

NASI Newsletter

Volume 4 | November 2014

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President's Message

Dear S.I. Members,

Nostradamus had predicted a bright future for India. At the 1st Blush, there is a lot to be cheerful about. But looking minutely at the challenges India is facing in various areas for development it seems it has miles to go, miles to go.



Annette Mascarenhas
President & Councilor

We are blessed, that we are part of a new civilization of information and communication technology that has digitalized everything. Each day, electronic media opens Pandora Box of shocking issues in areas as varied as illiteracy, malnutrition, water, poverty, pollution, natural disasters and violence et al.

Overwhelming statistics of missing children, violence and shocking apathy of the government is very worrying. More shocking is 55% of these children are girls. 60% of the hungry and malnourished are girls and women. The fervor that was seen after 2012 Delhi gang rape and murder seems to have dissipated. Atrocities against girls and women including femicide and female feticide are frightening. The report by U.N. World Population Fund shows that 6 out of 10 Indian men admit to having perpetrated violence against their wives/partners to assert dominance. Recently the media showcased the poorest of the poor women were forcibly sterilized in an inhuman way and also were administered spurious drugs resulting in deaths / infections. All this and more testifies biased approach against "Girl Child and Women".

In such depressing news, it was exhilarating to learn that Malala Yasufzai, a Pakistani teenage activist fighting for "Girl Child Right's To Education" at the cost of her own life and Kailash Satyarthi, the unsung hero, a child rights activists from India through his organization "Bachpan Bachao Aandolan" has been risking his life and fighting for decades, to stop child trafficking, abuse, rescuing children held in bonded labour are co-winners of Nobel Peace Prize for the year 2014. Both the activists put children's rights and education on centre stage and proved that if you work with perseverance grit, determination and without fear "nothing is impossible". They have also proved that "Successful are those who can lay a firm foundation with the bricks that others throw at them".

To S.I. India, 2014 is a significant year for many reasons. It marks the completion of 40 years of S.I. in India, beginning of 25 years of NASI India, and 80 years of SIGBI Federation.

To commemorate these special occasions initiated 3 NASI India Projects - The first one "The Go Green Project" was implemented at Dr. V. Pillai's campus by planting 3 saplings. UN Theme on world food day was "Family farming - Feeding The World, Caring for the Earth". Tree planting not only protects environment but also feeds the world and improves livelihood. It is predicted, if we do not awake and act soon there will be fight for food and water.

"The NASI - India International Conference" was held at the same venue. A galaxy of eminent speakers spoke eloquently on issues in keeping with the objectives of S.I. We had the privilege of meeting and hearing U.N. S.I. representative Anusha Shanthirashtipam from Malaysia and Asst. Director of SIGBI Federation Talat Pasha who spoke on Skype from UK. The speakers inspired, energized and ignited the participants to "Be Women Lead To Change".

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“Champaign in the Veins” is the description which I read about of an organization whose passion was community service. In a way, it describes efforts of our clubs for the welfare and rights of women girls and children especially to eliminate “Violence”. It may be a drop in the ocean of service but the ripples that they make has ignited fresh energy to the beneficiaries.

It is a defining moment for our clubs that our federation SIGBI recognized and appreciated the efforts. S.I. India is a proud recipient of SIGBI Award 2014 for “Violence and Conflict Resolution for Gender Sensitization Projects”.

“Who will be the voice for the poor and the voiceless ?
Who will speak for the peoples oppressed ?
Who will take action so that their voices can be heard ?
Who will do, if we don't ?”
For them to be, “Empowered Educated & Enabled”

Thank you and God bless and smile on you.

Yours in friendship,

Annette Mascarenhas

President and Councilor of NASI India

NASI – New Team



Annette Mascarenhas
Immediate Past President



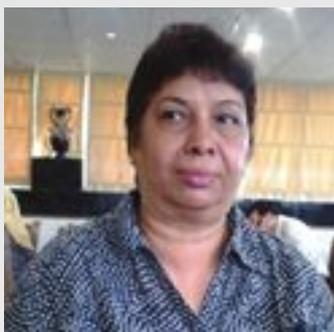
Shreelatha Narayan
President & Councilor



Dr. Lata Krishnan
President Elect



Mallika Venkataramani
Hony. Secretary



Felicity Saldanha
Hony Treasurer



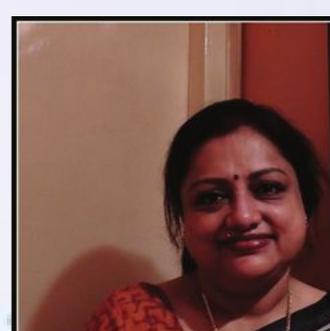
Anu Wakhlu
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Rema Ramchandran
Development Officer



