dakan, Dayan, Kookri
- Revenue Courts in Rajasthan
- Assessment of Impact of Gender Sensitization on Police
- Gender Sensitization of Men and Boys
- Changing Face of Dowry
- Property Rights in Karnataka
- Compendium on Female Feticide in English & Hindi
- Two Child Norm and its Impact on Female Feticide
- Implementation of PCPNDT Act
- Impact Assessment of Training Appropriate Authorities

Examples of WLRI work that has been fully institutionalized are:

- Within the central government:
 - Gender-responsive budgeting
 - The medico-legal curriculum on gender issues
- Within state governments:
 - Public prosecutor capacity building program in Rajasthan
 - Family Court Help Desks in Karnataka

- National Service Scheme program to train youth peer educator volunteers to address female feticide in Rajasthan.

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

1. RESEARCH

IFES was privileged to be supported by USAID to conduct a number of research studies to attempt to fill the knowledge gap on a variety of women's issues in India. The studies conducted are summarized below:

498-A Study

The Malimath Report, commissioned by the government, on the reform of the criminal justice system made disturbing recommendations for amendments to Section 498A of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) which would weaken the existing protections for abused women. The report based its recommendations on unsubstantiated assumptions. IFES believed it would be important to commission a study to examine the use and alleged misuse of 498A, in order to establish facts about the situation and possibly influence legislation, should it be introduced. The Center for Social Research (CSR) conducted the study. The study "IPC Section 498A: Used or Misused" which challenged the assumptions in the Malimath report was published and presented at a workshop in August 2005 in Delhi with over 100 people attending.

Anti-Violence against Women Work with Men and Boys

EngenderHealth (EH) and the Independent Commission for Peoples Rights and Development (ICPRD) developed a model for intervention with adolescent boys in schools and community groups to reduce violence against women and pre-tested training modules in five districts of Karnataka and Rajasthan, and Delhi.

After the pilot testing, EH and ICPRD produced a training workshop manual, entitled *Engaging Men as Partners to Reduce Gender Based Violence: A Manual for Community Workers*. The content and case scenarios included in the manual are based on data collected by EH and ICPRD through in-depth interviews of young men and boys in Rajasthan, Delhi and Karnataka. The interviews explored in detail the concept of masculinity and attitudes toward gender-based violence against women.

Using the training manual, EH and ICPRD conducted more than 40 training workshops in Delhi, Karnataka and Rajasthan. The workshops were coordinated with local NGOs. An instrument, the gender equity scale (GES), was designed to measure change in attitude and knowledge related to violence against women among young men and boys, and was fielded before and after the workshops. The analysis based on the pre- and post-workshop GES data showed desirable shifts in attitude among young men and boys. Thus the pilot projects demonstrated that well-designed training workshops targeting young men and boys can promote gender equity and potentially reduce gender-based violence against women.

NOTE: ICPRD received a follow-up grant to expand on this work in Karnataka. See Section 8, Community-based Responses to VAW, subsection "Engaging Men and Boys."

Research on Dowry Issues

IFES commissioned two studies on dowry and dowry-related issues. The first study, by the Indian Institute of Rural Development (IIRD), investigated the changing face of dowry in India and covered states in north, central and south India. It primarily looked at the trends, causes and consequences of dowry, based on primary data collected for this study and macro-level data from secondary sources. The study report, *Changing Face of Dowry in India: A Study of Trends, Causes and Consequences*, confirmed the fear that the problems related to dowry have become worse. The practice has not only spread to more caste and religious groups, but the size of dowry and the burden of dowry on the bride's family have increased alarmingly. The inducement of modern living promoted by ubiquitous commercial advertisements was found to be fueling dowry greed. A further finding was that the practice is so entrenched in the society that the expectations for dowry and the size of dowry are understood (unsaid) based on the social status and educational qualification of the bridegroom. The study showed that many women saw dowry as a mechanism to get their share of the family asset when they leave their maternal home to marry.

The second dowry study, by Social Uplift through Rural Action (SUTRA), examined dowry in the state of Himachal Pradesh. The focus of the study, entitled *Dowry in Himachal Pradesh and Its Links with Increase in Gender-Based Violence against Women and Girls*, was on the linkages between dowry and violence against women, dowry and female feticide. The study found that dowry is becoming more common in Himachal Pradesh than a decade or two ago. Consumerism was identified as one of the main causes of increasing dowry expectations. Also, girls appeared to pressure their parents into giving dowry for security reasons. As a result, brides' families often sunk into debt to meet dowry and wedding expenditures. The study found that a large number of families reported that dowry is responsible for the declining child sex ratio (female feticide) and a lack of or inadequate dowry often leads to violence against women.

Gender Sensitization in Police Training

This research, conducted by the Center for Social Research, assessed the gender sensitization training of the police, based on secondary data sources from Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Meghalaya and Delhi. Content analysis of key gender training manuals used by police academies in these states was performed. The study concluded that gender sensitization is not an integral part of current police training and made recommendations to strengthen gender sensitization among police personnel.

Property Rights—Joint Titling in Karnataka

Karnataka is among the few Indian states that attempted to increase women's ownership of government-distributed housing benefits, which provide houses and land to poor and marginalized families. The gender-specific titling initiative was expected to empower women and help women cope with violence and ill-treatment at home. With this backdrop, a study, *Women's Property Ownership: An Examination of the Process and Impact of Karnataka's Rural Housing Program Titling Directive*, was undertaken by the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) in cooperation with three local NGOs, SIRE, Samarasa, and Reach.

The study conducted a detailed audit of the implementation of the government-sponsored housing schemes in Karnataka. It reported on the extent to which land and house titles were issued in the name of women as required by the government order. The deficiencies in the

housing programs and their implementation were identified. The study concluded that the overall self-efficacy of a woman appeared to climb with the ownership of property in her name and a woman with property in her name demonstrated greater confidence in her ability to deal with domestic violence. She was more likely to challenge her husband and in-laws on injustices she experienced. The study concluded that, on the whole, the housing schemes were benefiting poor women in Karnataka. Upon completion of the study information sharing meetings were organized at the Panchayat¹ level, as plan to hold public hearings was cancelled due to threats related to corruption uncovered in the distribution of state property.

Studying Local Customs in Rajasthan

IFES commissioned a study by the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) on dakan/dayan (witch-hunting) and kookri (virginity-testing of brides prior to the wedding), analyzing the devastating effects of these customs on women and recommending intervention strategies for supporting women victims of these forms of violence. The study recounted the personal experiences of 63 women victims from 6 districts in Rajasthan. Forty percent of the victims were in the 41-55 age group. The findings suggested that poor, low caste women are more vulnerable to being labelled as dayan/dakan. The consequences of such labeling are severe and include extreme forms of physical and psychological torture. The report suggested that police, judiciary, Panchayats and NGOs are ineffective in preventing this custom from occurring. Two regional workshops (in Udaipur and Tonk) and one state-level workshop (in Jaipur) were held to disseminate information about the research and identify intervention strategies.

Cases before the Revenue Board in Rajasthan

IFES commissioned research by the Social Policy Research Institute (SPRI) to assess pending and closed cases of women litigants in the Revenue Courts, and to provide suggestions for policy interventions. SPRI found that cases remained pending in the courts sometimes for more than 20 years. The number of land-related cases rose rapidly in the last decade, partly coinciding with the rapid appreciation in land prices in some parts of Rajasthan. In about 60% of the cases reviewed the litigants were family members. Often male relatives acted illegally by transferring property into their names, thus defeating the widow's claim. Therefore, it was not surprising that the study found that more than 50% of the women litigants interviewed reported seeking legal advice from outside the family. While showing an overall faith in the revenue law, women litigants identified corruption (23%) and procedural delays (35%) as major weaknesses of the system. A more discouraging finding was on the question of gender sensitivity: 77 % of the women litigants felt gender sensitivity was lacking in the court system. SPRI developed a series of recommendations based on the study findings with input from revenue law experts and shared them with stakeholders.

NOTE: See Section 10, Dignity of the Girl Child, for additional research project on that topic.

LESSONS LEARNED

1. Research capacity in India:

It was very difficult to find capable researchers, particularly with regard to quantitative analysis. IFES ended up having to hire researchers to assist many of the organizations from whom it

¹ Local government bodies, with 33% representation of women as required by the Indian constitution.

commissioned research to complete their studies. Even research firms have very high turnover of staff which impacts continuity of supervision of projects. Significant effort was also required to identify and remove bias from among researchers and institutions about the subject of research. A program to build the research and analyses capacities in the social sector in India would be of great benefit to development work in the country.

2. NATIONAL ADVOCACY INITIATIVE – WOMEN POWER CONNECT (WPC)

“What we have learned is that women across India clearly want to be involved with and want to have a say in the development of policies affecting their lives.” - Kirsti Kolthoff, President, European Women’s Lobby, at WPC’s first national convention, February 25, 2005

Women Power Connect (WPC) was launched in February 2005 stemming from a realization that despite substantial grassroots efforts and advocacy, women’s groups in India were lacking the legislative co-ordination to affect national legislative outcomes. Until WPC was founded, there was no single, clear voice representing the needs and concerns of India’s women to legislators. Women had been lobbying for years in India, but came together on an *ad hoc* basis to lobby particular bills, without developing professionalism and without sustaining a full-time lobbying effort. The need to organize a national body to lobby Parliament and the government on women’s issues was keenly felt.

IFES supported WPC throughout the life of the WLRI project. Initially, regional meetings in Jharkhand, Goa, Rajasthan, Meghalaya, Karnataka and Chandigarh were held and a national body emerged from the process. This consultative process helped to identify issues of concern for women in different regions working at different levels, and to build a membership base for WPC.

As an organization working for the empowerment of women with a focus on lobbying and advocacy work, WPC developed the following objectives:

- To create an alliance of women’s organizations, NGOs and individuals with a special focus on women and girls;
- To influence legislation with a view to enhancing the constitutional rights of women and girls;
- To initiate dialogue at the regional, state, national and international levels to voice the concerns and the needs of the people it represents;
- To promote and support legislation or amendments to existing laws to empower women; and
- To observe, monitor and analyze policies, legislation and budgets with the aim of gender mainstreaming.

WPC’s Organizational Development

WPC was formally registered under the Societies Act on February 22, 2005. The development of WPC is discussed below, followed by detailed information on WPC’s priority issues.

Conventions

The WPC founding convention was held on February 25-26, 2005. Over three hundred representatives of women's organizations and activists attended from 27 states of India. One hundred fifteen organizations and individuals enrolled as members at the founding convention. Kirsti Kolthoff, President of the European Women's Lobby, was the keynote speaker.

Three priority issues, selected from recommendations from the six regional meetings, were adopted at the convention: the Domestic Violence Bill, 33% reservation for women in Parliament, and Gender-just budgeting.

The WPC Governing Body (Board of Directors) was elected at the Founding Convention, made up of four officers and five regional members. The governing body met on at least a quarterly basis, and continues to do so.

WPC organized its Second National Convention on August 17, 2007 in New Delhi. Over 300 prominent women leaders, representatives from various organizations and grassroots activists participated in preparing recommendations to be taken up with the government on each of WPC's priority issues. The event received widespread media coverage in 26 newspapers and on three TV channels. WPC launched its Lobby Training Manual during this Convention. The manual is the first of its kind in India and was extensively used in lobby trainings for women's organizations throughout the country.

WPC Lobby Training

In September 2005, three members of the European Women's Lobby (EWL) came to India from Brussels to provide lobby training for 35 members of the WPC Governing Body, staff and committee members. The lobby training took place over 2 1/2 days and included strategic planning on each of the three WPC priority issues. Participants trained by EWL immediately began serving as trainers at regional meetings designed to build WPC state chapters.

State Chapters

WPC state chapters have two major roles: to build membership and to lobby state legislative assemblies on state priority issues. The first of five regional WPC workshops to establish state chapters was held in Guwahati, Assam, for the northeast states, in September 2005. Thirty-five representatives from seven states attended. The participants' initial level of understanding of lobbying was very low, but the training remedied this. By the end of the training, participants had selected a state priority (sexual harassment) and prepared a lobbying action plan. State representatives also met in small groups to create action plans for starting state chapters.

In 2006, WPC held four regional meetings, in Chandigarh, Ahmedabad, Hyderabad, and Orissa. All the meetings featured lobby training for 1½ days and a half-day session on building state chapters. The number of participants ranged from 35 to 100 at the respective meetings.

The Chandigarh meeting was typical of the regional meetings. Participants were from the states of Jammu & Kashmir, Haryana, Punjab, Uttaranchal, Himachal Pradesh and Chandigarh. There was wide media coverage in the local press. A delegation met with the Chief Minister of Haryana, Mr. B. S. Hooda, and submitted a memorandum highlighting women's issues that needed immediate attention in the state.

In 2007, WPC set up five state chapters in Punjab, Jharkand, Rajasthan, Assam and Karnataka. No additional state chapters were added in 2008 due to a lack of funding. However, WPC has one organization in *every* state which acts as its contact or ‘nodal agency,’ ensuring WPC’s nationwide reach.

Gender Ginger Group

WPC created the Gender Ginger Group (G3), a group of Parliamentarians cutting across party lines who share a common commitment to the cause of women’s empowerment and gender equality. Eight MPs agreed to be part of G3. They strengthen WPC’s efforts by raising women’s issues in Parliament, working for the betterment of women in their respective constituencies and within their political parties, and by supporting legislation and policies that are gender-just.

Communications

WPC published three newsletters annually which were sent to all WPC members, Chief Secretaries of all states, MPs and Cabinet Ministers. WPC also sent regular updates, newsletters and other information via email to approximately 2000 people who work on women’s issues, are decision makers, and are in a position to influence policy. Before every Parliament session letters were sent to more than 500 MPs updating them on WPC’s priority issues and seeking their support in fulfilling WPC’s agenda.

