

Report of the State Level Consultation  
On  
**GENDER BUDGETING**  
**AND MARGINALIZED WOMEN IN TAMILNADU**

*Organised By Social Watch – Tamilnadu  
on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2014, Pastoral centre, Chennai*

**Resource Persons:**

1. Ms. Beulah, Ecomwell
2. Ms. Ramathal, Ex-Chairperson, Tamilnadu State Women's Commission
3. Ms. Sheelu Francis, Director, Tamilnadu Women's Collective
4. Ms. Bimla Chandrasekar, Director, EKTA, Madurai
5. Ms. Deepthi Sukumar, Safai KaramChari Andolan, Campaign for Dalit Women for Economic Equity
6. Mr. Neethirajan, Journalist, The Hindu - Tamil
7. Ms. Vimala, Tamilnadu Dalit Women Movement
8. Ms. Sandanamary, Uzhaikum Pengal Iyakkam, Ramanathapuram
9. Ms. Ester Mariaselvam, Action Aid, Chennai
10. Ms. Sherin, Velicham
11. Ms. Qudisia Gandhi IAS (Retd), Ex-Member TN State Women's Commission; REEDA – Rural Education & Economic Development Association.
12. Ms. Prema Revathi, Independent Journalist
13. Ms. Devaneyan, Thozhamai, Chennai
14. Ms. Pandimadevy, Advocate
15. Ms. Epsibai, Advocate
16. Ms. Ajeetha, Advocate

**'Social Watch – Tamilnadu' Team**

17. Fr. John Kumar, Director
18. Fr. Manu Alphonse, Advisor
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**The consultation started with an inspirational song on women issues by Ms.Sandanamary, President, Working Women's Association.**

**Welcome address by Fr. K. John Kumar, DIRECTOR, Social Watch - Tamilnadu**

**Points from his address:**

Fr. Kumar welcomed the gathering.

Since 2008, historically speaking, Social Watch has been taking up gender budgeting and the journey is being continued. The journey has been full of milestones and from the first

milestone; Social Watch have been associated with Ms. Sheelu Francis - Women's Collective, Ms. Beulah of IWID.

The first milestone was achieved when Ms. Ramathal, was the Former head, Women Development Commission and we were able to provide awareness seminars/ discussions on gender equity with regard to budgeting at the highest level of government functionaries from the year 2008.

In this historic journey, today's consultation/conference is yet another milestone.

Fr. Kumar once again formally invited all the participants on behalf of Social Watch, Women's Collective, IWID and EKTA.

The planning committee for women/women development has not been developed at the State level. It is to be noted that even though the perspective of gender equality particularly with reference to budgeting seems a very distant dream, it is important that today's milestone must be used to attain maximum gain.

Many policies have been created for women and also for the marginalized, but these policies do not empower them to be independent but are focussed on providing relief, poverty eradication or attractively packaged sops.

The challenging question for all the participants is to ponder if people should wait for such welfare programs or are we going to create such programmes and recommend them to the government.

The budgeting for women was not only about providing economic support to women, but is related to accepting the equality of men and women from a gender perspective, particularly with reference to marginalised women – giving them importance, advocating change for them, promoting repeated discussions for them. Social Watch is inviting everybody in joining these efforts.

Looking at the milestones, it is apparent that gender equality was first discussed in Tamil Nadu way back in 1994. A foundation was laid because of the lobbying by the Social organisations, people's organisations and women's organisations.

During 1997, the government of India introduced 'Women Component Plan' as part of the 9<sup>th</sup> five year plan and directed at least 30% of the funds/benefits are earmarked in all the women related sectors. However, the five year plans launched subsequently did not feature this women component plan.

From the perspective of gender equality, the effort towards collecting data, discussing issues are being continued at the national and state level.

It is to be noted that during 1995, the fourth world conference for women that was held in Beijing introduced the concept of 'Platform for Action' – the need for a gender perspective in all the policies of the government.

Also during the year 2000, the UN Millennium Development Goals, had identified gender equality as one of its goals.

The course of discussion has been towards creating provisions in the budget for women, creating a gender sensitive budget. It is to be remembered that while the discussions have been aiming at gender sensitive budget, the ultimate goal is to create gender equality.

Therefore during 2008, the theme upheld was 'towards gender budgeting in TamilNadu' and that is being continued as budgeting with the perspective of gender equality and discussing budget based on income/expenses of men and women.

### **Gender Budgeting – TamilNadu: Research Presentation by SW-TN**

#### *Points from her address:*

Ms.Kamatchi introduced herself and requested all the participants to introduce themselves.

#### **Presentation Pointers made by Ms. Kamatchi, SW-TN:**

## **Gender Budgeting & Marginalized Women in Tamilnadu**

### **The Need for Gender Budgeting**

- While schemes for women are aplenty, the ground reality of women, especially among sections like the dalits, tribals, girl children, elderly women, HIV+ women and the migrant women, continues to be an area of grave concern.
- Now Gender Budgeting becomes a concrete yardstick to measure a Government's commitment to the empowerment of women.

### **Framework**

1. Gender Budgets – THE CONCEPT
2. Gender Budgeting – THE GLOBAL SCENE
3. Gender Budgeting – NATIONAL SCENARIO
4. Gender Budgeting – INDIAN STATES
5. Towards Gender Budgeting in Tamilnadu – Efforts of SWTN
6. Recommendations on Gender Budgeting
7. Caste-Blind Gender Budgeting & Gender-Blind Dalit Budgeting
8. What must be done? Towards Budgeting for DALIT WOMEN
9. Coalition for Gender Budgeting in Tamilnadu!?

### **GB – Concept**

**Gendering the Budget is NOT meant merely to bargain for a larger share of the resources for women or to create a separate budget for them.**

**The aim is to Analyze and Mainstream the budgetary expenditures from a Gender Perspective.**

## Gender Budgeting – Global Scene

- 1970's & 1980's: "Integrating Women in Development".
- 1990's: "Institutionalisation of Gender Issues in Development... Mainstreaming Gender in Planning..."
- 1995 Beijing Women's Conference: "Gender Perspective in all Macroeconomic Planning".
- 23rd Special session of U.N. General Assembly in June 2000: "Attention to the goal of gender equality in budgetary processes".
- In 2001, UNIFEM launched a 20-country programme (2001-2004), to engage in budget-making from a gender perspective. In 2005, the second phase of the program was launched.
- In 2008, UNIFEM came out with a resource pack on "GENDER EQUALITY NOW. Accelerating the Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals" which explores and makes recommendations on 'The costs of prioritizing, planning and budgeting for gender equality, as well as the costs of failing to do so'.
- Recently **UN WOMEN** (*South Asian Region*) gives emphasis on GRB
- Today, in about 60 countries, Gender Budget initiatives are attempted.