Sunita Wadikar
Extensions Officer



Achina Kundu
Media Officer

Women Lead to Change: Human Rights & Status of Women

Presented By: Dato' Anusha Santhirasthipam
International Assistant Programme Director,
Soroptimist International (2011–2013)

Internationally recognized fundamentals

- Women's rights are human rights and human rights are women's rights.
- UN milestones achieved through collaborative partnerships between civil society organisations and Governments.
- Need to reinforce international commitments made at relevant United Nations summits and conferences in the areas of gender equality and the empowerment of women.
- It is a cross-cutting issue. Violence and discrimination are two sides of the same coin!

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as other relevant conventions and treaties, provide an international legal framework and a comprehensive set of measures for the elimination and prevention of all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls. There are also regional conventions, instruments and initiatives and their follow-up mechanisms, in respective regions and countries.

– The inclusion of gender-related crimes and crimes of sexual violence in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, as well as the recognition by the ad hoc international criminal tribunals that rape and other forms of sexual violence can constitute a war crime, a crime against humanity or a constitutive act with respect to genocide or torture.

Key Issues

1. Historical and structural inequality in power relations between women and men are deeply rooted, and persists in every country in the world as a pervasive violation of the enjoyment of human rights. Gender-based violence is a form of discrimination that seriously violates and impairs or nullifies the enjoyment by women and girls of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. Violence against women and girls is characterized by the use and abuse of power and control in public and private spheres, and is intrinsically linked with gender stereotypes that underlie and perpetuate such violence, as well as other factors that can increase women's and girls' vulnerability to such violence.
2. The right to education is a human right. Eliminating illiteracy, ensuring equal access to education, in particular in rural and remote areas, and closing the gender gap at all levels of education empowers women and girls and thereby contributes to the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls.
3. Resurgence of conservative movements that use religion, culture and tradition to excuse violations of the human rights of women and girls. Recently, there are countries claiming national sovereignty of laws over universal human rights or UN conventions e.g. child marriages, honour killings, dowry killings, witchcraft killings, female genital mutilation, etc.
4. Realisation that women's economic empowerment and full and equal access to resources, and their full integration into the formal economy in particular in economic decision-making as well as their full and equal participation in public and political life is essential for addressing the structural and underlying causes of violence against women and girls.
5. Growing prevalence of violence against women and girls in public spaces, including sexual harassment, especially when it is being used to intimidate women and girls who are exercising any of their human rights and fundamental freedoms e.g. Egypt.
6. Increasing vulnerability of older women and the urgent need to address the violence and discrimination against them, especially in the light of the growing proportion of older people in the world's population.

Strategies and methods to safeguard human rights and status of women

1. Use all appropriate means of a legislative, political, economic, social and administrative nature in order to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms of women and girls, and must exercise due diligence to prevent, investigate, prosecute and punish the perpetrators of violence against women and girls and end impunity, and to provide protection as well as access to appropriate remedies for victims and survivors.