Relationship with National Commission for Women

WPC’s relationship with the National Commission for Women (NCW) was placed on a very strong footing. Apart from frequent consultations on various laws, bills and schemes such as the Domestic Violence Act, the Sexual Harassment Bill, the Women’s Reservation Bill, and the scheme for Relief and Rehabilitation for Victims of Rape, WPC and NCW met to discuss future strategies and areas for joint action. With WPC’s support, NCW convened a consultative session on the Women’s Reservation Bill in December 2007, attended by women MPs and women’s organizations.

WPC’s Priority Issues

33% Reservation for Women in Parliament

The under-representation of women in Parliament has been one of the key issues embraced by the women’s movement in India. Over the years, WPC undertook a variety of measures to lobby for the passage of the 33% Reservation for Women Bill.

In 2005, WPC wrote to all the Members of Parliament (MPs) seeking their support for demanding introduction of Women’s Reservation Bill in Parliament during the monsoon session. Letters were sent to all WPC members as part of a signature campaign on the issue, and more than 10,000 signatures were collected. A delegation from WPC met with MP Krishna Tirath, Chairperson of the Women Empowerment Committee, to ensure her support. A delegation of women’s organizations led by WPC and the National Commission for Women (NCW) Chairperson, Dr. Girija Vyas, met with the Prime Minister on August 10, 2006, and presented a memorandum seeking action on the Women’s Reservation Bill.

A rally was organized in November 2006, led by WPC and other NGOs. The rally received immense media coverage and was a great success, as women's groups united to express their solidarity and put forth a common front demanding increased representation for women in Parliament.

A delegation met again with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to present a memorandum on the Women's Reservation issue, expressing disappointment at the delay in tabling the bill in Parliament and urged the Government to fulfill its promise to do so. A delegation met the (then) President of India, Abdul Kalam, and sought his support. WPC members also met MPs from different political parties on the issue.

Following this, several consultative meetings were organized by WPC in collaboration with other women's groups and the NCW on "Reservation for Women in State Legislative Assemblies and Parliament" to facilitate interaction between women's groups and MPs to evolve a strategy to get the bill introduced into Parliament. A resolution was passed at the consultative meetings to launch a campaign entitled "No Women's Bill No Women's Vote," expressing the withdrawal of support of women voters from parties that do not favor the women's reservation bill.

As a result of this fervent lobbying by WPC and other women's organizations, the Women's Reservation Bill was finally tabled in the Rajya Sabha in May 2008. Although it adjourned before a vote on the Bill could take place, this was a landmark development. Dr. S. Natchiappan, presented testimony on behalf of WPC to the Parliamentary Standing Committee in favor of the Women's Reservation Bill. The bill will remain on the Rajya Sabha's agenda for the next session of Parliament.

Domestic Violence Act

For many years, women activists had been trying to pass a domestic violence bill with civil remedies protecting women from DV in the family and in family-like relationships, suffering defeat year after year in Parliament. WPC became involved in lobbying the bill, which passed on the last day of the monsoon session in July 2005, and became known as "The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005" (hereafter DV Act). WPC then began a major push to get funding for the implementation of the Act.

A WPC delegation met with the Minister for Women and Child Development (MWCD) to expedite rule-framing for the DV Act. After the rules were approved by Parliament, the DV Act came into operation in 2006. WPC lobbied Central and State governments to allocate separate funds for putting infrastructure in place for the effective implementation of the Act. A WPC delegation met Montek Singh Ahluwalia, Deputy Chairperson Planning Commission, to submit recommendations on allocation of funds for implementation of the Act.

In 2007, letters were sent to WPC members and other prominent organizations asking them to keep track of new developments in their states and lobby their respective governments for implementation of the Act. In response, WPC state chapters lobbied their state governments on the issue. For example, the Punjab State Chapter took a delegation of WPC members to meet

with the Chief Minister of Punjab on November 25, 2007, requesting proper implementation of the DV Act.

A lobby document on domestic violence was sent to the nine MP members of the Gender Ginger Group and the 62 women MPs.

Sexual Harassment in the Workplace Bill

Although there is case law dealing with sexual harassment in the workplace, its scope is inadequate and it is inadequately implemented. Along with other advocates, WPC is lobbying for the passage of legislation. After WPC adopted sexual harassment as an issue, letters were sent to MPs to seek their support in getting the Sexual Harassment Bill tabled and passed. WPC also prepared clause-by-clause recommendations on amendments to the existing Bill and submitted those to MWCD, NCW, and to all MPs.

WPC organized a meeting to discuss the draft 'Protection of Women Against Sexual Harassment at the Workplace' bill in Kolkata, attended by 65 people from Jharkhand, Orissa, West Bengal, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. WPC submitted recommendations from this meeting to MWCD and regularly tracked the bill. WPC lobbied MPs to get the bill tabled.

In 2007, the bill was redrafted and WPC again sent a set of recommended amendments to MWCD. Thereafter, WPC was appointed to MWCD's Core Committee, formed to re-draft the bill. Letters were sent to MPs before every session to seek their support for passage of the Sexual Harassment Bill. Several MPs responded, conveying their support.

Gender-Responsive Budgeting

WPC's gender budget committee developed strategies for lobbying the Ministry of Finance. A researcher for WPC examined various aspects of the government's outcome budget (2005-06) through a gender lens. The issues included agricultural credit, growth in employment opportunities for women in the food processing industry, the information technology industry, non-conventional energy such as solar energy/bio-gas schemes, residential facilities for women, hostels for working women, health and sanitation schemes such as integrated low cost sanitation, and food security. The researcher found that although some of the schemes were gender sensitive, there was little effort to collect sex-disaggregated data and most programs had not specifically targeted women.

A WPC delegation met with Ashok Lahiri, Chief Economic Advisor to the Government of India, to ensure women's priorities were reflected in the 2006-2007 National Budget. WPC presented him with a memorandum reflecting women's priorities. This memorandum was revisited in light of Dr. Lahiri's comments, and presented to the Finance Minister.

At the state level, WPC participated in the preparation of the annual budget for the Government of Madhya Pradesh for FY 2007-08. WPC was also appointed to the committee formed by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation to set up gender budget cell in the Ministry. Training on gender budgeting was conducted by WPC for officials in Haryana.

Three regional WPC meetings on gender-responsive budgeting were organized in Assam, Karnataka, and Bihar which were attended by 230 people from 15 states. A set of recommendations was prepared for making budgets more gender-responsive and submitted to the Chief Ministers of the respective states. Action plans were prepared for lobbying state governments.

A state-level meeting was organized in Mumbai on gender-responsive budgeting, attended by academicians, media, economists, activists, women Panchayat leaders, and representatives from NGOs from 11 districts of Maharashtra. A large number of participants were from grassroots organizations.

A media conference was held on February 25, 2008 to discuss the work done by the government on the issue of gender-responsive budgeting, attended by 15 journalists from print and electronic media.

Declining Child Sex Ratio

The 2001 Indian census showed a decline in the male-female child sex ratio, a decline which was already having dire consequences for women in an increase in VAW, parents withdrawing their adolescent girls from school for their safety, and an increase in polyandry.² As soon as WPC added the declining child sex ratio to its legislative priority list, WPC organized two regional meetings in Punjab and Rajasthan on the issue, attended by over 100 participants in each state. A set of recommendations were drawn up to ensure effective implementation of the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act and action plans were prepared to lobby the state governments for strict implementation of the Act. WPC delegations met the Chief Minister of Haryana and the Governor of Rajasthan to apprise them of the situation and presented memoranda highlighting the recommendations made by women's groups on the issue. Letters were sent to the Secretaries of all 30 states of India requesting an adequate allocation of funds for the proper implementation of the PCPNDT Act.

WPC has received significant funding from UNFPA to continue its advocacy on female feticide issues.

LESSONS LEARNED

1. Necessity of long-term donor funding:

A dues-based membership organization lobbying to create a gender-just society is a new concept in India. Despite the fact that WPC has received encouraging responses from the women's groups, individuals and the government, it still needs support for sustained growth until such time as its membership has been built, to the point at which it can be self-sustaining. WPC requires long-term funding to keep going with its activities, strengthen its membership, and increase its outreach. WPC has raised the expectations of women and it would be counter-productive to discontinue donor support at this stage.

2. Delhi-centric:

² Women being married to more than one husband, often to all the sons in a family.

Though WPC has a national presence, in terms of its composition it tends to lean heavily on activists in Delhi. Therefore it appears Delhi-centric, a fact which may discourage state-level organizations from actively participating in WPC activities.

3. Acceptance from larger women's political groups:

WPC has forged linkages with women's groups and NGOs working on issues related to women's rights, but it still needs acceptance from some of the major women's groups that are perceived as being in the forefront of the national women's movement.

4. Strengthen relations with its members:

It is important for WPC to strengthen its relations with its members by providing them space and ownership to lead specific campaigns at the state level.

5. Media

WPC has done a good job at engaging the media, but an effective media-plan should be developed, especially to focus on smaller cities and rural areas through radio.

3. MUSLIM WOMEN'S INITIATIVE (MWI)

“Until last year I was a victim of domestic violence and did not know anyone to approach for help. I heard an interview on FM radio where women's rights in the Qur'an were discussed. I was desperate to meet the speaker and somehow I located her. When I met her I cried a lot and could not speak even a single word. She said, “You have cried a lot, from now onwards you will not cry, I am there to be with you.” She invited me to attend an IFES workshop on Muslim women's rights. She also took me and other women to visit a counseling center, a court, and a police station. Since then I have begun feeling empowered. Now I have my own garment business and I support my children. I also support other women who are in crisis. I hope that my example will inspire others to treat women with dignity and respect” – Asma, Jaipur.

Muslim women in India share a number of challenges with their sisters from other religions such as entrenched patriarchy, poverty, superstition, illiteracy, and poor health. Indian Muslim women also have the additional burden of being subject to patriarchal interpretations of Islamic law and teachings. The Muslim Women's Initiative (MWI) in Karnataka and Rajasthan supported Muslim women's empowerment by increasing knowledge about their rights in the Qur'an and Indian law. MWI also fostered an understanding about women's rights among men and boys in the Muslim community. Reaching over 20,000 people in the two target states, MWI provided rights-based education to Muslim men, women, and girls, bringing Muslim women closer to the mainstream, creating support structures to access these rights, and helping them decrease their isolation as a marginalized group within a religious minority.

To initiate MWI, IFES organized a national meeting on 'Socio-Economic and Legal Issues of Muslim Women' in October 2004 at Jamia Hamdard University in New Delhi. More than 100 participants attended the conference and discussed Muslim women's socio-economic, health and educational status, and their Islamic rights in theory and in practice. As follow-on to the national meeting, a MWI advisory committee was formed to analyze the national meeting and prepare a strategy. The decision was made to focus on grassroots awareness workshops (called 'camps' in India) on Muslim women's rights under the Qur'an and the Indian Constitution.

Phase I

The Information Dissemination Program

The MWI information dissemination program was designed to support Muslim women's empowerment through addressing the knowledge gap among Muslim women about their rights in the Qur'an and Indian law, fostering understanding of all sections of the Muslim community (including men and boys) about these rights, encouraging their participation in promoting them, and training and sensitizing staff of partner NGOs on legal issues specific to Muslim women.

Phase I started in Karnataka with forming partnerships for the MWI women's rights awareness camps with Guard, Spurthi Mahila Mandal, Sabala, and Professor Hasnath Mansur, serving the districts of Mysore, Bijapur, Dharwad, and Bangalore. In a six month period each organization organized awareness camps, workshops for men and kutas (mini-fairs).

IFES organized an orientation program for its Karnataka partners and their newly-hired project staff in April 2005 in Bangalore, with 40 participants. IFES developed information kits in Urdu and Kannada, including posters and brochures. IFES also developed a standard assessment form to evaluate participants' increase in understanding from attendance at the awareness camps.

In June 2005, the Karnataka MWI partners started holding meetings with stakeholders prior to launching the awareness camps in their respective districts. Ten workshops with stakeholders (academicians, lawyers, community and religious leaders and activists) were organized to get their support for the awareness camps, to evolve sustainability models and to build local networks. All the workshops ended with the formation of stakeholder support groups for the purpose of continuing the program and addressing women's issues, including procuring funds from government welfare schemes for women.

The awareness camps were highly interactive, using skits, songs, folklore, films, and group tasks. Each camp was supposed to have around 30 participants but in some places 60 participants turned up. It became clear that most of the women were hearing about the Indian Constitution for the first time and that they had many misconceptions about their rights under the Qur'an. All MWI partners received an overwhelmingly positive response from the participants as well as from important stakeholders in the community.

The objectives of the kutas (mini-fairs) were to reiterate the information provided at the awareness camps and to share the information with women's families. In addition, the kutas served to provide the women a chance to meet with other like-minded women and develop a sense of confidence and empowerment through this. They were also designed to be fun-filled events with skits, singing and food.

MWI partners in Karnataka conducted 77 camps for Muslim women (most of the participants were self help group members who were considered to be change agents), 10 workshops for stakeholders, and 8 kutas for participants and their family members, reaching 14,000 people.

Phase I of MWI's information dissemination program in Rajasthan began in January 2006. The districts selected were Ajmer, Alwar, Jaipur, Jaisalmer, Kota and Jodhpur. Gharib Nawaz Mahila Evam Bal Kalyan Samiti in Ajmer was chosen as IFES' partner and hired the services of

regional coordinators from the respective target districts. The objective of the program was the same as the MWI program in Karnataka. Eighty camps for women and three workshops (one in each of the three targeted districts) were organized for stakeholders to brief them about the camps and to highlight the needs of the women, especially with regard to VAW. Involvement of the stakeholders prior to and after the camps helped not only in getting community buy-in while implementing the project but also created community-based support systems for the protection of women's rights. Phase I of the program reached 15,600 people in Rajasthan.