## Gender Budgeting in India

- Ninth Five Year Plan (1997-2002) adopted the "Women Component Plan" (*... not less than 30% of the funds are earmarked to women...*)
- 2002 UNIFEM Workshop on "Engendering National Budgets in South Asia".
- In 2004-05 the Ministry of Women and Child Development adopted "Budgeting for Gender Equity" as a Mission Statement. For now, about 56 ministries has Gender Budgeting Cells.
- The approach to the 11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan, entails strict adherence to GENDER BUDGETING across the board.
- Steering Committee on Empowerment of Women and Development of Children stressed the need for GB to be adopted in all States and UTs as "ultimately they are the implementing agencies of all developmental programmes at the field level".
- Annual Report of MWCD 2009-10 - "Women Component Plan should no longer be used as a strategy either at the Centre or at the State level. In its place as already initiated by the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Women and Child Development, we should adopt GENDER RESPONSIVE BUDGETING or GENDER BUDGETING only".
- During 2012, MWCD provided strict guidelines to all states for institutionalising Gender Budgeting.

## Gender Budgeting Statement - By MWCD - GoI

- Gender Budget Statement was first introduced in Budget 2005-06.
- In order to make further refinement to the Statement, every year the Ministries/Departments are requested through the Annual Budget Circular to highlight the quantum of public expenditure earmarked in budget for women.
- On the basis of the information thus furnished by the Ministries/Departments, the Gender Budget Statement is prepared.
- This Statement indicates, in two parts, the budget provisions for schemes that are substantially meant for the benefit of women.
- Part A details schemes in which 100% provision is for women
- Part B reflects schemes where the allocations for women constitute at least 30% of the provision.

### GB in Indian states

**Implementing GB by Government of India does not imply that  
GB is implemented at every State and at the level of Local Bodies**

- The Planning Commission (GoI) has also instructed all STATE GOVERNMENTS that it should be ensured that Gender Budgeting is a part of the Planning Process of ALL STATES as part of the directions issued to States for the Eleventh Plan and Annual Plan 2007-08.
- Some of the Indian States like Kerala, Rajasthan, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Gujarat, Punjab, Assam, Orissa, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Uttrakhand, Tripura, Nagaland & Chhattisgarh have made concrete initial steps towards Gender Budgeting.

### GB In Tamilnadu ???

**In spite of a consistent push from the Central Government for more than a decade (1997-2014),**

***NONE of the Tamilnadu Govt budget documents talks about "GB" or "WCP" till the budget year 2014-15 !***

**IT IS A PURPOSEIVE NEGLIGENCE BY THE TN STATE GOVT.**

### Key Findings

1. The actual allocation for women is not even 5% of the State Total Budget Plan Outlay over the period 1997-98 to 2004-05.
2. And over the period (1997-98 to 2004-05), at least Rs. 12,408.88 crores that were women's

due have been denied to them.

3. The 2005-06 Accounts of Tamilnadu Government reveals that most of the departments are gender-blind and gender-insensitive.
4. Percentages of Total State Budget to Women-Targeted Schemes are 3.60% in 2005-06 (Accounts).
5. Percentages of Total State Budget to Pro-Women Schemes are 2.48% in 2005-06 (Accounts).
6. The total plan outlay earmarked for women in Tamilnadu accounted for only 6.08 % of the total State Budget Plan outlay in 2005-06 (Accounts), which increased to 6.40 % in 2006-07 (Revised Estimate) and 6.70 % in 2007-08 (Budget Estimate).

## Advocacy Efforts

- Monograph on “Towards Gender Budgeting in Tamilnadu” March 2008
- A State-Level Consultation brought together key leaders of Women's Organizations, women researchers and activists in the State
- We met leaders of the various main political parties, committed bureaucrats and lobbied for the need to initiate GB in the State
- Tamilnadu State Women’s Commission organized, on 20<sup>th</sup> August 2008, a Consultation on *Gender Budgeting at the State Secretariate*
- But, till today, the promise of Gender Budgeting in the State of Tamilnadu remains an unfulfilled dream.
- And SWTN continues its advocacy efforts towards Gender Budgeting in the State both among Government circles and among civil society circles.

## GB & TN State Planning Commission

- TN SPC is merely an advisory body
- **12<sup>th</sup> FYP (2012-17) of TNSPC has promised**
  1. a state level gender outcome assessments (along with TNCDW)
  2. gender audits of public expenditure, programmes & policies.
  3. Generate standardized gender disaggregated data (including data disaggregated for SC/ST and minority women) at state & district level.
- **TN SPC Annual Plan 2012-13 (Annexure VIII-B) – No Physical Targets**

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- We recommend the following to the State Government for bringing Gender Equity in Budgeting.
- The State should develop a Mission Statement on Gender Budgeting in the State and the process of Gender Budgeting should be initiated immediately.

- Gender Budgeting should be decentralized to the Districts and at the level of all local bodies like village and town panchayats.
- Gender Budgeting should take in the special needs and rights of the more marginalised sections of women in the State, such as dalit and tribal women, unorganized women labourers and the physically challenged women.
- Gender cells must be started at the State level, both at the planning and budget departments as well as in every department of the State.
- The Gender Cells, along with the departments of Statistics and data collection should generate and compile gender-segregated data in all budgetary and economic spheres in the State.

In September 2011, SW-TN signed a contract with United Nations Women, New Delhi, to undertake a 18-month research project, entitled, ***“Tracking State Budget with Intersectionality Framework for an evolution of Gender Responsive Budget for Dalit Women in Tamilnadu”***.