2. Provide powerful support to the NGOs, particularly to women's organisations which have the expertise to work from grassroots through to the advisory levels of government in a collective mode.
3. Accelerate public awareness, education and training to discourage the demand that fosters all forms of exploitation as well as counteract attitudes by which women and girls are regarded as subordinate to men and boys or as having stereotyped roles that perpetuate practices involving violence or coercion.
4. Carry out awareness-raising and education campaigns, in co-operation with civil society organizations, especially women's organizations, through different means of communication, targeting the general public, young people, men and boys, to address the structural and underlying causes of violence and abuse against women and girls; to overcome gender stereotypes and promote zero tolerance for such violence, to remove the stigma of being a victim and survivor of violence; and to create an enabling environment where women and girls can easily report incidences of violence and make use of the services available and of protection and assistance programmes.
5. Mainstream a gender perspective into all legislation, policies and programmes and allocate adequate financial and human resources, including through the expanded use of gender-responsive planning and budgeting, taking into account the needs and circumstances of women and girls.
6. Take effective steps to ensure the equal participation of women and men in all spheres of political life, political reform and in all levels of decision-making, in all situations e.g. minimum representation in Parliament.
7. Ensure that the specific needs of women and girls are incorporated into the planning, delivery and monitoring of, and infrastructure for disaster risk reduction programmes and protocols and humanitarian assistance to address natural disasters, and that in disaster preparedness efforts and in post-disaster settings, the prevention and response to all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls, including sexual violence, are prioritized and adequately addressed.
8. Address violence against women and girls resulting from transnational organized crime, including trafficking in persons and drug trafficking, and adopt specific policies to prevent and eradicate violence against women in crime prevention strategies.
9. Take appropriate measures to address the root factors, including external factors, that contribute to trafficking in women and girls. Prevent, combat and eliminate trafficking in women and girls by criminalizing all forms of trafficking in persons, in particular for the purpose of sexual and economic exploitation, as well as by strengthening existing civil and criminal legislation with a view to providing better protection of the rights of women and girls and by bringing to justice and punishing the offenders and intermediaries involved, including public officials, by protecting the rights of trafficked persons and preventing revictimization.
10. Encourage private sector investment in programmes, campaigns and strategies to respond to, prevent and eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls, including sexual harassment at the workplace, and to empower victims and survivors of violence.
11. Adopt and fund policy reforms and programmes, and support education, to sensitize, train and strengthen the capacity of public officials and professionals, including the judiciary, police and military, as well as those working in the areas of education, health, social welfare, justice, defense and immigration; hold public officials accountable for not complying with laws and regulations relating to violence against women and girls, in order to prevent and respond to such violence in a gender-sensitive manner, end impunity, and avoid the abuse of power leading to violence against women and the re-victimization of victims and survivors.
12. Prevent, investigate and punish acts of violence against women and girls that are perpetrated by people in positions of authority, such as teachers, religious leaders, political leaders and law enforcement officials, in order to end impunity for these crimes.
13. Ensure that all children, particularly girls, have equal access to, and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality, and renew their efforts to improve and expand girls' education at all levels, including the secondary and higher levels, in all academic areas; and increase girls' ability to attend school and extra-curricular activities by investing in public infrastructure projects and accessible quality public services and providing a safe environment.
14. Promote women's full participation in the formal economy, in particular in economic decision-making, and their equal access to full employment and decent work; empower women in the informal sector; and ensure that women and men enjoy equal treatment in the workplace, as well as equal pay for equal work or work of equal value, and equal access to power and decision-making, and promote sharing of paid and unpaid work.

15. Take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social, educational and other measures to protect and promote the rights of women and girls with disabilities as they are more vulnerable to all forms of exploitation, violence and abuse, including in the workplace, educational institutions, the home, and other settings.

16. Undertake legislative and administrative financial and other measures to give women full and equal access to economic resources, including the right to inheritance and to ownership of land and other property, credit, natural resources and appropriate technologies, inter alia, by means of international cooperation; prioritize and intensify initiatives towards the economic empowerment of women at the grassroot level, including through entrepreneurship education and business incubators, as a way of uplifting their status, thereby reducing their vulnerability to violence.

17. Refrain from using social justifications for denying women their freedom of movement, the right to own property and the right to equal protection of the law.

18. Promote and protect the human rights of all women including their right to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health, free of coercion, discrimination and violence; and adopt and accelerate the implementation of laws, policies and programmes which protect and enable the enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, including their reproductive rights, in accordance with the Programme of Action of International Conference on Population and Development, the Beijing Platform for Action and their review outcomes.

19. Review, enact and strictly enforce laws and regulations concerning the minimum legal age of consent and the minimum age for marriage, raising the minimum age for marriage where necessary, and generate social support for the enforcement of these laws in order to end the practice of child, early and forced marriage.

20. Ensure the provision of viable alternatives and institutional support, including for girls who are already married and/or pregnant, especially educational opportunities with an emphasis on keeping girls in school through post-primary education and promoting the empowerment of girls through improving educational quality and ensuring safe and hygienic conditions in schools; physical access to education, including by establishing safe residential facilities and childcare, increasing financial incentives to women and their families where necessary.

21. Ensure the access of adolescents to services and programmes on preventing early pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections and HIV, ensuring personal safety, and preventing the use and abuse of alcohol and other harmful substances.

22. Special focus on programmes to educate women and men, especially parents and caregivers, on the importance of girls' physical and mental health and well-being, including the elimination of child, early and forced marriage, violence against women and girls, female genital mutilation, child sexual exploitation, including commercial sexual exploitation, sexual abuse, rape, incest and abduction, and the elimination of discrimination against girls such as in food allocation.

23. Recognize the important role the media can play in the elimination of gender stereotypes, including those perpetrated by commercial advertisements, and in promoting non-discriminatory and gender-sensitive reporting, including by preserving the confidentiality of the identity of victims and survivors where appropriate; and, to the extent consistent with freedom of expression, encourage the media to improve public awareness on violence against women and girls, to train those who work in the media, and to develop and strengthen self-regulatory mechanisms to promote balanced and non-stereotypical portrayals of women with a view to eliminating discrimination against and the exploitation of women and girls and refraining from presenting them as inferior beings and exploiting them as sexual objects and commodities and instead present women and girls as creative human beings, key actors and contributors to and beneficiaries of the process of development.