Evaluation

Assessment of the impact of the program was done at the awareness camps and at the kutas through surveys of randomly selected participants. The analysis of responses showed that there was a 70% increase in the level of awareness about the rights of Muslim women. In addition, 90% of the participants remembered information correctly after a gap of three-four months.

Phase II

Counseling Centers

As a result of Phase I, a number of Muslim women brought their domestic violence cases into the open and began demanding legal assistance. It is difficult for Muslim women to disclose the occurrence of violence in their families or go to law enforcement agencies. Thus Phase II of MWI set up counseling centers for Muslim women to provide the needed legal assistance and counseling.

Five counseling centers in Karnataka's targeted districts (Bangalore, Bijapur (2), Dharwad and Mysore) were started. In Rajasthan, the MWI partner NGOs offered counseling at their offices. IFES organized capacity-building programs for staff in counseling skills, interacting with victims, police and lawyers, the importance of documentation, and the importance of networking with available support structures. Ultimately, 1850 women received counseling in the two states.

IFES' partners also conducted the following activities:

- Developing strong linkages with community groups especially community leadership (Jama'at³), other counseling centers, lawyers and police.
- Organizing additional information dissemination programs on women's Qur'anic and Constitutional rights.
- Making educational opportunities available to women and children who have dropped out of school.
- Contacting a number of individuals and institutions such as Waqf Board,⁴ to get financial support for deserted women.

Women's Groups

Forty women's groups, with 200 members were formed, primarily around micro-credit activity. Eight training programs were organized on women's rights for the members along with exposure

³ A group of 10-12 religious leaders and prominent members of the community.

⁴ The Waqf Board is an Islamic charitable trust. The Karnataka State Waqf Board provided space to Visthar for a counseling center in Bangalore.

visits to counseling centers. Groups began to manufacture products aimed at the local market. Most of them opened bank accounts and several received bank loans for income-generating work, which led the women to feeling both legally and economically empowered. Monthly meetings were organized to ensure close interaction among group members. These meetings provided a platform for sharing experiences, achievements, challenges, and effective strategies to support women in need. The women acquired skills and the confidence to question community leaders and government officials, and to approach the courts, hospitals and the police. Members of the women's groups came to feel empowered and in turn helped other women acquire their rights.

Stakeholder Support Groups

Eight stakeholder support groups were formed with 12 members each, consisting of community and religious leaders, academicians, activists and lawyers. They met monthly and helped NGO coordinators solve women's cases. Ultimately 1250 community leaders participated in the stakeholder support groups.

Women's Rights Courses in Rajasthan

The objective of the course was to teach Muslim students in four secondary schools not only about women's rights in the Qur'an and in the Indian Constitution but about the societal unequal treatment of women. Materials were prepared and eight courses were taught, attended by 500 students.

Orientation for Religious Scholars and Madrasa Students in Rajasthan

In order to sensitize the community on women's rights, orientation programs were organized for 500 mid-level religious scholars and madrasa students. Each program was three days long and focused on the status of women and the rights of women in the Qur'an and the Indian Constitution. In follow-up sessions, the participants shared how the program had contributed to changing their attitudes towards women's issues.

Altogether, there was outreach to 7000 women, girls, men and boys with information on women's rights in the two states.

Phase III

Women's Groups

By Phase III, the core community-level structures of MWI were 260 women's groups in the two states with over 3900 members. MWI partner NGOs strengthened these groups as they become agents of empowerment of women at the community level in all spheres – social, economic, political and ethical.

Monthly meetings were conducted to provide training to women members on strategies to protect and promote women's rights, to take part in the development process in their areas, to approach banks, counseling centers, and police stations, and to establish linkages with the stakeholder support group members and other agencies in the area. In these meetings, VAW cases were discussed along with strategies to support affected women. Health, hygiene,

sanitation, and education were also discussed. Typically, members drafted monthly action plans, evaluated the previous month's plans and discussed strategies to reach unachieved goals.

As a result of the above efforts, women's groups became actively involved in developing their communities and arranging vocational training programs for girls. For example, to become economically independent girls in the Idgah neighborhood of Jaipur indicated their interest in receiving training in sewing and painting. ASHA, an organization that provides training on painting on paper, glass and cardboard, agreed to do the training. Other women's groups continued actively advocating for gender equity and took up various issues in their areas including sanitation, enrollment of girls in schools, and pensions for widows.

Women's groups actively supported victims of abusive relationships in their neighborhoods. For example, Rehana, a resident of Ajmer, married a man who used to beat her regularly after getting drunk. Once he left her at her parents' home, but her parents were poor and unable to bear the expenses of her children. She did not know what to do. Rehana met with some women's group members who suggested that she join the group and learn some skills in order to earn her living. After learning to make caps, she started earning money and now is economically independent. She is planning to divorce her husband.

Information-sharing about Welfare Schemes and Development Plans

NGO partners provided MWI women's group members with information about accessing various government schemes at the central and state-levels. The women directly approached government departments themselves for information and shared it with other women.

Enterprise Development

To promote the economic self-reliance of the MWI women's groups, a study was initiated to identify enterprise- and income-generation opportunities. The scope of the study included situational analysis, social and general infrastructure, resource and skill mapping, business strategies, and identification of business opportunities and support networks. The study concluded that women were in the forefront of skilled embroidery, needle and other craft work. However, they were missing visibility and presence in the market since their activities were home-based and highly decentralized. Their capacity needed to be enhanced so that they could benefit from the growing market economy. It was suggested that a united front among partners would strengthen their activities.

Following this study, workshops were organized in Karnataka and Rajasthan so that partner organizations could learn about joint venturing options, decide on collaboration, and work on further business strategies. It was proposed that a new entity in each state, made up of all partner organizations, be created to take the initiative forward.

Counseling Training Program

While MWI's Rajasthan partners did not have a formal counseling center structure, their cases were handled either directly by IFES' NGO partners or with the help of Vishakha's counseling centers. The MWI women's groups played a very important role in identifying women in crisis and supporting them. In The order to enhance the capacity of women's group members to do effective counseling, a training program was organized at Ajmer, conducted by Vishakha. The

program focused on strategies and approaches to counseling and ways to provide holistic support to women. The program not only enhanced the ability of group members to provide counseling but also forged strong linkages between women's group members, MWI partners, and Vishakha.

Campaign against Polygamy

Many women's groups began to initiate action against polygamy. For example, Husna, from the Sakina colony in Jodhpur, approached her women's group for help. Her husband, Rizwan, wanted to marry a second time in spite of their having three children. Group members, along with a legal advisor, met with Husna's husband. In this meeting he was told about his responsibilities towards his wife and children and the negative effects of a second marriage. He was also informed about women's rights in the Qur'an and the Indian Constitution. After listening, Rizwan decided against a second marriage. Many such cases are being reported from MWI intervention areas.

Leadership Training for Women's Group

One of the most significant achievements of MWI is the emerging leadership among Muslim women. IFES and its partners recognized the need to further strengthen this leadership, addressing limitations in the dominant forms of leadership, articulating a conceptual framework of ethical and service-oriented leadership, and developing capabilities.

Sixteen leadership training programs were organized for MWI women's groups, ten in Karnataka and six in Rajasthan. Participants learned about the importance of unity and team work, collective leadership, and most importantly, to stay together, rising above minor differences in order to achieve collective goals. *NOTE: For details of the key components of the leadership development program, see Section 11, "Leadership Trainings."*

Meeting with the Chief Minister of Rajasthan

Through MWI, a demand for and acceptance of change within the Muslim community increased, which led to improvement in the socio-economic status of many Muslim women who participated in the program. The program fostered the emergence of leaders, especially young women, who are now promoting empowerment and mainstreaming of Muslim women in India.

An example of this took place in Rajasthan, when Muslim women's groups, who were receiving loans from the Bank of Baroda, were invited to participate in an exhibition organized during the Rajasthan Chief Minister's visit to Ajmer. The women displayed their crafts and products and shared success stories reflecting their economic independence and empowerment with the Chief Minister. She expressed her surprise and pleasure at the mobilization of Muslim women into self help groups.

Lessons Learned

1. Holding the National Dialogue opened doors for MWI, provided direction for the program, and gained allies:

The National Dialogue provided IFES with insights regarding approaches to addressing Muslim women's issues, and made it clear that understanding at the grassroots level was necessary for creating a demand for change within the community. The Dialogue provided IFES with

visibility and community support, which was particularly important for an international organization working for the first time in India. Through the Dialogue, IFES was able to meet individuals who became strong supporters of MWI and served as resource people, such as a Muslim woman lawyer from Mumbai, a professor whose booklets on Muslim women's rights IFES used at the camps, and a professor from Bangalore who provided valuable technical input. IFES also received cautionary advice about groups not to work with.

2. The support IFES gave its NGO partners was crucial in their agreeing to undertake the MWI program:

Most NGOs that IFES contacted to ask them to become partners were initially hesitant, as secular organizations, to work on the religious aspect of the program. Some organizations' governing bodies refused to work on these issues. Even the organizations who agreed to work on MWI were initially uncomfortable, but were reassured once it became clear that IFES would support them through capacity-building and provide the content and design of the program. It was also important that the strategy adopted was in tune with the community and took into account its values, perceptions and beliefs.

3. Men in the community were willing to have IFES' partners conduct camps on Muslim women's rights in their communities because the NGO partners had been working in the communities for a long time:

IFES' partners had been working in the intervention areas for a long time and had relationships of trust with the community. The MWI orientation program enhanced the partners' ability to communicate with people in the right manner. Since the project team members were Muslims (and mostly women), they became the face of the project; their dress code (covering their heads) helped them get support from male leaders in the community. Most men seemed to agree that knowledge about rights in the Qur'an and Indian Constitution was necessary for their women to know and an opportunity was presenting itself. That is why they allowed their women to participate. A few objected and felt that Qur'anic rights should only be spoken about by those who had religious education. But their objections did not hinder the program since most of the men were in favor and provided full support.

4. The involvement of the community leaders in the pre-camp workshops was unique and produced community acceptance of the project:

Involvement of community leaders prior to and during the project worked well to enable the program to function. Small meetings helped in getting a large number of male supporters who were convinced about the true intention of the program after understanding the nature of the program and getting a close look at the information kit (handouts). It also made NGO team members confident about the program. In a few places partners faced opposition from some community leaders, but were able to overcome it with the assistance of those who were supporters.

5. Involving community leaders in the planning process enabled them to commit later to the cause of Muslim women's rights:

Since community leaders were involved in the planning process (small initial meetings), and were then invited to attend workshops, it was easy to have them form stakeholder support groups

and commit to the cause of Muslim women's issues. When asked, they then took the responsibility and thus shared in the ownership of the MWI program.

6. The pre- and post-assessments inspired confidence in the NGO partners:

Pre- and post-assessments helped in evaluating the impact of the intervention at the time of the camp and assessing the level of retention at the time of the mini-fairs. The assessments not only provided feedback for IFES, but served to build the confidence of the NGO partner team members that the intervention was being effective.

7. The consultative process conducted after Phase I to design Phase II furthered the relationship of trust between IFES and its partners and served to lessen the dependence of the partners on IFES:

Having a consultative process between Phases I and II served to further develop the relationship of trust among IFES and its partners and served to make the partners feel responsible for the intervention. Involving the partners in designing strategies for Phase II also lessened the dependency of the partners on IFES.

8. The orientation programs at the madrasas were too long:

The orientation programs for religious scholars and students at madrasas in Rajasthan were of three days' duration. It was difficult to keep the interest of the participants for such a long time. While there was significant interest among participants in the subject, partners felt that the program should have only lasted two days and been more focused.

9. The courses for students in the secondary schools were a success but were not sustainable without honoraria for the teachers:

The courses at the four secondary schools in Rajasthan were very successful. However, not having honoraria for teachers beyond the first pilot made it difficult to continue the classes in the same schools. Only a few teachers agreed to continue teaching the classes without honoraria. In schools where the classes were piloted in the future honoraria were not offered to begin with and this helped in ensuring that the school and teachers saw the course as integral to their on-going work.

10. Having exposure visits to government departments was very important in raising women's confidence so that they could access government welfare schemes and join the mainstream:

Mainstreaming has been one of the major goals of the program. One step that was taken to achieve it was exposing the women group members to various government departments, especially to make welfare schemes accessible. This enhanced the confidence of the women and they began to realize that their minority status did not stop them from enrolling in government plans/schemes.

11. MWI developed a gender-friendly environment in the intervention districts:

Awareness-generation among women, girls, men, and boys and evolving a community-based support structure consisting of women's groups and stakeholder support groups helped in the creation of a gender-friendly environment in the intervention areas. An even more favorable environment could have been built if stakeholder support groups had been strengthened in the same way as women's groups were.

12. Formation of women's groups and capacity-building efforts resulted in empowering some women and making them confident to exercise their rights and help other women obtain their rights, but the numbers were limited:

Capacity-building programs and exposure visits to the available service delivery systems helped most of the women in the program gain confidence. Some became real change agents, people who were approached for help by the women in their areas. IFES expected that a majority of the women would become vocal, active and outgoing, but that did not happen. Some reasons are that (1) the partners were not able to devote enough time to enhance the leadership abilities of all the women, (2) educational and family backgrounds prevented some women from becoming leaders, and (3) some of those who emerged as leaders did not provide space to others to share leadership.