The study primarily involved a desk-study of the Tamilnadu Government budgets for the three years, 2009-10, 2010-11 and 2011-12 from the point of view of benefits to Dalit women in the State. The study also attempted to identify the gaps that exist between present policy frameworks / schemes and the actual socio-economic reality of Dalit women by in-depth studies of some key state government schemes in areas crucial for the lives and livelihoods of Dalit women in the State. Thus we chose ‘Livelihoods’, ‘Access to Credit’, ‘Access to Higher Education and ‘Rehabilitation of women manual scavengers’ as issues crucial for Dalit women and chose ‘MGNREGS’, ‘Mahalir Thittam’, ‘Post- Matric Scholarships’ and ‘NSLRS’ as schemes respectively for deeper analysis.

Given the potentiality of the study for long term and sustained advocacy initiatives in the State in the future, SW-TN formulated the research as sufficiently broad-based and inclusive. Organisations and individuals, long involved in grassroots and research processes linked to Dalit women in the State, were brought in as research associates and as collaborators / advisors.

Drawing key understandings of the grassroots reality of these Dalit women through a sample study of about 160 Dalit women, spread over more than 10 districts of the State, viz-a-viz specific state schemes, the study attempted to identify the gaps that exist between these schemes and the actual needs and reality of the Dalit women.

We also interacted with a group of Dalit women panchayat presidents, as to their expectations regarding the implementation of Special Component Plan to suit the interests of Dalit women.

### **Gender-Blind SCP in Tamilnadu – A Glimpse**

“The Progress of the Dalit Community should be measured in terms of the progress made by its womenfolk” – **Ambedkar** (Speech to the Dalit Mahila Federation, 1942)

- Indeed a deeper analysis of the State schemes that go to make the Special Component Plan for the three years **(2009-10, 2010-11 and 2011-12)** clearly reveals the extent to which the **Special Component Plan in the State has remained, to a large extent, gender-blind!** There is absolutely no



strategy, in terms of schemes or projects, geared to the welfare of dalit women.

- Out of the about **190 state schemes** that go to constitute the **SCP** fund for the three years, hardly a handful (**17 to be exact!**) given below, can be taken as **pro-dalit women or dalit women-oriented**.

- It is indeed revealing to note that allocations specifically for DALIT WOMEN (who constitute 49.96% of the dalit population) is just **10.16%, 8.55%, 9.76%** of the total SCP allocation during the three years respectively!

### **Caste-Blind GRB** (WOMEN-ORIENTED SCHEMES)

- In the recent exercise, as an exploration into intersectional possibilities of Gender Budgeting in the State, we have closely looked into schemes that could be termed as '**pro-women**' or '**women-targeted**' among the state schemes for the years **2009-10, 2010-11 and 2011-12** and to see as to **what space dalit women have within them**.

- **Out of the 86 schemes** that were planned, only a few (**18**) can truly be claimed as either "**dalit women-targeted**" or "**pro-dalit women**". And if one removes the schemes that are under SCP, there are hardly any schemes, visualised exclusively for the welfare of dalit women.

### What must be done?

### Towards Budgeting for DALIT WOMEN

- Concretely, every **GENDER RESPONSIVE BUDGETING** effort must have a well-defined component of SCP for dalits.

- Similarly every **SPECIAL COMPONENT PLAN FOR DALITS** effort must have a well-defined component of GRB.

- To this extent every cell that deals with **GRB or SCP** at the level of central ministries as well as the departments of state governments must have a **dedicated intersectional unit for dalit women**, adequately funded and duly empowered.

- Of course, going by earlier experiences of both GRB and SCP, *mere adequate allocations will not suffice*. **The quality of the schemes developed is crucial** as well **regular monitoring and evaluation**.

TOWARDS ADVOCACY for BUDGETARY RIGHTS of MARGINALIZED WOMEN

- A Beginning !!!

## **Panel Discussion on Budgeting based on Gender perspective, and Income/Expenses of TamilNadu Government– perspectives and initiatives of Experts working in the field - Chaired by Ms.Beulah, Director, Ecomwel.**

Members of the panel:

- Ms.Ramathal, Ex-president, TamilNadu Women's Commission – "TamilNadu Women's Commission and initiatives taken for gender budgeting".

- Ms.Sheelu Francis, TamilNadu Women's Collective – “Political environment in TamilNadu and gender budgeting.”
- Ms.BimlaChandrasekhar, Ekta, “Gender budgeting and EKTA's initiatives’
- Ms.DeepthiSukumar, “Need and creation of gender budgeting in today's changing economic environment,”
- Mr.NeedhiRajan, Journalist, “Media's perspective on Gender Budgeting”.
- Ms.Neelavalli, Women's initiatives in Development, “Rural Women's perspective on gender budgeting”.

Session Moderator: Ms. Beulah, Director, Ecomwel

**Ms.Beulah's opening remarks:**

This is an important juncture as elections are nearing. Organisations working for gender budgeting therefore need to make the political parties aware of the situation and could also provide recommendations.

Social Watch has brought out important statistical information that shows lack of gender sensitivity in budgeting. It is important that organisations involved in this field carry this forward. Organisations need to thank and congratulate the Social Watch team for bringing out detailed information on this critical issue. It is also praiseworthy of Social Watch for bringing together different groups working for women's development and sharing this perspective. This is the right beginning at the right time for initiating action with regard to the information shared. Organisations working in this field have to carry this forward.

Media has a big role in mainstreaming social issues. Only a few responsible journalists take up reporting of social issues. In this regard, Mr.Needhirajan, a senior journalist is to discuss “Gender budgeting from media's perspective”.

**Points from Mr.Neethirajan's address:**

It's important to recall orientation provided by Fr.Kumarand Fr.Manuon the relevance of understanding budget from the perspectives of dalits around 10 years back to various groups, media group being one among them.

That orientation has helped experts understand issues and that has paved way for movements.

The Tamil translation of the report on gender budgeting is completed and it will be available to all the enthusiastic readers.

In today's world, writing about caste issues and gender issues are looked at as second grade assignments in terms of reporting. It is not being encouraged.

When looking into protection of civil rights and Special Component Plan, a senior IAS officer, Dr. Krishnan, IAS, based in Delhi informed that post schooling 30-35% women of the non-SC communities took up graduate courses in higher education whereas 1% of SC women(15 dalit castes) took up higher education. The senior IAS Officer, one of the architects of the Special Component Plan was of the opinion that the Special Component Plan has to reach the dalit women and empower them specifically.

In TamilNadu, as per 2001 census, percentage of dalits who have taken up higher education is 2.7%. The percentage of persons belonging to Arundadiyar (dalit) community who have taken up higher education is less than 1%. This figure is not gender sensitive and therefore the number of women who missed out on higher education is not clearly known.