24. Support the development and use of ICT and social media as a resource for the empowerment of women and girls, including access to information on the prevention of and response to violence against women and girls; and develop mechanisms to combat the use of ICT and social media to perpetrate violence against women and girls, including the criminal misuse of ICT for sexual harassment, sexual exploitation, child pornography and trafficking in women and girls, and emerging forms of violence such as cyber stalking, cyber bullying and privacy violations that compromise women's and girls' safety.

25. Improve access to timely, affordable and quality health systems for women and girls, including through gender-sensitive national strategies and public-health policies and programmes that are comprehensive, affordable and better targeted to addressing their needs and that encourage women's active participation in their design and implementation; and also enhance women's access to affordable, safe, effective and good quality treatment and medicines, with a special emphasis on the poor, vulnerable and marginalized segments of the population.

26. Ensure that in armed conflict and post-conflict situations the prevention of and response to all forms of violence against women and girls, including sexual and gender-based violence, are prioritized and effectively addressed, including as appropriate through the investigation, prosecution and punishment of perpetrators to end impunity, removal of barriers to women's access to justice, the establishment of complaint and reporting mechanisms, the provision of support to victims and survivors, affordable and accessible health care services, including sexual and reproductive health, and reintegration measures; and take steps to increase women's participation in conflict resolution and peace-building processes and post-conflict decision-making.

Photo Gallery- Sept 2014 meeting Mumbai



Anusha Santhirasthipam

Lighting of the Lamp

At the Regenza Tunga

Release of Newsletter



Dr. Daphne Pillai
Speaker

Ashok Mehta
Speaker

Dr. Sally Enos
Speaker

Anu Wakhlu
Devl. Officer



Dr. Armida Fernandez
Speaker

Cake cutting
by Committee

Dr. Talat Pasha
Speaker

Felicitating
Dr. Daphne Pillai

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Harrogate Conference



The Harrogate conference was well represented by some of our members from across the country and SI India won the Award for its work on Gender Sensitization. Congratulations!!!!

More details are available on <http://sigbi.org/harrogate2014/>

President's Thank You Letter

Dear Friends,

As I come to the end of my tenure as President and Councilor of NASI - India I thank Almighty God for his loving providence over us. With his grace we have marched on with determination, hard work, Camaraderie and team spirit. It's a memory to cherish, beautiful in its mingled texture of warf and woof, attractive even in its gloomier spots and inspiring in the variety of experiences it imparted.

A tribute of warmest thanks, however brief to NASI Board Members, Past NASI Presidents, Host Clubs, and members who extended home hospitality, Presidents and Members for your support, contribution, time, talents, generosity, professional expertise and constructive criticism above all for your friendship and working together in team spirit. I would like to make a special mention of my loving thanks and appreciation to Kshiti, Lata and Rema who in true spirit of soroptimism worked silently and efficiently in friendship. Besides they are my support and strength. In spite of several hurdles, together we have strengthened the foundation of S.I. India.

My special thanks to S.I. & SIGBI Presidents, Board Members and SIGBI Administrative Officers for your advice, support, assistance and friendship.

It is now time for me to handover the baton to incoming President Shreelatha and her team. I wish them all the very best. You surely strengthen the organization and take it to higher heights. Enjoy being Soroptimists and show you care through "Friendship and Service" - "May you always find new roads to travel, new horizons to explore and new dreams to call you own". I exhort each member - "Dare to Dream - Dare to Try - Dare to Fail - Dare to Succeed".

Thank you and God bless and smile on you.

Yours in friendship,

Annette Mascarenhas
President and Councilor of NASI India

From the Editor's Desk



Compliments of the Season and X'mas greetings to all!!

It has been an eventful year for SI India, with India for the first time bagging the Award as a Country (SI India) at the Harrogate conference. We have just launched our website and this would definitely help us have more visibility across the globe. <http://sigbi.org/india/>

Clubs are doing amazing work and the need of the hour is to showcase our projects in a fitting manner on the website. We also need to enrol more members and it should be the endeavour of all Clubs to raise the bar on their projects as well as retention and enrolment of members. We also need to focus on increasing the number of Clubs in the country particularly in our Capital city, New Delhi.

A big thank you to Annette Mascarenhas and the team for leading the Clubs. We welcome the new team and wish them continued success.

Rema Ramchandran
Media Officer

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Looking for the best rates on Foreign Exchange?

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