13. The leadership workshops were essential for introducing the idea of community leadership and will contribute to the sustainability of the program:

The leadership workshops were urgently needed to address the issue of community leadership, as distinguished from an individualistic approach to leadership. The leadership trainings will contribute towards the sustainability of the program.

14. Learning that the Qur'an and the Indian Constitution set forth rights for women was the major factor in the increase in the exercise of those rights by women:

Once women learned that women's rights were supported and guaranteed by their religion and by their governance system, they started raising questions about the violation of those rights. They no longer felt hesitant to let people know that they have rights and will pursue their enforcement. This took place in all intervention areas. There is continuous demand for more information dissemination workshops from all intervention districts in both states.

15. The strategy of using self help groups led to improvement in the socio-economic status of the Muslim women who participated and helped to ensure the sustainability of the program:

The strategy of introducing micro-credit activities in self help groups has ensured the sustainability of the program by improving the economic status of the women and their families.

16. Rights' awareness should precede the formation of women's self help groups:

It is very important that micro-credit activities not be introduced in the beginning of the women's groups' formation, but only after group members have gone through an awareness camp and learned about their rights. Combining Phases I and II, which happened in two areas in Rajasthan due to a shortness of time, was a mistake.

17. Special efforts to involve men and presenting material in a non-threatening way succeeded in creating openness on their part:

Involving men from the community during the small meetings before the program actually began brought them closer to IFES' partners. Thus, the men did not feel threatened by the nature of the information and were open and even helpful in implementing the program.

18. Men and boys moved from 'openness to action':

During the men's workshops, the participants were given information about women's rights and were also informed about how, in reality, women were being denied those rights. They could not ignore this information and they began to analyze the situation, focus on how the community was responsible for denying these rights to women, and the role that men play in the protection and promotion of women's rights. They felt that there was a need to take action through the stakeholder support groups. In addition, several religious leaders spoke about women's rights during sermons, which initiated a debate about women's rights.

19. Sustainability is mainly being achieved due to self help groups and access to government schemes:

Sustainability of the program is being achieved in a number of ways. The self help groups will be able to keep meeting and sustain their activities without assistance from the partner organizations. The reason is that micro-credit is involved; meeting for saving purposes happens every month. Furthermore, the group members have been introduced to the model of community leadership, which has been well received in all intervention districts. It is anticipated that they will continue to come together not only for micro-credit activities, but to deal with women's rights issues. Having created stakeholder support groups among community leaders will also help sustain the gains MWI has made.

Linkages with government schemes and programs will also keep activity alive.

20. Empowerment and mainstreaming:

Positive change occurred in women's group members who felt proud to be associated with the project, became self-confident and determined to effect change not only in their own lives but also in their sisters' lives. They felt that the MWI program gave them visibility at the community level.

21. Emergence of women leaders:

The emergence of women leaders was a major achievement of the MWI program. In addition to advocating for women's rights, women began participating in civic activities. Many women's group members voted for the first time after learning that voting is their fundamental right and the best way to participate in the democratic process of the country.

4. GENDER-RESPONSIVE BUDGETING (GRB)

"I confess that policy makers often tend to forget that one-half of the population is constituted by women and they are entitled to an equal share -- and an equal say -- in all programs and schemes." - Finance Minister of India, 2008-9 Budget Speech

The Government of India (GOI) made gender-responsive budgeting mandatory for all Ministries and Departments in 2006 and the Finance Minister of India directed all Ministries to establish gender budgeting cells. All Ministries with line-item allocations in the national budget were required to submit annual reports and performance budgets reflecting allocations and expenditures on women.

The WLRI Gender-Responsive Budgeting component was launched in response to needs perceived by the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD), UNIFEM and IFES to support the directive of GOI. This component focuses on ensuring that planning and budgeting effectively respond to the issue of gender equality, as a tool for empowering women.

Initial Consultation

To launch this component, IFES, in collaboration with the National Institute for Public Finance and Policy (NIPFP), consulted with senior government officials, civil society representatives, and other donor agencies in February 2006. Among the major recommendations made were:

- Building the capacity of gender budget units in the national government;
- Developing a gender budget training manual for use by national and state governments;
- Supporting a grassroots training program focused on elected local government representatives; and
- Producing a compendium on gender budgeting programs globally and in India, in collaboration with MWCD.

Building the Capacity of Gender Budget Cells

With IFES' support, the Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA) and MWCD conducted two capacity-building workshops on gender-responsive budgeting for gender budget cells of fifty Departments of the Government of India (GOI).

The Secretary for Expenditure, Ministry of Finance, referred to the two IFES workshops in his letter accompanying the "Charter for all Gender Budget Cells." Due to the Charter, gender budget cells of each Ministry and Department came to be headed by the Secretary or Joint Secretary whose seniority ensured that gender issues would be considered in the schemes/programs of the GOI.

Developing a Gender Budget Handbook and Training of Trainers Manual

MWCD, UNIFEM, IIPA, and IFES completed the "Gender Budgeting Handbook for Government of India Ministries and Departments" and, with the support of UNIFEM, 1000 copies were printed. The Handbook was then used for a Training of Trainers session. Thirty-five experts were trained and they have since assisted different Ministries and Departments to mainstream gender in their programs, as well as build their capacity to apply gender budgeting while formulating budgets.

Grassroots Training Program for Elected Women Representatives

Six capacity building workshops for 280 elected women representatives (EWRs) of municipalities were conducted by IFES' partner, Women's Political Watch, in two districts of Rajasthan (Kota and Bundi). This was the first exercise of its kind to be held for EWRs in Rajasthan. In addition to the EWRs, key stakeholders, including the district commissioners, budget officers, municipal officials and planning officers, attended the training. Prior to this training, women councilors tended to stay away from meetings on the budget since they were rarely heard and merely put their signature to what was presented to them without any understanding of what they were approving. After learning about the fundamentals of gender budgeting the EWRs said "No more automatic signing." Also without exception, according to

the women councilors, work was taken up only in wards represented by male councilors. They articulated their demand that the municipal officials allocate funds for use in their wards.

Some weeks after the training, IFES met some EWRs who had been trained in gender budgeting. In comparison to the docile and quiet EWRs at the first workshop, these EWRs were now articulate leaders who indicated they would leave no stone unturned to ensure that their communities prosper and government programs reach those they are meant for.

Gender Budget Compendium

IFES prepared a gender budget compendium containing 60 reviews of international and Indian projects. MWCD agreed to publish the compendium on its web site.

Gender Responsive Budgeting in Six Ministries in Rajasthan

IFES was invited (with other agencies) to assist the Planning Secretary, State of Rajasthan, to identify gender gaps in six departments of the government (agriculture, health, education, woman and child, registration and stamps, and social justice). The focus of the sessions was to make gender-responsive budget allocations to these sectors.

Other Trainings and Technical Support

The training and technical support provided by IFES' gender-responsive budgeting expert are too numerous to elaborate herein. Selected examples are as follows:

- Planning Commission's Committee on Gender Budgeting in incorporating gender concerns in the National Eleventh Plan
- Reserve Bank of India Training Institute in building the capacity of senior banking officials on human rights and gender budgeting
- Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy, a premier training institute, in building the capacity of Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officers on gender issues
- Administrative Training College of the Government of Madhya Pradesh in developing a curriculum on gender budgeting to be incorporated into their training programs
- Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Reduction on a symposium on applying gender budgeting for slum upgrading and poverty reduction for mayors, state secretaries and elected women representatives.

LESSONS LEARNED

1. Responding to a brilliant initiative of the Government:

As the Government of India was increasing its commitment to GRB, UNIFEM [the only partner donor in India supporting this work] was decreasing its commitment. IFES, with the approval of USAID, was able to incorporate GRB in its WLRI programming, and hire one of the pre-eminent Indian experts in the field. IFES' expert, with her ability to work with government officials at all levels made the program the huge success it was. At the time that the Government of India ordered that all Ministries and Departments create gender budget cells, it had no capacity to staff the cells or train people to do so. IFES was able to step into the breach! This program was fully integrated into government efforts.

5. FORMAL JUSTICE SECTOR

“You don’t need a survey to find out that women feel insecure in this country. You just need to take a walk in the evening. You don’t need numbers to see that domestic violence against women is widespread. You just need to look into their eyes.” “Outside Home, Indian Women Unsafe; Inside, She Needs Luck,”- The Indian Express, January 24, 2008.

Help Desks at Family Courts

The family courts in Karnataka were notoriously difficult for poor and illiterate women to access. IFES’ Karnataka grants manager read an unpublished study that recommended the creation of help desks at the family courts. IFES, through its partner Paraspara Trust, supported the Karnataka State Commission for Women (KSCW), an agency of the Department of Women and Child Development (DWCD), Government of Karnataka, in establishing help desks in all seven Family Courts in the state. The first help desk was opened in Bangalore in May 2006 with space provided by the principal judge of the Family Court. Immediately, women began approaching the help desk for information on family law, support for execution of orders, help with marital disputes, and following court procedures in relation to receiving maintenance, etc.

Five thousand brochures on the help desks were distributed among NGOs in Bangalore. An NGO Committee to support the help desk project and provide direction for the help desk project was formed.

A training manual for help desk managers was developed which included the purpose of the help desks, the role of the help desk manager, the functions of KSCW, legal rights of women, family laws, the Family Court Act, functioning and working of Family Courts, functions of the District Legal Services Authority, gender perspectives and basic counseling skills. The manual was translated into Kannada (the local language) and provided to the help desk managers.

By November 2006, help desks were opened in all seven Family Courts of Karnataka (Davanagere, Raichur, Gulbarga, Bijapur, Belgaum Mysore and Bangalore). Over 2400 women approached the help desks for support and nearly 3000 telephone consultations were conducted in the first year alone. The women were offered support on:

- Information on relevant legal provisions
- Assistance in following Family Court procedures
- Availing themselves of police protection
- Securing free legal aid
- Referrals to temporary shelter, psychological counseling, etc.

The help desks were managed by facilitators, who were appointed and paid for by KSCW. Women lawyers receiving fellowships from the DWCD served as volunteers at the help desks a few days each week.

NGO committees were formed in all Family Court districts to support the help desks. The NGOs provided 99 volunteers to assist the help desk managers, attend monthly review meetings, meet with judicial officers to discuss issues faced in providing relief to women litigants, and publicize the help desk in relevant forums.

IFES' support for the help desks ended in February 2008. Fortunately, the help desks in all seven courts are continuing to operate with the support of KSCW.

Rajasthan Public Prosecutors

Shockingly, the Assistant Public Prosecutors in Rajasthan, who are responsible for prosecuting crimes against women, received no on-the-job training. Conviction rates were extremely low. IFES decided to do something about this. IFES, through its partner Prayatn, supported the Rajasthan Institute of Public Administration (RIPA) in training all Assistant Public Prosecutors in Rajasthan on gender issues and crimes against women.

A design workshop was held in October 2005 at RIPA, attended by 55 public prosecutors, lawyers, forensic experts, police, medical jurists, gender experts, NGO representatives, and academicians. The focus of the workshop was to decide on priority areas for the training program. Gender sensitization, substantive and procedural law, and skill and knowledge upgrading (including ethics) were selected.

After the design workshop, Prayatn engaged a consultant to prepare modules for the trainings. Thirteen training programs were conducted, attended by 260 participants (among whom 30 were women). Based on the success of the trainings it was decided to institutionalize the program within RIPA, which involved conducting TOTs for resource persons on RIPA's staff and selecting several Assistant Public Prosecutors who had the capacity to become trainers. A training manual and a resource kit were prepared for the TOT programs. RIPA is using the manual in ongoing trainings and has shared the public prosecutor training experience with the government training institutions in other states.

In Karnataka, IFES introduced the idea of gender training for public prosecutors to the Director of Prosecutorial Services and the state's Administrative Training Institute (ATI). After attending the Rajasthan design workshop and receiving copies of the materials prepared for the trainings in Rajasthan, ATI and the public prosecutors ran the program in Karnataka without IFES' assistance.

Karnataka Judges

Study after study in India highlighted the insensitive and sexist attitudes of judges regarding women litigants and witnesses in courts. Karnataka High Court Justice Manjula Chellur was interested in working with IFES on gender sensitization of the judiciary. She agreed to serve as an advisor and a committee of judges was formed. The judges decided they would prepare the modules with the assistance of a lawyer whom IFES would hire as a consultant. Senior advocate Geetha Devi agreed to work with the judges on the project. A module on gender sensitization of judges has been completed. Justice Chellur is continuing to schedule the trainings through the Karnataka Judicial Academy and the National Judicial Academy.

LESSONS LEARNED

1. The Family Court help desks project was exemplary:

The Family Court help desks project was exemplary, not only because of its success in reaching thousands of women litigants who would otherwise have had no assistance with their cases, but in the degree of cooperation among the government (KSCW), NGOs and the courts.

2. Public Prosecutor trainings became sustainable because of link to RIPA:

RIPA in Rajasthan and ATI in Karnataka are government training institutions, responsible for training public prosecutors, although neither had ever done so! Not only was IFES successful in getting both institutions to do initial trainings for public prosecutors, but both institutions are continuing the programs, thus insuring its sustainability.

3. Working with judges is very difficult for NGOs to achieve:

Working with judges is notoriously difficult for NGOs to achieve. The breakthrough in Karnataka came about because Justice Chellur had previously been to England for training on gender issues sponsored by the British Council. Her interest in working on the gender sensitization of the judiciary had lain dormant for several years until IFES came along. NGOs are prohibited by law from working directly with the Karnataka Judicial Academy.