Media can throw light on the plight of Arundadiyar women, the challenges that exist in accessing education for them, however it is not easy as such reporting is not encouraged and it is only after facing several hardships that such articles can be published.

Also, speaking of such issues is discerned to be casteist reporting and therefore it is not encouraged. By not discussing such critical issues, those issues are not do not exist for many.

Now as this society can be perceived as casteist and male dominated, it is important to understand intersectional discrimination faced by Dalit Women. There is no equivalent term in Tamil to get across the term intersectional discrimination. After consulting eminent colleagues such as Ms.Revathy, a suitable phrase; women facing discrimination at multiple levels has been identified as a phrase in Tamil to connote intersectional discrimination.

This meeting is crucial in bring forward this concept of intersectional discrimination for in-depth discussion of among activists, experts in this field.

While more understanding is evolving in terms of stakes in the budget, that is, if dalits can demand that a portion in the budget be set aside and if women can demand their share, the implementation of the budget presents a different perspective. The bureaucracy is clear to say that these stakes cannot be realised.

Governments at the central level and the state level are only interested in infrastructure development.

In analysis, it is said that governments collecting more indirect tax than direct tax are engaged in exploiting the economic resources of people. India being a country that

collects more of indirect taxes than direct taxes; thus creating environment of exploitation. By not providing for dalits, women and marginalised in the budget, the State is committing injustice.

Another point to be noted is that constitutional duties such as food, clothing, and shelter have been converted into schemes/policies; by doing so governments are not having a long term vision but are changing practises every five years. The policies/schemes are given a political hue and therefore are not effective.

With regard to reporting on budget, eminent journals report on the quality of budget, some of them compare the budget of the current year with that of the past year. Political parties comment on budgets, make known their views during elections. They do not comment on budgets on the basis of issues. Parties belonging to the opposition rate the budget as not very effective, parties allied to the parties in the government rate the budget favourably adding a political colour to the discussion.

Media and activists can play an important role in analysing the budgets objectively, with the consideration that it is people's money that is being spent on an everyday basis.

As I am in the media, I take it as a responsibility to write/comment on budgets regularly.

Ms.Beulah summarised the points.

**Points from Ms.Ramathal's address:**

It is important to understand that our democratic electoral system has been corrupted because of bribery and it has been compromised and therefore women are not in a position to lobby for a better budget.

Changes need to happen at the attitudinal level among members in a family. Son preference and spending more for son is part of the family ethos in our society. So even a family budget shows discrimination in gender budgeting. So there is no question of equality. If equality is not there, then the question of rights is not there.

Women have to realise that they are not second rate citizens but are in fact the first ones to evolve as a human being and that is when women can start talking about budget. It is important that women take leadership, lack of it will not lead to equality in gender budgeting.

If we take a closer look it can be seen that whether it is political parties or other forums, men have the financial controls. Even in governments, women may be given

a supporting role, if made minister, she may be given the Social welfare Ministry- women are not given portfolios such as defence, finance and home affairs.

It is very rarely that women are given those kind of roles and that too because the lady may have the required seniority---It's a fact that if women are given finance ministry, then they will deal in a very professional way---Women cannot be corrupt...however there is a change, it is found that even women are engaged in corrupt practices.

Exceptions cannot become a rule...it is a fact that women are purposefully kept out of governance as they have the ability to perceive irregularities in budgeting.

It is to be noted that in every activity related to development, women must be put in the front. As part of my experience, I would like to inform that myself and Ms.Kamatchi, Mr.Deva, Fr.Durai and others discussed about gender budgeting with the Chief Secretary of the then Government in 2008. The Chief Secretary said that the concept of gender budgeting is agreeable in spirit.

It was not very clear if the government functionaries at the higher level understood the concept of gender budgeting. The main idea that they were having with regard to women's development was based on the support provided to Self-help groups.

There is a general belief that 70% of women have become empowered. This is a misconception. It is believed that if women are provided with small loans and are taught to open bank accounts, then they automatically attain empowerment. All of us know that this is not empowerment. Government wants to believe that women are utilising the funds provided to them.

However, it is evident from the excellent report prepared by Ms.Kamatchi as to how women and particularly Dalit women are unable to benefit from the government schemes.

As a person hailing from an agricultural family, I am able to understand the travails of Dalit women, Society sees these women from a different perspective, and there is lack of belief with regard to their education and development. The fact that they are equal to others is not recognised, the fact that these women also have intelligence and ability is not recognised.

I have spoken to government functionaries once again and reiterated that this current budget should have a gender perspective, should be based on gender. My suggestions have evoked favourable responses. It is to be seen and observed if the current budget has the required gender sensitivity.

I feel that this is an opportune moment and in order to make the government think in these terms, we can even conduct a struggle/movement to showcase our requests.

It's a fact that such a struggle/movement will involve negative consequences, but it is also a fact that there is no other way to get their attention.

Also while voting, people must think and act conscientiously. Women must use the power that they have in their constituencies particularly in a panchayat to seek education, health and rural development.

The media person brought out the fact that less than 2% of women got higher education. Generally only 7% of women get the opportunity to do higher education. Only 1% of women go up to the Ph.D. level. Now the situation is slightly better. That too only because UGC (University Grants Commission) had brought forth a rule saying that only if Teachers complete Ph.D. they can get promotion. It is sad to note that only 1% of women take up research at the higher level.

As 50% of the electorate is made of women, women should use the power to get a better budget. It's a sad fact that even after the availability of colleges and women's studies department, only 7% of women take up higher studies.

Government is able to distort fact easily. For example, out of the 35 lakh students who have enrolled for education, only 9 lakh students take up public examination. But the government reports that 9 lakh students are taking public examination withholding the enrolment figures. It can be understood that it is the Dalit women who have missed out this education.

I call upon others for organising an awareness campaign for all the women on the availability of free education not only up to the school level but also up to the college level. It's a cause for concern that even after the availability of such facilities, girls do not continue studying....

It is because of the attitude of the society and the individual. Also girl students are not allowed to choose options, it is the family that selects the course that the girls need to study which also contributes to the discontinuation of the study.

Education and non-discriminatory child rearing practices in the context of gender should be the values that are followed in all the families. The general attitude that women must be submissive, should not question much continues to be passed down.

While going through the report prepared by Social Watch, I am able to note that there is no mention of a monitoring committee within TamilNadu State Women Development Commission – if such a provision made then the monitoring committee will be able to analyse budgets and reiterate the issue of gender sensitive budgets. Women Development Commission has responsibility and powers to intervene in the problems and issues faced by women. It is a different issue that we need to ponder if

these powers are utilized properly. The commission can summon a person if there is a need.

I would like to share a personal experience wherein I had to write a letter to ask Deputy General of Police to meet me regarding pending cases, however typist working for me flatly saying that I was only a superintend and it will be not suitable to ask a DGP to answer my queries. However, I asked for the letter to be sent and the DGP did meet me.

This incident goes to prove that even if it is a small initiative; women are reluctant to take initiatives. There is a lot of self-doubt among women if they can do things.

The women commission had powers, the commission can assume judicial review if needed, many members of the state women commission do not know the powers and therefore do not use them.

Every department should have monitoring cell that will look at gender budgeting with reference to that department. The report by Social Watch illustrates the amount of money that has not been provided for women.

We live in a male dominated society and laws are created by men. Therefore seeking equality and equal treatment is very hard as men are unable to comprehend that women are also individuals like them. Changes for the benefit of women must be brought out in Education, health and rural development. Social control particularly in terms of control on the basis of caste is severely discriminating against women. The attitude of non-acceptance towards inter-caste marriages is distressing. Women must learn to come out of such controls and move forward.

I call upon the team from Social Watch to seek the support of bureaucrats to promote the idea of gender budgeting in the government.

Ms.Beulah summarised the points.

**Points from Ms.Sheelu Francis's address:**

2014 is a festive year as elections are going to happen in this year. Everybody is talking about politics particularly that of party politics. We are all here to discuss the political environment in TamilNadu and the ways in which the topic of gender budgeting be brought into the political discussion.

The recent political discussion in TamilNadu is centred on the 10 betrayals (dhrogams). If we talk about women's issues in a gathering, if there are women among the participants they will listen. If the majority of the participants are men, they will not listen to the discourse. For men, women's issue is a non – issue.

As this is the month of March, there are a lot of discussions on women. It can be seen that the main participants in these sessions are women. Women participating in these events draw up a declaration and that is the end of the discussion.

However, with regard to other issues such as the vindication of Tamils identified in Ex PM Rajiv Gandhi's case there is widespread discussion. It's a cause for concern women's issues do not draw much of attention and discourse.

Women are not looked at as human beings. If such a perspective was there in the society, there would not have been any need for us to come together to have this discussion and the government functionaries would include the agenda of gender equality. Political leaders talk about issues concerning defence and discuss defence budgets, but have not talked about women's issues.

The political leaders justify state's promotion and sale of alcohol saying that as alcohol is available in the neighbouring states, it is difficult to stop promoting and selling of alcohol. Even though these leaders say that they are aspiring to become Prime Minister of the Country, they do not seem to have national vision.

In TamilNadu, with regard to budgeting, Women are marginalised. Secondly, every issue is influenced by the issue of caste. If there is a problem, there is a tendency to analyse the caste orientations of the persons involved in the problem; the caste orientation of persons supporting the persons involved in the problem.

This casteist outlook is a curse in TamilNadu. The Dravidian parties who have been alternately forming governments in TamilNadu came into power a long time ago.

There was a major revolution that happened in TamilNadu against caste. From then on it has been only the Dravidian parties and not the national party Congress. The Dravidian parties have only casteist outlook.

In this scenario, with regard to the state of Dalit affairs, even if all the Dalits come together and cry for their rights, the political parties are trying to see as to how Dalits could be used/exploited. There is very little regard for the rights of Dalits and no regard at all for the rights of women.

Dalits are coming together to form a movement and subsequently a party, other political parties interact them because there is no other choice available.

There is also a lot of caste politics among castes. Mr. Needhirajan who spoke earlier was talking about the problems faced by Arundadhiyars. It is distressing to note that among Dalit caste groups, there is a lot of politics. Even yesterday, I witnessed a lot of communal tensions because an Arundadiyar girl and an Adidravida boy were in a



relationship. Inter Dalit community marriages are not encouraged. Dalit communities are ready to get into conflict in case couples from different Dalit groups are engaged in a relationship. This is a pathetic situation brought about by castes in TamilNadu.

If we read through the local magazines, it can be inferred that the Dravidian parties calculate people's votes on the basis of their caste and this clearly illustrates the extent to which these parties are influenced by caste.

This illustrated the great influence that the caste system has on the society.

Ms.Ramathal, mentioned that individuals must follow the path to change and must not get involved in corrupt practices. But I feel that since the individual is part of the society,he/she would be influenced by society. Only problems are available in society and no role models are available.

There are no role models to be found even among women. So it is very clear that our society is divided on the lines of caste and several other issues.

The political party that has formed the government now and the parties that were in power earlier have been designed policies that are anti-women.

Taking forward gender budgeting, if we ask for 30% or 49.5% of the budge from the government, the government will be ready to spend that money for self-help groups, cradle scheme or the scheme for economic growth or for Amma canteen or for Tasmac.

The government is referring to the gold for wedding thaali (ornament) scheme as a women targeted scheme. The Cradle baby scheme is referred to as women targeted scheme. Actually speaking these schemes are anti-women.

The society does not have a clear and correct understanding on women's issues. Therefor even before thinking about a gender sensitive budget, we need to realize the society in general lacks gender perspective.

Other states also do not have much of gender sensitivity with regard to the budgets. States such as Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh have started to look at gender oriented budgets. These states have started using the gender equality perspective since the governments (BJP) have introduced the concept.

Kerala even without the BJP government started discussion on gender budgeting and they have not allocated 30% but only 10% of their budget for women. If we assess the difference the increase in the budget has made to the status of women, we would be able to see no difference.

Violence against women has not gone down but has increased. The more educated women are the more injustice they are suffering.

So it is to note that with regard to the political environment in TamilNadu, we are not coming out of casteism, gender discrimination, honour killings.

Women are caught in these currents...does that mean we have to wait till these problems are resolved.

It is to be understood that a general perspective on gender equality should evolve and sensitivity towards gender budgeting need to be promoted. Both these things should happen on a simultaneous basis...and this should happen in this current period in time.