6. LEGAL AID AND LEGAL LITERACY

IFES' partner, Global Rights (GR), was mandated to enhance legal aid and legal literacy in Karnataka and Rajasthan to improve women's access to justice. After conducting a needs assessment, GR decided to:

- 1) Develop a paralegal training program to create a corps of paralegals within community-based organizations that could act as community trainers, advocates, and advisors on women's rights; and
- 2) Create a culture of human rights lawyering through a lawyers' fellowship program.

Paralegal Network

In an important breakthrough for IFES and GR, Mahila Samakhya⁵ (MS) agreed to work with GR on the Karnataka paralegal program. MS works in nine rural districts in Karnataka. In the first year, 46 paralegals participated in trainings on legal rights, advocacy and training techniques, and worked with sangha⁶ women to increase legal awareness in the community, organize periodic legal training programs for nari adalat⁷ members to enhance their legal knowledge, and engage social justice committee⁸ members of the Panchayat to enhance their knowledge of women's rights and law. The paralegals initially received 16 days of training, covering violence against women, legal issues relating to feticide, sexual assault, sexual harassment at the workplace, and trafficking. In addition, in order to place the law on violence against women in context, trainings included a basic overview of the criminal justice system, a review of evidence, burden of proof, bailable/non-bailable offences, compoundable/non-compoundable offences and the structure of the courts. A comprehensive manual was

⁵ A semi-autonomous program of the Government of India for women's empowerment.

⁶ Village women who are involved in MS self-help groups or education groups.

⁷ Women's courts in the informal justice system.

⁸ A committee which is set up at the village council (Panchayat) to deal with social problems and concerns in the village.

developed on violence against women covering the material taught at the workshops and other issues.

In Rajasthan, GR partnered with URMUL Trust, an umbrella of 12 organizations working in isolated regions of western Rajasthan, to create the paralegal network. Twenty-two paralegals participated in the program and received training similar to the trainings in the Karnataka paralegal program.

Each paralegal in the program prepared an action plan. One of the activities taken up by the paralegals was to create an “Each One Teach One” program. The purpose of this program was to widen the net of beneficiaries of the program by ensuring that the paralegals train a minimum of one other person on the issues that he/she had been trained on.

In the first year, paralegals reached 1640 people through public outreach programs and handling cases of domestic violence, dowry death, rape, and maintenance. Their work included the following:

- Workshops on the laws relating to violence against women;
- Filing First Information Reports (FIRs) in police stations;
- Translating the paralegal manuals provided by GR and creating smaller documents on specific legal issues in Marwari, a local language;
- Training their colleagues to become paralegals based on GR’s training program; and
- Speaking on legal issues affecting women at Panchayat meetings.

Lawyers Fellowship Program

The Lawyers Fellowship program in Karnataka was implemented through an award to Hengasira Hakkina Sangha (HHS). The program offered a 10-month fellowship to ten lawyers in Karnataka, in districts where Mahila Samakhya programs were located. The Lawyers’ Fellowship program began with extensive training. The first workshop focused on strategic lawyering, while later ones focused on violence against women, including exploring the links between violence and gender, the role of lawyers in dealing with these cases, the law on female feticide, sexual assault and child sexual abuse, and other topics.

Each Lawyer Fellow was expected to adopt an action plan to encourage local courts and government officials to implement important Supreme Court decisions. Lawyer Fellows conducted public outreach programs, including linking Fellows to counseling centers to provide assistance in legal matters, sitting in on Nari Adalat meetings and giving Nari Adalats lay judges legal advice and input in handling cases, and contacting local NGOs to conduct legal aid camps.

In Rajasthan, GR developed a partnership with the National Law University, Jodhpur, to implement the Lawyers’ Fellowship program through the University’s Center for Human Rights Education. The 15 Fellows were provided training on international human rights instruments, laws relating to violence against women, property rights, personal⁹ law, and strategies on

⁹ Family law is known as personal law in India.

providing legal assistance to women. In addition, the program focused on developing skills in client interviewing and counseling, mediation, communication, strategy building, and advocacy.

Examples of activities by Lawyer Fellows included the following:

- In Jodhpur, the fellow brought a case on behalf of a minor girl who was raped by a police constable. The FIR was lodged five months after the rape when they discovered the girl was pregnant. The Fellow used several of the cases provided in the GR training materials to obtain a conviction against the accused that included 10 years' imprisonment and a fine of \$1100.
- Lawyer Fellows enrolled in panels at local police stations to offer their services to victims of sexual assault.
- A Fellow in Jaipur persuaded the bar association to issue a circular to lawyers informing them of the Supreme Court decision on sexual assault and asked for applications from lawyers to empanel them at police stations.

Global Rights trained a total of 44 district-level lawyers to work on women's access to justice in 14 districts in Karnataka and nine districts in Rajasthan.

To ensure sustainability of the strategic lawyering on behalf of women, GR worked with the National Law School of India University, Bangalore and the National Law University, Jodhpur to institutionalize the pilot initiatives into distance education programs on gender and law for lawyers. The universities will be running programs based on the design and content developed by Global Rights for the Lawyers Fellowship program.

Facilitators' Guide

GR developed a "Facilitators' Guide to Community-Based Legal Education for Gender Justice," in order to enhance the legal skills and practical knowledge of lawyers and paralegals and ensure the sustainability of their work with lawyers and paralegals. The Guide was also designed to build community awareness, especially regarding domestic violence. The Facilitators Guide was translated from English into Hindi and Kannada, illustrations were added, and the guide was published and distributed. The program ended on December 31, 2007.

LESSONS LEARNED

1. Global Rights' experience in other countries adapted to India:

Global Rights, an international NGO, had experience in other countries with "strategic lawyering" and paralegal programs. This experience was adapted well to the Indian context by talented staff hired in India.

2. The paralegal program's success was due partly to their being 'imbedded' in the community:

The paralegal program was successful in large measure due to the fact that the individuals who were trained as paralegals lived in the villages and towns where they did their work. They were not outsiders, so their acceptance by the community in the role of an advisor was more easily achieved.

7. COUNSELING CENTERS

Laxmi came to the Bikaner Counseling Center in Rajasthan because her drug-addicted husband physically and emotionally abused her. She said that her counseling sessions were the first time in her life that she felt like a competent and worthy person. She was given clear information about her options and offered assistance to pursue them. The counseling center referred Laxmi to a lawyer who helped her get a divorce and a settlement from her husband. She enrolled in a sewing and tailoring course to develop income-generation skills and used the rest of the money for her daughter's education.

Instances of violence against women remain largely under cover and are silently accepted as a way of life by most women in India. Lack of information about legal redress and justice make women even more vulnerable. IFES identified the need for prevention of violence against women through enhancing women's access to counseling and legal services through the setting up of counseling centers. IFES' partners, Vishakha in Rajasthan and Mahila Samakhya (MS) in Karnataka, established 28 counseling centers to serve women in these states. The counseling centers provided much-needed services in rural areas and poor urban slums where the legal system is often intimidating and simply inaccessible to poor women.

In Rajasthan, the counseling centers were housed in special women's police stations.¹⁰ These police stations were set up by the government in all districts of the state and the police were keen to collaborate with NGOs after success with a pilot project in Jaipur, the state's capital. Co-locating at the police stations gave the Rajasthan counselors easy access to the police in registering cases for women, provided a deterrent to further violence from victim's families during the counseling/mediation period and an opportunity to sensitize the police on gender issues. In Karnataka, counseling centers were located in Mahila Samakhya federation offices. The federation offices house MS's micro-credit and adolescent girl education programs.

In both states counseling centers were staffed by one counselor and two social workers and had lawyers on-call. The centers provided counseling and informal dispute resolution, supported women in registering cases with the police, created networks of institutions that provided services to women, made referrals to community resources such as short-stay homes and government departments, and empowered women through knowledge and information. Most cases involved domestic violence, although a significant number of cases involved kidnapping of children, custody of children, property rights, divorce, separation and maintenance. The counseling centers also focused on using the new Domestic Violence Act, the importance of marriage registration, and cases involving dowry, rape, bigamy, child marriage, sexual harassment, and adoption.

In total, 10,000 men and women approached the Karnataka counseling centers for legal assistance. registered. The Vishakha counseling centers opened in Bhilwara, Ajmer, Chittorgarh, Udaipur, Alwar, Bharatpur, Bikaner, Barmer, Phagi, and Jodhpur. Over 5000 women had cases handled by the Rajasthan counseling centers. Outreach efforts touched another 25,000 women.

¹⁰ Vishakha counseling centers are co-located on the grounds of police stations. However, the police receive no funding from IFES and receive no benefit from the arrangement. Approval was specifically obtained from USAID on the matter of the relationship between the police and the counseling centers.

Unique to the Rajasthan counseling center program was the formation of district support groups, made up of NGOs, government functionaries, and others in the community to provide case-related support and act as a pressure group in emergency situations involving the police, the government, and caste groups.

In addition to direct services, the counseling centers conducted extensive legal awareness and outreach programs. In Karnataka, programs at the village level on VAW were undertaken, often through street plays and pamphlets, reaching over 93,000 people. Five hundred fifty legal awareness programs were conducted on the Domestic Violence Act 2005 alone. Other programs covered the importance of marriage registration, Muslim personal law, and a variety of other legal issues for participants from women's and adolescent girls' groups, adolescent boys' groups, child education centers, community members, college students, women in short stay homes, and teachers. Pre-marital training was offered to junior college students in which information on the psychological preparation for marriage and handling marital problems was presented.

Training of the counselors and social workers in both states was an ongoing process, with follow-up trainings every year. Trainings were conducted on counseling skills, mediation, gender sensitization, the law, and proper record keeping. Legal training topics included property rights, Muslim women's rights, domestic violence, divorce, maintenance, dowry, issues of rape, bigamy, feticide, child marriage, sexual harassment, trafficking, child labor, and more. Judges, lawyers, and police officials at the district level were involved as guest lecturers in the training programs.

As a result of the counseling centers, men and women have been discussing violence against women openly, and women have pursued their rights and become safer through access to counseling and legal services. Women became familiar with and used the justice delivery mechanisms effectively.

IFES' partnership with Vishakha ended on 31 December 2007. Vishakha has secured funding from the Dorabji Tata Trust to continue the counseling centers. IFES' partnership with MS ended in April 2008.

LESSONS LEARNED

1. Link between MS and GR Lawyer Fellows:

Critical to the success of the MS counseling centers was the link between the counseling centers and the GR Lawyer Fellows, who provided vital legal services to clients at the centers.

2. Direct legal redress systems made available: The program provided a direct legal redress system for women by offering the required services in their own areas. A ripple effect was created, expanding the scope of the program as one woman always brought in others.

3. Sense of ownership among stakeholders:

The institutionalization of district support groups in Rajasthan created a sense of ownership among stakeholders regarding development and rights issues. The resources of these

stakeholders were pooled for various advocacy efforts on behalf of individual women to influence government policies.

4. Issues of sustainability:

The short span (Rajasthan: May 2004-December 2007; Karnataka: 2005-April 2008) of the project was not enough to establish the centers independent of IFES' funding. Counseling centers, by the nature of the service they provide, can never hope to be entirely financially sustainable. This is especially true where clients are low income. It is therefore of crucial importance to ensure avenues of funding, including through Women and Child Departments, so that the centers remain open.

5. Difficulties in working with the police:

In Rajasthan, frequent transfer of those police officials who were actively providing support to the counseling centers affected program implementation as new officers had to be educated and convinced to support the counseling centers. It was also unfortunate that due to USAID regulations, the project could not fund ongoing gender sensitization training for the police. Formal gender training of the police is required to overcome systemic insensitivities that impact the experience of clients at the counseling centers.

6. Rapid turnover of staff:

In Karnataka, the counseling and coordinator staff turnover was rapid, partly due to the challenges of working in rural areas and the hardship involved in working for long periods of time on issues of violence against women. Hiring and training of new staff took time and slowed down the pace of the program.

7. Overall objectives met:

IFES' overall objectives to build awareness among women of their legal rights, to counsel and create a forum for redress, to network with the police, district support groups and local NGOs, were successfully met.

8. COMMUNITY-BASED RESPONSES TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Community-Based Response to Gender Equity

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) of the Government of India has been operational in the district of Davanagere [Karnataka] for more than a year now. But the villagers of Bandri Thanda had neither heard of this program nor benefited from it. Rukmini Bai, a leader of the CBR group, heard about the NREGS program in one of the trainings organized by REACH, IFES' partner. She took it on herself to educate her fellow members and spoke about it at their weekly meetings. The villagers came together to ask the local village Panchayat to provide them employment opportunities under the scheme. Despite the discouraging response from the local officials, the group persisted. The CBR members staged a protest in front of the village Panchayat. They took their agitation to the taluk level. They ensured that all senior district level personnel heard the pleas and used the local media very effectively. The local Panchayat finally responded and because of their sustained efforts, job cards were provided to women and men in Bandri Thanda.

The WLRI Community-Based Response (CBR) component began with a focus on prevention of violence against women through formation and capacity-building of community-based groups in Karnataka and Rajasthan. The project was the follow-on to the research projects conducted by EngenderHealth and ICPRD. Based on the findings from their action research studies, ICPRD developed a community-focused interactive program that promoted positive attitudes and behavior among young men and boys towards combating and reducing gender-based violence (GBV).

The program began by holding training of trainers (TOT) workshops in the two states for staff of IFES' partners. Partners mobilized and formed over 600 groups in the community consisting of 10,400 members made up of village leaders, school teachers, doctors, anganwadi workers, traditional birth attendants, auxiliary nurse midwives, self help group members, lawyers, youth representatives, Panchayat members, housewives, people involved in small businesses, and students. The partners then trained these CBR groups on protecting the rights and dignity of women and girls. In all the trainings, emphasis was placed on knowledge, strategies, resources available at the local level, and the development of action plans to address women's rights.