There are several individuals in this group who have tried to do something for gender equality by participating in politics, to make use of opportunities, to become people's representative and bring about change.

There is this question as to how many of us really understand about budgeting. During 2008, after a training program for Secretaries, in private conversation, it was revealed that 75% of expenses are incurred towards administration. The 25% of the budget are allotted for schemes and there is no question for special treatment to women within the limited scope of this budget. It was a cause for concern to note that the Secretaries did not understand the importance of gender budgeting.

Several efforts over a period of time have not been successful. However the 2014 elections could be a major opportunity for promoting our views. Several parties are releasing their political manifesto. Some parties are mailing people asking them to give information/details of issues/problems and their expectations.

The participants in this meeting are from different districts and organisations. We must approach parties and help them in formulating points on gender equality and budgeting to be part of their election manifesto.

With regard to our State, it will be great achievement if we are able to influence the government to use the term gender budgeting in the 2014-15 budget for the state.

I am sure that if organisations put up a concerted effort, change will happen in the State. It should be mentioned that since 2007, Women's collective has been creating awareness through several training programmes across TamilNadu and the organisation is willing to cooperate in efforts, struggles along with other organisations.

Ms.Beulah summarized Ms.Sheelu Francis's address.

*Points from Ms.BimlaChandrasekar's address:*

We are nearing women's day...Would like to wish everybody for women's day.

This year's theme for women's day is 'inspiring change'. So, with hope note it is to be believed that we can bring change. Change is to be brought about in our thinking, in our action so that collectively we bring about a pressure so that there is a political will to include gender responsive budget into the entire pattern of budget in TamilNadu. So when we were discussing about budget, we did not get involved in the politics.

However, we were involved in the national and international processes, particularly with the protection of women from domestic violence act, (it must be recalled that all the organisations working for women issues contributed towards evolving this act), the implementation of it is characterised by a monitoring process at the national level.

During this monitoring process, there is a general reflection on the lack of budget for this act across States. Towards Nirbaya's case, a 1000 crore fund has been allocated on a yearly basis; if prevention of domestic violence act is also given such a budget it will be useful. There is no fund allocation for prevention of domestic violence act.

With this in background, small groups across all the districts of TamilNadu started brainstorming on the budget necessary for the implementation of prevention of domestic violence act.

There have been a few opportunities for interacting with the participants/organisers of this program on gender budgeting over a period of time. Ms.Kamatchi spoke about gender budgeting at the South Asian Feminist network on my request.

In the long run, we have come to understand only with the allocation of funds, laws can be put into practice and implementation can be undertaken with regard to gender sensitive action.

We initiated discussion among small groups. When I had visited Bangladesh, I had a memorable experience. I enquired about women who occupied ministerial posts such as the Prime Minister, Finance Minister, Agricultural Minister from a rickshaw puller and he was of the opinion that the lady who was the minister for finance ministry may not do well as she did not have much of prior experience. In fact there were 15 new ministers. I had to ask as to how without providing opportunities, women can gain experience. I questioned as to why women were looked at with suspicion. I informed that person that in his own home, it was his mother or his wife who maintained the household budget. They managed the family affairs...I had to inform that the state or the nation is the extension of the family. So it is not impossible, only men have to change their outlook. This seems to be a big question mark.

In this context, we wanted to achieve an understanding on gender perspective among many people and ourselves. In order to start the process, I approached People's budget initiative, based in Delhi – Centre for Budget Governance & Accountability, with whom I already had an association. I have been negotiating with them for the past two years to come here and conduct workshop. 3 resource persons from CBGA and Fr.Manu from Social Watch conducted a two and half days workshop for 30 participants.

As part of the workshop we learnt as to what is the concept of gender budgeting, why should gender budgeting be important, how should it be done --- the participants were not only NGOs but were drawn from a pool of people who would think in these terms...we brainstormed on who the participants could be and figured out that students and a few staff members from nearby college would be interested and therefore approached them. We particularly approached students from commerce department. It could be observed that Students from the Economics department were researching on this topic of gender budgeting for their M.Phils and Phds. We integrated them in this training program.

So we were to get very good insights. The participants promised that they would look through the lens of gender budgeting in their own institutions. After this process got over, and after a month's time, there was also a follow-up. It was then we were discussing about a core team in the presence of Fr.Manu. The core team would comprise people from different institutions and different intersections and we want to create a gender budget cell.

Also as part of the follow-up meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> of February of the gender budget cell, we looked at a few specific issues. It was decided that we organise a simple workshop on gender budgeting in Tamil, organise consultations and circulate hand bills to many people, even to politicians. They do not have any knowledge. During CEDAW process, sometimes though when we bring issues forward, even a few politicians, officers get interested. So we need to create awareness on a broad base. Secondly our analytical knowledge needs to be enhanced. We are planning a program on strengthening/deepening our analytical knowledge/capacity on gender budgeting.

As Ms.Sheelu had earlier informed, these elections are a good opportunity whether we like it or not. Whether we like it or not we have to use this opportunity of elections to our table. Organisations have to touch mainly upon two issues and ask the political parties to integrate these concepts their political manifestos. If the political parties don't undertake to act, women will start thinking differently.

We have to do this because it is a pain to see that even after 30 years of work; women have not been considered as an agency. It's a different thing to see them as vote bank other than an agency that have the power to change. Many efforts should be put in by

different organisations. There is no alternative. We should emerge as an integrated voice in order to capitalise on the opportunity provided by the parliamentary elections. My congratulations to Social Watch for presenting information on gender budget so effectively. We are happy to note the initiative taken

This gender budgeting is a tool. I am also involved in the alternate report (preparation process) of CEDAW wherein Articles 7 and 8 talk about women's political and public participation. When we look into these aspects, the impact indicators which are considered as very important in the process of CEDAW reporting is based on the analysis of money spent. The idea is to understand as to how the schemes for women have brought about changes, and to what extent the gap in the equality between men and women has been reduced. We are involved in the process of monitoring of these aspects. We would like to align with you, we would like to take this forward and to see that something positive comes out of it.

Ms. Beulah summarized Ms. Bimla Chandrashekar's address.

**Points from Ms. Deepthi Sukumar's address:**

I thank Social Watch for giving me this opportunity. During September (2013), our organisation arranged a consultation/convention for manual scavengers at Delhi. This was a collaborative effort with the ministry of Social justice and empowerment and officers were part of the effort. Among the participants who were manual scavengers, many of them were women – had come for sharing in view of rehabilitation.

I would like to mention the account of Mina, a lady whose house was near the metro station and also around 15 women who had their residences near her. Ms. Mina informed that I am liberated from the job of manual labourer but I still do not have any other alternative as livelihood. E-rickshaws are very popular in Delhi – these rickshaws can carry 8 people with one driver and they can be operated using batteries. This is similar to the share autos in Chennai. These rickshaws are slow. Women can easily drive these rickshaws as the mechanism is not complex and shifting of gears is not required. Not that woman cannot drive complex vehicles.

Ms. Mina asked that through the rehabilitative scheme, she be provided with an e-rickshaw. That is she is discussing about an alternative livelihood. By that time of September, the prohibition of manual scavenging act had come into force. These people had not received their monetary provision of the rehabilitation which was around 1 lakh rupees. The debate raised by the officer's was that the scheme provided only 50 to 75000 rupees – where is the question of giving 1 lakh rupees. The debate continued and the money for rehabilitation was not given.

Our organisation funded 1 lakh rupees for the rickshaw. Today through the rickshaw, Ms. Mina is able to earn 15000 rupees on a monthly basis.

This experience illustrates the extent to which our nation's planners and implementers are negligent...to what extent they are ignoring....

The officials are saying that 50000 rupees can be given and that can be extended to 75000 rupees. They are not talking about 1 lakh rupees. The money for rehabilitation is not a grant but a subsidy and one component is given as a loan that needs to be repaid. So it is not a big deal.

Recently the finance minister, Mr.Chidambaram announced the budget. The economic survey report which was widely reported in the media looked mainly into mining sector, manufacturing sector, corporate sector. The focus was mainly on these sectors. The discussion was on the figures that showed decrease and reasons for issues.

However, 2011 census data reveals that Dalit women fall behind on all statistics in comparison to all the national averages. If you consider, literacy, health, any development indicator if the national average is 60%, the figures for Dalit women will fall between 45-50%. That is the extent of the shortfall and gap.....gap between the national average and statistics of Dalit women. There is no discussion about this issue anywhere.

So what is the reason? Society and all of us are responsible for not discussing and debating on these issues concerning Dalit women. Dalit movements, women movements, civil society movements,are not discussing these issues related to Dalit women. With regard to overall financial situation, the government is being very corrupt. The gap between expenses and income is referred to as fiscal deficit. When expenses are higher than the income, it is referred to as fiscal deficit.The government claims that it hasdecreased the fiscal deficit, actually government has reduced public expenses i.eit has reduced spending in schemes such as MNREGEA - rural employment guarantee programme, in primary education, higher education, in health care, in food security, in Public Distribution System.

However, it is to be noted that the subsidy given by the government to corporate sector, companiesand manufacturing sector, have not been reduced. There is a big doubt as to whose government is ruling the country. Obviously, it is the corporate sector that is ruling the country. They are involved in all the planning. They are able to bring in their requirements into the budget. For the last 3 years, I, Fr.Kumar and Mr.Gandhi have attended several consultations sessions on budget.

The TamilNadu state Government has arranged consultations on the budget allocated for the schemes of Dalits...We have been working extensively on this, trying to understand as to how many schemes designed by us for the development of SC/STs/Dalits have been accepted and implemented .....Mr.Gandhihs been very supportive of this in this endeavour...We have designed 30 schemes and brought it to

the notice of the TamiNadu government and it is unfortunate that not even one scheme has been accepted for implementation. So even after arranging these consultations they have not responded in the expected manner.

With regard to planning of budget, since last year it can be observed that Dalits, Dalit women, women in general have not been part of the consultation process. However, the Chief Minister does hold consultations with the companies/MNCs before budgets and no scheme is implemented without consultations. Every State and nationally also, the respective government engage in several consultations with the corporate sector before the budgets or any before introducing policies/schemes.

Mr.Needhirajan was talking about lack of direct taxes....We know that companies have to pay taxes for their profits. Individuals also pay taxes for the income they accrue, property taxes and wealth taxes are there in practice. We need to account the indirect tax that we pay for each and every thing that we buy, it is common to everybody, and it is common to both poor and rich

In this country, two third parts of tax collected comes from indirect taxes and only one third of the taxes come from direct tax payment. That means, people who contribute for paying one third of the entire tax amount get access to subsidies .....The Special Economic Zone are exempted from taxes, they are special tax free zones...they are given tax holidays for one year....so subsidies for the corporate sector continue...no changes are made.

Government is not ready to bring in changes in the conditions of women, Dalit Women and SC/STs. We need to raise questions on issues: who are consulted, and with whose interests these budgets are being planned, and to whom does the money belong to. The revenue generated by the government is through people...contributed by non-corporates, common people and women ...when buying soap or a phenyl or anything.

We need to ask as to how the budget is planned and how the schemes are planned...its important to ask these questions. For this we need some knowledge....all women need to understand the budgetary processes...the incomes and expenses that need to be accounted for....a detailed understanding is needed among us .....only then we will be able to engage in ideating as to how the budget needs to be designed.

Ms.Kamatchi, very beautifully analysed the budget and is able to show the extent to the SC/ST population, women, Dalit women are not benefitted. Only 17 schemes are women oriented and very few are Dalit women oriented. As Ms.Sheelu pointed out the so called women oriented schemes are actually anti-women schemes. Therefore it can be said that there is not even a single scheme that is for women empowerment or for the empowerment of Dalit women.

Already only 3% is earmarked for women in the budget and the 3% comprises of these schemes... so the amount that would go in for the benefit of Dalit Women is negligible. In TamilNadu, the population of Dalit Women is 10%. Census data reveals that 20% of population in TamilNadu is made up of SCs (Dalits) – in this case we can say that half of the Dalit population would be women. So the percentage of Dalit Women in TamilNadu is 10%. So we need to see that 10% of the budget is allocated only for Dalit Women.

Another thing is that we should not accept the schemes that are presently given...schemes for Dalit women these schemes are not for development or empowerment...they are only welfare based .... These schemes are for marriage, providing sewing machines, providing tailoring machines ..... No schemes are directed towards creation of wealth, asset formation .....None of these schemes would fall into that category.