IFES supported eight NGOs in Karnataka and two in Rajasthan to implement CBR programs. The eight partners in Karnataka were the People's Movement for Self-Reliance (PMSR), Singamma Sreenivasan Foundation (SSF), Paraspara, Sneha, Samarasa, SIRE, REACH and Swami Vivekananda Youth Movement (SVYM). The two partners in Rajasthan were Prayatn and the Society for Education, Conscientisation, Awareness and Training (ECAT). Each organization formed between 50 – 120 groups in their respective districts.

The CBR group members had very little knowledge of gender issues prior to attending the trainings. After the trainings, they began sharing information with their communities and met regularly to learn, strategize and plan outreach. They reached out to hundreds of thousands of people discussing various issues faced by their local communities and neighborhoods that adversely affect women, such as: domestic violence, alcoholism, child marriage, education of girl children, female feticide, women's property rights, abandonment, divorce, maintenance, dowry harassment, rape, bigamy/polygamy, sexual harassment, HIV/AIDS, lack of allocation of resources, and trafficking.

Meetings, street theater, village fairs, competitions, and youth activities were used to generate awareness about gender equality and GBV. The groups began making themselves known as go-to points in the villages for women facing violence and other rights violations. Women began approaching the CBR groups and they offered support and tried to resolve disputes. If the problem could not be solved, the CBR groups referred the victims to counseling centers, hospitals, and/or shelter homes (when available). Group members went to the authorities to secure information and legal assistance and participated in fact finding teams, home visits and hospital visits to solve cases. The groups also drew on support from local community and Panchayat leaders and from the media to protect women's rights. As an outgrowth of these activities, the police began to call various CBR groups for information and assistance in resolving cases.

The CBR groups also assisted women in registering for benefits under NREGS and assisted single women and widows to register for the 'below poverty line list' so that they were eligible for government programs. They helped women secure free government houses, housing plots and agricultural land, and to register property in their names.

Engagement with local government was an important feature of this approach. Group members became active participants in ward and village planning committees and attended Panchayat meetings to voice their concerns. They visited Panchayat offices and demanded improvement to basic facilities such as drainage, street lights, and drinking water.

Other achievements of the CBR groups included:

- Providing information on VAW and the DV Act;
- Spreading anti-VAW and anti-dowry messages at community events such as village fairs and festivals;
- Documenting the number of school-age girls and how many girls are attending school at present; encouraging parents to send their girls to school;
- Promoting registration of pregnancies, births, marriages and deaths;
- Encouraging births in hospitals;
- Celebrating the birth of girl children;
- Interacting with Panchayats and seeking information on Panchayat budgets;
- Ensuring that women get access to employment programs; and
- Assuring that all children, particularly girl children, receive immunization.

Another illustrative case study is as follows:

A villager in Bijapur district of Karnataka, Mr. Kalingappa, married his daughter to a boy from a nearby village. The birth of a girl child was seen as inauspicious by her husband's family. Her husband and his parents started to physically and mentally abuse her for begetting a female child. Ultimately, when it became intolerable, Mr. Kalingappa sought the support of the CBR group in his village and requested that they come to the rescue of his daughter. The CBR group members invited both families for a discussion and urged the husband's family to stop the abuse and treat the wife properly, failing which they needed to be prepared to face further consequences. The husband and his family were told that scientifically, both the husband and the wife were equally responsible for the sex of the child and a girl child was equal to a male one. The husband and his family got the message and understood the power of the collective they they were up against. Today, the husband and wife are living together without any problems.

The CBR groups have matured from their initial role as social collectives to respond to VAW into community groups looking at larger development issues pertaining not only to women but to the entire community. This is an emerging paradigm in social development and when scaled up will have the potential to make a significant contribution towards achieving national goals for poverty reduction, women's empowerment, and ultimately the UN Millennium Development Goals.

Some of the unique features of the CBR program are:

- The rights and responsibilities-based approach to development
- Evolution of a gendered perspective of rights and development in the community
- Community-driven and sustainable development process
- Community-based convergence of services
- Significant outreach to rural women
- Involvement of men and boys as partners
- Use of the Right to Information Act and social audits, both very powerful tools in ensuring that development dividends reach the poor.

During the final project year, the CBR groups enrolled 916 girls in school and ensured that 17,211 children were immunized. CBR groups held 2243 interactions with Panchayats. The groups were also instrumental in registering 1472 births, 330 marriages, and 2418 pregnancies and enrolling 9607 people in the NREGS program.

IFES and its partners recognized the need to further strengthen leadership in the CBR groups, addressing limitations in the dominant forms of leadership, articulating a conceptual framework of ethical and service-oriented leadership, and developing capabilities. Leadership training programs were organized for the groups in Karnataka. Participants learned about the importance of unity and team work, collective leadership, and most importantly, to stay together, rising above minor differences in order to achieve collective goals. *NOTE: For details of the key components of the leadership development program, see Section 11 “Leadership Trainings.”*

LESSONS LEARNED

1. Dependence of CBR groups on local NGOs:

All CBR groups credit their empowerment and growth to the local IFES partner NGO and most expressed that while they can continue to function and sustain their roles without the NGO, they would still like to continue their association with them. The NGOs themselves did not make proactive efforts to ‘let go.’ Higher levels of independence were seen in groups which were also self help groups. The relationship between the CBR groups and the NGO needs to be strategically nurtured so that the benefits of the relationship continue without making them dependent on the NGO.

2. Relevance of GBR groups:

In most places, the groups were counted upon to arbitrate in social conflicts both at the family and community level. This emerging identity for the groups has been a critical factor in sustaining the membership interest and needs to be consciously promoted. In several areas, CBR members began to perceive their membership as prestigious as they suddenly found formal recognition and acceptance from within their families and communities for their work.

3. Deterrence effect of empowered groups:

The empowerment of the CBR groups created a deterrence effect against violence. They reconciled family differences, arbitrated on property issues, and gave a voice to hundreds of women who otherwise would have endured violence silently. More than anything, these groups presented a structured platform to women to articulate and share their problems, look for

solutions and be available for each other. This support that they gave each other is the most important response that has emerged.

4. Reduction in domestic violence:

The presence of the CBR groups in the villages and slums has brought about a visible reduction in domestic violence. What has been striking is the absence of gender tensions and insecurity among the men as they have taken on complementing roles in support of women in the community.

5. Leadership issues:

Most of the groups have seen the emergence of new leaders. They tended to come from people who have had previous experience in NGOs or self help groups. While all the groups agreed to the concept of rotating leadership, this did not always happen. Groups having men as members tended to be led by them, with women playing a supportive role. Groups made up only of women provided women greater opportunities for leadership.

6. Enhanced self-esteem of individual members:

Active participation in community issues has resulted in women feeling more important and being recognized by their families and the community has enhanced their self-esteem, making them better able to participate in family and community matters, and interact with local government officials and elected representatives.

7. Connection to the partner NGOs needs to continue for another 18-24 months:

In order to reach a critical level of maturation, the CBR groups need to be supported by the partner NGOs for another 18-24 months.

Engaging Men and Boys

“A girl in our area wanted to study further after finishing school but her parents refused. Though she was a minor they began searching for a suitable groom for her. When we learned of this, we went to her house and spoke to her parents about child marriage and that it was illegal. But they refused to listen to us. We went again and again but to no avail. Then we decided to organize a mass campaign in front of their house with street theatre on this issue. Seeing this, the parents were so convinced that they came up to us and admitted that they had been wrong. They decided to send their daughter to school instead of getting her married.” - Gopi, Youth Forum member, Bangalore

Traditional stereotypes of masculinity shape the identity and behavior of young boys and men, causing them to perpetuate gender inequalities rather than break patriarchal norms. Surveys indicate that in more than 40% of households in India, domestic violence is prevalent. In order to alleviate root causes of GBV and gender inequality in India, IFES and its partner, The Independent Commission for People’s Rights and Development (ICPRD), launched a project which engaged men and boys as partners in combating gender-based violence.

‘Youth Forums Against Gender Based Violence’ (hereafter ‘Youth Forums’) was an innovative and unique approach to engaging young men, possible perpetrators of violence in the future, on

gender equity and making them allies and leaders in combating gender-based violence. The project was rooted in the notion that so long as women are not able to lead a life of dignity and equality, free of violence, men and the society at large will not be able to attain their full potential. Therefore it was imperative that men become partners in advocating for the rights of women and girls.

The Youth Forums project began with outreach into villages and urban slums by a cadre of trained ICPRD personnel utilizing street theater and public events (mass campaigns, cycle rallies, debates, poster competitions, etc.). Boys who showed interest in the subject were recruited and organized into youth groups. While engaging in a process of self-reflection, learning about gender, patriarchy and GBV, youth also participated in information, education and communication (IEC) events. The youth were supported by women members of micro-credit groups in their villages. These groups were formed by the Working Women's Forum (WWF), a NGO engaged in micro-credit activities for poor women. As the project evolved, each Youth Forum had 12 young men and eight women from the community. Since its inception in June 2006, youth from 164 villages/slums in Karnataka and Rajasthan have been mobilized. The combination of youth and economically-empowered women transformed power structures at the village level.

Training selected members of the Youth Forums who showed capacity, leadership, and gender sensitivity as master trainers/peer educators was one of the major achievements of the project. Master trainers, assigned to two or three villages, developed the capacities of youth leaders in the villages about combating GBV. They became the key catalysts, informants, communicators and coordinators of the project at the local level. Local stakeholders, such as Panchayat members and teachers, cooperated with the master trainers and Youth Forum members to stand up for the cause of women. The coalition of master trainers and self help group members quickly gained status in the community.

One of the major highlights of the Rajasthan program was the cultural activism through vibrant street theatre and role plays. In rural pockets, the women were vulnerable to VAW and had very little access to entertainment. Hence, street theater was a huge draw for their entertainment as well as for disseminating information about GBV. Women spectators would openly vent their anger at GBV, in contrast to their submissiveness at home.

Significant outcomes from the project include:

- A fundamental shift in the perceptions and attitudes of Youth Forum members regarding GBV and gender roles.
- Interaction with communities through mass campaigns bringing GBV issues into the public and sending a message that violent behavior is unacceptable.
- Sexual harassment of girls often leads their parents to stop sending their daughters to school. Youth Forum members were transformed from passive observers or participants in harassment of girls in public places to active combatants against harassment, often calling the police.
- Youth began to intervene against alcoholism and domestic violence, cutting through the shroud of familial privacy.

- Youth Forum members prevented many instances of sex-selective abortion, child marriages, and dowry harassment in their families and neighborhoods.
- Youth interacted with village heads, local government institutions, school administration and teachers, reaching more than 40,000 persons.
- Youth Forum members exhibited great self-confidence and clarity on issues as they elicited support from key community stakeholders to combat GBV. These youth are now go-to persons in the community on gender equity issues.
- In Karnataka, due to the efforts of Youth Forums, 300 women joined WWF during a six month period, of which 100 became new borrowers.

The Youth Forums have become a strong base on which to build initiatives on HIV/AIDS, anti-trafficking, health, gender budgeting and interaction with village, local and law enforcement institutions on women's rights.

LESSONS LEARNED

1. Youth Forums and self help groups transform villages:

The combination of youth and economically-empowered women transformed power structures at the village level, strengthening both groups. The potential for permanently lowering the occurrence of domestic violence in these villages is enormous, based on performance of the Youth Forums to date.

2. The success of the master trainer program:

The selection of young leaders as master trainers and giving them extensive training on gender and development issues will also be transformative for the villages they live in.

9. TRAINING OF MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Prosecutors are often unable to win cases involving crimes against women because doctors don't properly document the extent of burns and dying declarations in dowry death cases, nor properly prepare postmortem reports. Since all cases of violence against women (VAW) must be registered with doctors for medical certification, the doctors needed sensitization both on gender and legal issues. Medical professionals received essentially no training on these issues. IFES' partner, Swami Vivekananda Youth Movement (SVYM), trained 922 doctors on handling cases of domestic violence and dowry deaths in partnership with the Institute for Rural Development and Administrative Training in Karnataka, and the State Institute for Rural Development in Rajasthan. The project objectives were to:

- Create a platform for training and educating medical professionals on issues related to violence against women.
- Develop appropriate training materials for continuing education of medical professionals in dealing with violence against women.
- Equip medical professionals with an understanding of the background of violence against women, and minimum standards for professional practice in handling such cases.

SVYM consulted with police officials, the judiciary, medical practitioners, and survivors of violence in the preparation of the training module. A gender specialist and a specialist in forensic medicine were members of the team that developed the training module, “Medical and Humane Management of Cases of Violence Against Women.”

In the feedback received from doctors, a significant percentage of them found the training to be very useful. Many were informed of new elements they had not considered earlier regarding how critical it is to prepare clear, detailed medical reports. They were made aware that the medical report is the key to securing justice for women who have suffered different forms of violence. To quote one of the trainee doctors, “The training helped me to be honest, impartial and has given me the confidence to do my job in helping to deliver justice.”

Besides helping to build potential linkages with the state and national government, departments of health and law, this effort achieved the following:

- Gender sensitive and effective management of VAW cases by doctors
- Appreciation by the judiciary of SVYM’s effort in strengthening access to justice for victims of violence against women by enhancing the competency of doctors to depose in a court of law
- Expansion of the program to Madhya Pradesh and shortly to other states of the country
- Inclusion of SVYM’s Medico-Legal Curriculum in the basic medical course in all of India’s medical schools.

The inclusion of SVYM’s curriculum in all medical schools in India is one of the outstanding achievements of WLRI. Now all doctors in India will receive training on issues related to violence against women before they enter practice!

LESSONS LEARNED

1. Difficulty in getting doctors to participate in Rajasthan:

The biggest challenge the project faced was getting the government doctors to participate in the training due to their busy schedules.

2. Sustainability:

SVYM not only prepared an excellent manual and training module, but wisely worked with officials in the government to get the SVYM medico-legal curriculum adopted in the MBBS (India’s basic medical course) as a requirement for all medical students.

10. DIGNITY OF THE GIRL CHILD

“I am Kuldeep Kaur and I am 74 years old. Nearly two years ago, I reluctantly went to a RUWA workshop on female feticide. I was aware of the problem but on that day I started looking at it from a new perspective. My [Sikh] community is the worst hit and so many of our daughters go missing every day, even before they have had a chance to see this world. I decided to do something and so I made a group of women worshippers at the Gurdwaras in Jaipur who went

from house to house to create awareness regarding the injustice of female feticide. Now many men have joined us and our campaign has spread to other districts.”

IFES’ Dignity of the Girl Child (DGC) program addressed female feticide, infanticide and the neglect of the girl child. Changing attitudes towards the girl child is a very difficult task, as it necessitates broad societal change due to deeply ingrained patriarchal mindsets, strong son preference, viewing daughters as liabilities, and the inferior social status accorded to women in Indian society in general. The long-established preference for sons over daughters in India has led to a serious demographic distortion of low female to male child sex ratios: in some communities in Rajasthan there are only 850 girls born for every 1000 boys in the 0-6 age range.¹¹ IFES worked closely with over a dozen NGO partners in Rajasthan to raise the profile of the issue of the dignity of the girl child.

The program involved commissioning research and intervention projects to inform, sensitize and mobilize youth and adult males, traditional birth attendants, adolescent girls and women, local government leaders, anganwadi workers, government school teachers and others. IFES realized that a multi-pronged approach involving advocacy and outreach efforts, in addition to research and pilot programming, would be essential to address the decline in the child sex ratio (CSR) in Rajasthan. State, district and local government, the legal community and civil society needed to be sensitized on the impacts of adverse sex ratios and mobilized to act immediately and effectively.

Research

Compendium on Research and Interventions into Female Feticide in India

IFES commissioned independent researchers to produce a compendium compiling all the research and interventions that have been conducted in India to address female feticide and infanticide. Five thousand copies of the compendium were printed in English. The Hindi version contained messages endorsing the compendium from the Minister of Women and Child Development and the Minister for Health and Family Welfare of the Government of Rajasthan. The compendium was disseminated widely in Delhi, Rajasthan and throughout Hindi-speaking states of northern India.

Knowledge, Attitude and Perceptions (KAP) Survey

IFES contracted with TNS, a leading research company, to conduct a survey of the adult population (18+) in Rajasthan on knowledge, attitudes and perceptions of the girl child. The objective of the survey was to gain insights into the causes and enabling conditions of female feticide in Rajasthan with emphasis on regional variations. TNS interviewed 4,200 adult males and females from seven regions in 140 rural villages and 70 urban wards. The survey findings contradicted current knowledge about the treatment of girls in Rajasthan. The results either documented real changes or denial on the part of the community regarding discrimination against girl children.

¹¹ Figures are from the 2001 Indian census.

Implementation of the PCPNDT Act¹²

IFES commissioned research through Prayatn on the implementation of the PCPNDT Act in all 32 districts of Rajasthan to determine factors which led to effective enforcement as well as obstacles to enforcement. The report, “Status and Effectiveness of the PCPNDT Act in Rajasthan,” completed in September 2006, was influential in changing government policy and led the Department of Medical and Health¹³, Government of Rajasthan, to set up a state level Technical Support Cell to improve implementation of the PCPNDT Act under the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM). Also, an action plan for training Appropriate Authorities¹⁴ was approved by the Secretary Health, Government of Rajasthan (GOR). Subsequently, the Government of Rajasthan set up district level cells in all 32 district headquarters for closer monitoring of the implementation of the Act.¹⁵

Impact of the Two-Child Norm¹⁶

IFES commissioned a study to analyze the two-child norm policy and its implications. Activists argued that in a society with overwhelming son preference such a policy served as an incentive for couples to undergo sex-selective abortion. The study searched for evidence of any linkage between the two-child norm and female feticide. The study was conducted in six districts of Rajasthan: Pali, Barmer, Jaisalmer, Chittorgarh, Jhunjhunun and Ganganagar. The Social Policy Research Institute’s findings did not show significant association between the two. This was contrary to what was suspected at the time the study was commissioned.

Legal Module for Health Care Providers

IFES commissioned the Indian Institute of Health Management Research (IIHMR) to develop a module to strengthen the knowledge of legal norms amongst health care providers. The aim of the module was to empower health care providers, and others working in the field of reproductive health, through knowledge of laws, essential medical-legal background, and provisions impacting the reproductive health of women. The training module, entitled ‘Legal Norms in Reproductive Health with a Focus on Adverse Sex Ratio,’ was incorporated into the training curriculum of the health and hospital management program as a seven-day course for 240 students. It was also used in a WHO-supported course for health care providers. The State Institute of Health and Family Welfare plans to use the module for in service training of medical officers of the public health care delivery system.

Impact Assessment of Training of Appropriate Authorities (AAs)

IFES commissioned a study to analyze the impact of the PCPNDT orientation programs conducted in Rajasthan for the Appropriate Authorities (AAs). Orientation training of AAs was

¹² In order to arrest the phenomenon of selective killing of female fetuses using advanced medical techniques, the Pre Natal Diagnostic Techniques Regulation and Prevention of Misuse Act 1994 (PNDT Act) was passed by Parliament, effective 1 January 1996. This Act, modified to the Pre Conception and Pre Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act in 2003, prohibits determination and disclosure of the sex of the fetus.

¹³ The nodal agency responsible for implementation of the PCPNDT Act in Rajasthan.

¹⁴ Designated government officials responsible for the implementation of the PCPNDT Act.

¹⁵ In July 2008, Dr. Meeta Singh, IFES’ DGC consultant, was appointed to the PCPNDT Advisory Committee by the Department of Health and Family Welfare, Government of Rajasthan.

¹⁶ The two-child norm refers to a state-supported policy in which incentives were given to families with two children and penalties imposed on families with more than two. Rajasthan, in 1995, barred people with more than two children from running for Panchayat positions.

carried out in 2003-2004 by the State Institute of Health and Family Welfare. The study found that while AAs acknowledged some benefits from the training, they faced numerous barriers which prevented them from being fully effective in their jobs. In addition, the report identified gaps in training, and included recommendations on improving orientation and training for AAs. These recommendations were presented to relevant government officials.

Intervention Activities

Implementation of the PCPNDT Act through Capacity Building of NGOs

To enhance the legal activism of grassroots organizations on the implementation of the PCPNDT Act, the Center for Advocacy and Research (CFAR) conducted training workshops for activists, civic groups and NGOs in different parts of Rajasthan to scale up the pace of advocacy at the local level to get the Act implemented, strengthen evidence-based advocacy on the misuse of ultrasound machines, educate and monitor medical practitioners on their compliance and adherence to the Act, and form constructive linkages to move forward.

CFAR developed a training module and organized three training workshops for 70 civil society organizations and two dissemination workshops for other stakeholders such as AAs, representatives of State and Central Government, lawyers and medical practitioners. Following the trainings, several of the participating NGOs conducted sting operations and worked with local media.

In Phase II, CFAR trained and mentored six NGOs to further enhance their capacity to partner with government agencies and law enforcement mechanisms in eight districts: Bharatpur, Bhilwara, Barmer, Jhunjunu, Jaisalmer, Jodhpur, Sirohi and Alwar. Concrete action was taken against clinics that were found to be violating the PCPNDT Act, including cancellation of the registration of 9 ultrasound centers in Bhilwara, and the seizure of ultrasound machines in Bhilwara (12), Sirohi (1), Alwar (1) and Barmer (1). In addition, “show cause” notices were served for the violation of the Act on three clinics in Bharatpur, two in Barmer, three in Jaisalmer, one in Alwar and one in Jhunjhun.

Sensitization of Caste/Religious Leaders

Son preference is very strong in Rajasthan due to the religious role of the son in conducting the last rites for his parents and other factors. Many religious and caste communities in Rajasthan (Jains, Jats, Sikhs, Rajputs, Brahmins, and Maleshwaris) have organizations with elected governing bodies that oversee the social interests of their community. These organizations and their leaders exercise a powerful hold on community members. IFES collaborated with the Rajasthan University Women’s Association (RUWA) in engaging community leaders to disseminate messages about the dignity of the girl child in order to initiate attitudinal change within their communities.

The community leaders were sensitized at 12 workshops on the existing practices of sex selective abortion, the skewed sex ratio in the state, and its implications. The important office bearers of the six communities made commitments to undertake awareness-raising efforts in their communities.

Some examples of the projects undertaken are:

- A Jain community group (Jain Shvetambar Terapanth Mahila Mandal) organized two camps, one state and the other national, on combating female feticide.
- Sikh women leaders organized meetings of 200 Sikh women on a monthly basis. Between traditional worship songs (shabads and kirtans), the issue of female feticide was discussed and the women signed oaths vowing never to undergo sex selection for themselves and their families. Ultimately 1000 families signed oaths. They developed a plan of action for 20 Sikh temples (gurdwaras) in Jaipur.
- In Sri Ganganagar, at a Sikh community wedding, 21 couples, along with more than 1000 guests, were administered an oath by the Gianiji (Sikh priest) to never practice sex determination and female feticide. This step was especially significant because Sri Ganganagar has the worst child sex ratio in the state.
- The Sikh community of Sri Ganganagar also organized a Khalsa March in February 2007. Nearly 8000 people marched through 25 villages led by Sikh clerics who spread the message of combating female feticide. Ultimately, nearly 53,000 people took the oath against sex determination and female feticide.

In June 2006, RUWA held a “Follow Up Sharing Workshop for Sensitization of Community Leaders on Combating Adverse Sex Ratio, Female Feticide And Enhancing Dignity of the Girl Child.” Forty delegates representing the six communities participated in the workshop and presented an account of the steps taken by each of their communities. RUWA formed an inter-community cell to strategize and execute future actions.

Although IFES’ support came to an end in March 2006, various community leaders have continued to take up awareness-raising efforts within their communities. For example, on March 8, 2008, the Jain Terapanth Mahila Mandal celebrated International Women’s Day by launching posters against female feticide. Jain religious leaders were present and spoke about the value of the girl child to 300 women.

Community-Based Response to Female Feticide

IFES supported a community-based intervention program with three NGO partners (VIHAAN, URMUL and SWACH) in 750 villages in the districts of Alwar, Jhunjhunun, Ganganagar, Jaisalmer and Hanumangarh. The programs aimed to target, inform, sensitize and mobilize youth and adult males, traditional birth attendants, adolescent girls and women, local government leaders, anganwadi workers, government school teachers and others who influence societal mindsets on issues pertinent to adverse sex ratio and female feticide. The interventions were an attempt to make the communities themselves responsible for the prevention of female feticide.

The focus of the work done by SWACH in Alwar centered on early registration of pregnancy and involvement of the local health care providers and volunteers. SWACH worked directly with 194 auxiliary nurse midwives, 547 anganwadi workers, sahyoginis (government appointed maternal health workers and their helpers), and 501 dais (traditional birth attendants). SWACH organized 501 discussions with village Panchayats, 301 with registered medical practitioners, 513 with school teachers, 117 with religious leaders and 61 with local artists and performers.

In Jhunjhunun district, VIHAAN formed 300 village-level groups with 12-15 persons in each. The 1847 men and 1915 women in these groups were trained to be change agents in their communities. The groups met monthly. VIHAAN also trained 125 traditional birth attendants and 54 block level functionaries, and organized 42 orientation sessions with village Panchayats.

URMUL Trust worked in 157 villages in Hanumangarh and 150 villages each in Ganganagar and Jaisalmer. URMUL established connections with officials at district, block and village levels and with other stakeholders including PCPNDT committee members. They formed 32 action groups in Hanumangarh, 54 in Ganganagar and 60 in Jaisalmer, with 2040 members. These are mixed groups of men and women that have been sensitized on the issue of female feticide. URMUL reached out to 4441 children in 755 schools, held two workshops for the media and trained 45 village Panchayat members on female feticide. Children in 87 villages in the three districts painted 5393 slogans against female feticide on walls of community buildings and houses.

In Phase II, SWACH, VIHAAN, and URMUL focused on strengthening the 169 CBR groups and sensitizing community leaders at the district and block levels. Each of the CBR groups made monthly plans, undertook compliance actions and recorded progress, along with constraints, and submitted monthly reports. Eight hundred meetings were held among the nearly 4000 CBR group members across the 5 districts.

Community leaders reached out to more than 60,000 people through community weddings, marches, and state and national-level consultations, challenging millennia-old practices. For example, beating metal plates in celebration of birth was traditionally reserved for male children, but was initiated for daughters. In two villages, girls were allowed to conduct funeral rites for their parents. Tangible evidence of women who chose not to abort their girl babies mounted. For example, in two blocks of Alwar district, in only 2 years, more than 500 female babies were saved from pre-birth elimination.

While CBR groups continued to celebrate the birth of baby girls in the villages, on March 8, to mark International Women's Day, all 169 CBR groups celebrated the birth of 390 baby girls in the five project districts. Members of the CBR groups visited the homes of the newborn girls and congratulated the parents and families with sweets and small gifts. A congratulatory letter was presented to each set of parents by URMUL, signed by the highest district official, the District Collector herself. The parents of the girl babies were amazed to receive such a letter and so proud that many of them framed the letters and put them on their walls. The Collector instituted a policy of sending a congratulatory letter to parents of all baby girls born in the district in the future.

In 2007, the Social Welfare Board, Government of Rajasthan, honored URMUL for its commendable work against female feticide in the villages.

Mass-Media

IFES funded the production of the second round¹⁷ of 13 episodes of the Hindi television serial called 'Atmajaa' (meaning born of the soul). Atmajaa dealt with female feticide and the broader gender disparity. IFES contracted with Eleanora Images to develop and produce the new episodes of the serial which used the same characters and addressed numerous women's rights issues, such as dowry, inheritance and rape. The series aired on TV starting in October 2005. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, funded all air-time costs (valued at \$88,000). The serial was also telecast on satellite TV covering 146 countries. Independent viewership data confirmed that 29 million people living across the Hindi-speaking belt of India saw multiple episodes of the serial. The success of the serial has led to its continuation for two more seasons by the Government and other funding sources.

Mass Awareness Programs

Posters

To commemorate the Week of the Girl Child in August 2005, IFES launched a mass awareness campaign on the dignity of the girl child through posters and slogans developed in a creative workshop. Posters were put up in 35,816 anganwadi centers and 3,000 women's dairy co-operatives throughout the state.

Sensitization of Urban Youth

IFES partner, Society to Uplift Rural Economy (SURE), implemented an intervention on sensitization of urban youth in Jaipur to enhance the dignity of the girl child in conjunction with the National Service Scheme (NSS), a government run youth program. The project sensitized 100 NSS program officers and 2572 peer educator volunteers (PEVs)¹⁸ to bring about attitudinal changes within themselves and in their communities.

A slogan book 'Dekho Ladki Ka Vishwas' (Look at Her Confidence) and a handbook 'Mere Samajik Sarokar - Meri Diary' (My Social Responsibilities - My Diary) were developed for the PEVs. These included slogans, FAQs, success stories and a work plan for the PEVs to record their activities while sensitizing peers, friends and families. A message from the Governor of Rajasthan was included in the handbook. An online quiz on the issue of female feticide was also launched.

Several follow up activities were held: signature campaigns, rallies, and kite flying festivals in colleges with the kites carrying messages promoting the dignity of the girl child.

Although the NSS project formally ended on February 15, 2008, funds were obtained from the central government, Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs, for the continuation of the program with NSS in Rajasthan.

Corporate Social Responsibility Programs

The Indian Oil Corporation, as part of its corporate social responsibility program, supported a pledge campaign with NSS and others against female feticide from Oct 15-20, 2007. This

¹⁷ The first round of 13 episodes was funded by PLAN International and broadcast on the national TV channel Doordarshan. It was widely viewed and very successful.

¹⁸ This was more than double the project target of 1000.

coincided with the navratras (a time when girls are worshipped in rituals honoring female divinity). The six-day campaign educated people about the dignity of the girl child and the negative consequences of female feticide. Ten of Jaipur's busiest gas stations participated in the campaign, displaying large posters promoting the rights of girls and warning that female feticide is a crime in India.

Student volunteers from NSS and the other NGOs urged motorists and passengers to sign pledges against female feticide as they waited in line for gas. An estimated 300,000 drivers and passengers were exposed to the campaign and nearly 50,000 pledge papers were signed. These signed pledges were submitted to the Family Welfare Secretary, Government of Rajasthan, to advocate for swifter and more effective action against female feticide.

The Chamber of Commerce in Sri Ganganagar supported the celebration of Kanya Lohri on January 13, 2008, honoring 101 baby girls before a crowd of 7000 people. The Lohri festival have for centuries been celebrated only for the male child.

Lessons Learned

1. Capacity of NGO partners:

Although many NGOs in Rajasthan had good experience working at the grassroots level, few had the capacity to conduct social research. This challenge was overcome by hiring experienced and capable resource persons to work with the NGOs, often from outside of Rajasthan.

The overall lack of capacity of NGOs in Rajasthan hampered the ability of the DGC program to get started. In some districts in Rajasthan with the highest adverse sex ratio, like Sri Ganganagar and Hanumangarh, there was very limited NGO presence, if any. Thus IFES had to fund NGOs, such as URMUL, to establish themselves in these districts and carry out the DGC projects. This proved to be a time consuming process.

2. Research Initiatives:

With regard to research, there was resistance on the part of doctors and various government authorities to reveal relevant information. The researchers were seen as a threat because of the possibility of stringent action due to illegal activities. Further, high profile, extremely busy officials were often not available for interviews or unable to give adequate time to the process. A series of meetings with senior government officials was required to build trust, explain the purpose of the research and highlight the usefulness of the research outcomes as a step towards good governance. It was only then that official clearances for conducting the research studies in these sensitive areas were obtained.

3. Community-Based Response Interventions:

The entry points for introducing the sensitive issue of female sex selective abortions called for imagination, tact and the ability to address uncomfortable questions. The issue was introduced sometimes in the context of education for girls, at other times in a village meeting to discuss water management and at still other times linked with care during pregnancy. As expected, there was both strong denial and apathy regarding the issue of the 'missing girls.' Often the NGO field workers were met with hostility and in one case they were not allowed to perform street

theatre and songs in a village. A youth from a hostile village was hired by the NGO field team as a strategy to make way for a gradual acceptance of the existence of the problem, followed by a positive and constructive approach towards enhancing the dignity of the girl child.

Since the issue of female feticide is highly sensitive, it seemed prudent to have separate groups for men and women, giving them the space to question, debate and argue about the issue. However, as sensitization to the issue increased the groups realized that the dignity of the girl child is not just a women's issue. Over time their understanding reached a certain maturity and the men's and women's groups evolved into mixed groups. In addition adolescent girls' and boys' groups and children's groups proved to be great assets towards infusing energy and enthusiasm into activities such as writing on walls and beating a metal plate to celebrate the birth of a girl, a custom hitherto reserved only for boys.

In the two and a half years since their inception, the CBR groups established a strong ownership of the issue and yet are still fragile. The groups continue to require mentoring and assistance to sustain the momentum.

4. Leadership training:

Leadership training programs for CBR group members were held in all intervention districts. While they were tremendously well received, it would have been more useful to conduct these programs at the beginning of the project rather than at the end.

5. Involvement of Panchayats:

The CBR initiative owes a large portion of its success to the bonds forged with the Panchayats. They were able to put into effect constructive strategies to leverage the law along with social mobilization. Efforts by CBR groups along with their NGO partners towards trust building with the Panchayats led to a sense of ownership and responsibility.

6. Male participation:

Inclusion of men, especially in the CBR interventions, proved to be an important strategy as in most cases they were the decision makers. Following sensitization activities, most were quick to understand the gravity of the situation and some of them emerged as strong champions for the dignity for the girl child. While some men continued to be skeptical, often claiming that all the hullabaloo is exaggerated and will end up spoiling the girls, most were willing to expend time and effort to bring the issue into the open.

In the case of caste and community leaders, male participation led to a sense of ownership of the issue after a series of consultations. The first round of consultations was met with resistance and sometimes even hostility. It took a serious focused effort, often engaging the same community leaders at least twice, for them to move through denial, to acceptance, and then onwards to seeking solutions.

7. Anganwadi workers:

Anganwadi workers were great assets in curbing female sex selective abortions, especially in Alwar district. Constant interaction, reposing confidence and responsibility in them towards

saving the girl child, and acknowledging their efforts in public provided needed impetus to the project.

8. Sensitization of urban youth:

Sensitization of urban youth in Jaipur through the National Service Scheme (NSS) proved to be refreshing because of the youths' eager receptivity and tendency to enquire and question. The young people responded better to activity-based tools for learning rather than traditional classroom learning. Training aids like films, role plays and group work elicited fresh insights from them. Repeated contacts with the students and involving them in advocacy activities proved to be the key to success in eliciting their commitment and resolve to work on eliminating female feticide. It was heartening to see shy and unsure youngsters on day one of the campaign quickly graduate to eager and confident torchbearers of gender equity.

9. Legal activism:

The most important lesson to emerge from the success of the various forms of legal activism was the necessity of continued support for the NGOs from CFAR. The local NGOs were not taken seriously by the regulatory authorities. The outside organization (CFAR) was given greater respect and was much more influential. The sustained interaction with CFAR instilled in the authorities a sense of being monitored and put them on notice, so fewer violations occurred and implementation of the Act improved.

10. Corporate social responsibility:

As an outcome of the media exposure of the activities undertaken by IFES' partners, India Oil and the Sri Ganganagar Chamber of Commerce decided they wanted to take up the cause and do something. However, these organizations needed help and guidance in planning strategies and technical support in terms of understanding various facets of the problem of female feticide.

11. Achieving attitudinal change:

Any intervention which tries to achieve attitudinal change needs to be planned with staggered milestones to achieve long-term objectives. It also needs to be given enough time and funding to overcome the numerous obstacles. It takes a long time to (a) develop innovative strategies; (b) build trust with policy makers and the government to ensure a positive approach; (c) overcome powerful lobbies of doctors and politicians that try to impede implementation of the law to combat sex selection; and (d) break traditional stereotypes and mindsets.

The Dignity of the Girl Child project made remarkable progress, but real change takes a long time. It is hoped that the communities exposed to the project will continue many of the initiatives and that other funders (governmental, unilateral, and bilateral donors) will pick up where IFES left off.

11. LEADERSHIP TRAININGS

To achieve sustainability, IFES' community-based groups in the MWI, CBR, and DGC programs, felt that it was essential for the CBR groups to become strong and proactive agents of change in the community and that the parent-NGOs begin to play the role of a support entity. To

this end, IFES decided to strengthen emerging grass roots leaders from within these groups directly during the last five months of their direct support from WLRI (January– May 2008).

That leadership is emerging is self-evident. To the extent that this leadership is channeled, supported and pro-actively strengthened not to be affected by problems faced by similar community-based groups from past experience, they will be able to continue their work into the future as WLRI support is withdrawn.

Key components of this leadership development program included:

- Understanding common models of leadership and their shortfalls
- Appreciating the necessity to evolve new/alternate vision for leadership - one that would foster justice and human rights for all in the community, nation and world. Such leadership is community-centered, service-oriented, ethics-based, inclusive, participatory and horizontal
- Understanding equity and equality of all people – gender, communities, castes etc.
- Approaching work with an attitude of service, responsibility, accountability and a drive for excellence
- Recognizing the value of, and utilizing the experience and knowledge that exists within, the community
- Understanding that development is not a process that an outside agency ‘performs’ on a community but something that the community resolves to do to itself
- Learning tools of effective communication and consultation both within groups and with other stakeholders
- Developing the capacity to learn from conceptualization, systematic planning, action and reflection.

Based on successful pilots conducted with the Muslim Women’s Groups, IFES designed materials that were easy-to-use without diluting the conceptual framework of the program. These materials were designed to be integrated into the monthly meetings of the community groups and consisted of stories, songs, skits, role plays, discussions and other interactive learning tools. Through this process it was envisioned that the CBR members and groups would:

- Recognize the defects and limitations in dominant forms of leadership
- Articulate an alternate framework of good leadership that is community-centered, service-oriented and ethics-based
- Initiate a process of individual and group learning centered on personal and social transformation
- Become effective agents of development and social justice in the community.

Leadership training workshops were organized for MWI, DGC and Karnataka CBR groups during April-May 2008 and it became clear that the trainings played a key role in strengthening the groups and ultimately ensuring sustainability.

12. IFES EFFORTS TO SUSTAIN PROGRAM ACTIVITIES AND IMPACT

IFES and partners are committed to ensuring that program activities, models and impact are sustained. The approach of the WLRI program was built around the assumption that the models the program developed would either be replicated/scaled up by Government of India agencies, other donors, the community itself or that the key lessons learned and approaches would be institutionalized in a suitable entity such as a partner NGO, a government/quasi-government entity or a civil society entity.

To this end, during the last year of the program, work was carried out to disseminate the approaches, models and lessons learned to as wide an audience as possible. IFES supported all partners in seeking funds to strengthen, continue and replicate their programs. This support took various forms including provision of specialists for strategic planning [e.g. WPC], proposal writing [e.g. Vishakha and DGC], meetings with government agencies [e.g. CBR partners in Karnataka], targeted capacity building [e.g. MWI economic empowerment areas] etc. A detailed sustainability matrix is being attached herewith to list these efforts.

Examples of work that have been fully institutionalized within the central government are the Gender Budget work and the medico-legal curriculum on gender issues. Examples of work that have been institutionalized within state governments/entities are the public prosecutor capacity building program and the Family Court Help Desks. The program to train youth peer educator volunteers to address female feticide issues is fully integrated into the National Service Scheme program in Rajasthan. However, significant work remains.

In the next years, IFES will endeavor to take some of these models and approaches to an even wider audience and institutionalize them within government programs and schemes wherever possible. IFES will also address critical gaps and opportunities arising from internal and external review the WLRI program:

- Models being implemented at the state level successfully such as Family Court Help Desks need to be presented to other states for replication/adaptation.
- Institutionalizing/scaling up of models such as the Muslim Women's Initiative, the Community Based Responses to Violence Against Women groups, and the Youth Forums Against Gender Based Violence need continued support to mature and sustain their activities.
- Leveraging public and private sector support for scaling up of models developed under the first phase and transitioning some activities to other government and NGO partners.
- Building on the lessons learned and partnerships established in the first phase to ensure the programs' long-term impact.
- With several policy and legal frameworks in place, e.g., the Domestic Violence Act, gender budgeting, programs to address trafficking, the employment guarantee scheme, as well as increased budgets for health and education, WLRI can play a significant role in supporting systems and processes to ensure effective implementation.
- Strengthening Women Power Connect in its path to sustainability.

In order to achieve the above goals, IFES is seeking funds directly from various donor agencies and foundations, including USAID in addition to supporting the fundraising efforts of the WLRI partners.