Another aspect that we need to look into is that the schemes designed for everybody, women are also applied for Dalit women. If all women are given marriage assistance, Dalit women are also given marriage assistance .....If higher education scholarship is provided for women, Dalit women are also provided with Scholarships...that is not empowerment...how will the gap be ever closed...no action is being taken towards closing the gap...Dalit women are facing problems because of the gap....The gap or inequality existing between Dalit Women and other Women, Dalits and others is not being addressed by these schemes.

It is not that they are not thinking about it ....It's just that they do not purposely want to anything....Purposefully we are being denied of rights...purposefully we are being denied of consultative processes, all processes to close the gaps ...And that is because of Casteism that we have discussed earlier especially the rural class which is very blatant. How do we handle this situation or respond to this situation?

One way is to make use of the elections, we can interfere with the political manifestos, we need to engage with the political parties when they are framing their manifestos, and we have to tell them about the schemes that are required.

Another thing to be noted is that, every time the budget session is in progress, budget interim is in progress, we need to put forward our proposal and demand that we need to be given due allocation in the budget. It is our money and therefore should be given to us. When we go for consultations, we need to go prepared with our schemes and our programmes.

In order to carry this forward to reality, we need to have a law...we need to have a law on gender responsive budgeting .... So far it has been only a plan..Proposal...a scheme .... It's a policy...That is why TamilNadu government for many years now has been ignoring...not that they don't want...not that they do not know anything



about gender budgeting...we can understand if IAS officers from Social Welfare department do not know, but what about Officers in the Finance Department...Finance Secretary? What about Chief Secretary? So many people are discussing and debating on gender responsive budgeting .... If they do not know, it shows their mentality, their mind set..... a mind set to deny .....we need to break this mind set...we also need to aspire...

Me and Ms.Kamatchi through **UNWOMEN** project, wanted to plan interventions for Dalit women. Initially, She suggested that we plan to take a look at fields where of Dalit women work extensively (5-6 areas), we would try to understand the schemes, facilities available for them ...we would try understand their needs and aspirations.....and we need to analyse the gaps that exist ....we want to look at groups in Rural areas, engaged in unorganised labour, unclean occupations, microfinance, status of Dalit women in Panchayati raj and status of women in higher education...these are the five sectors that need to be studied...we need to study the situation of Dalit Women in these 5 sectors....we need to study the schemes of government towards Dalit women and how these schemes respond to their needs...Only if we analyse the gaps in these schemes, we will understand completely.

That plan did not work out .However we engaged with 10 Dalit women who were from 10 different districts – Selvi, Veeramma, Rupa, Jeyarani, Amirthavalli, Mangai...they have all come for the meeting today..all of us together started a campaign for Dalit women ....We have working at the economic aspect of development for the Dalit women and we have been engaging with the Dalit women....When we interacted with the Government for budgeting we came to know about a few schemes...these women are highly talented....Ms.Selvi is involved in a cooperative and she is the President, she is the leader for four hundred women...Ms.Veeramma is into business....Ms.Amirthavalli runs her own NGO and is in charge of several groups and in the way Ms.Jeyarani and others are doing very good in their NGOs, fields .....None of them are supported by Government schemes ...even tough one of them is involved in Cooperatives sector, there are no special benefits or proportionate allocation for Dalit women in the cooperative sector ... we need to realise that many Dalit women are in cooperatives. Also in entrepreneurship...that is business entrepreneurship .....the sewing machines....the cows and goats scheme are not required. The women are interested in different businesses, some trade...some commerce ...that kind of support is required.

When we met with a person associated Finance minister, these women gave speeches in front of him...he was of the opinion that you cannot undertake to run such enterprises ...only members from Jain/Saitcommunity can do it ...how can you undertake businesses...we met the Finance Secretary...Fr.Kumar was also present there...who was not enthusiastic with regard to our ideas.

The need of the hour is a law, only then we can demand. So far, Government has been giving many excuses .....as long as it remains as a policy, proposal or a scheme, there are going to be many excuses and there are many ways for the government to easily escape from doing its duty. But when it becomes a legal act, a law, the ways to escape is less for the government. Of course it cannot be said that all the acts are implemented...but we have a weapon to make them understand. So that is what I plan to take...i.e. my plan of action.

Ms. Beulah summarised the points.

***Points from Ms.Beulah address when she spoke on Ms.Neelavalli's behalf:***

As Ms.Neelavalli, Director, IWID is unable to be part of the program, I have been asked to be part of this programme and share IWID's experiences. Many of you may know about IWID's activities....IWID has been working for women for the past 30 years. IWID has been raising voices for the rights of the women in society. Especially, in relation to budgeting, IWID has been working at various points in time. IWID has been regularly interfacing with various government bodies over the past two years in Delhi.

IWID has been working through interfaces on making the unheard voices of women being expresses in plan and policies of women. In the process of engendering five year plans, IWID has been able to use its in depth field knowledge. IWID has been engaged in sustained work in the area of women and governance, where men and women are working together.

Even now, across different states, training of trainers is being conducted. This process is happening on the basis of the felt need for change. We would like to share IWID's experience from the rural women / gender budgeting perspective.

It is important to note that during last financial year's budget (2013-14), 200 crores have been allocated for "women in difficult circumstances". This "women in difficult circumstances" refer to most vulnerable women, single women and widows. This money goes into the creation of working women's hostel, one stop crisis centres, national health plan and effective implementation of the domestic violence act. This money is also spent towards implementation of sexual harassment at workplace act.

In this background, if we consider the programmes for rural women, then we can think of firstly MGNREGA towards which major chunk of money is going, secondly road constructions in rural areas are also given importance. We need to note the fact that women related budget are being channelized towards these areas.

As Ms.Bimla had earlier said, the Nirbhaya fund has been created during the year 2013-2014. The budget is towards survivors of violence, acid attack survivors and survivors of sexual violence.

In IWID, over the past few years there has been a discussion on how we have all been critical of the existing system in the government. All the women related organisations have been evaluating the government schemes and we have been giving judging the schemes as good and bad. Over and above that we have not been able to come up with alternative plans.

Today we are talking about anti-women schemes. But we the people sitting here, are we proposing alternative schemes for women. Of course it is a fact that we have been critiquing the schemes of TamilNadu such as Thalikkuthangamkodu or Tasmac or ThottilKolandai. We have a right to do so but the question to be asked is whether we are proposing alternative schemes to counter these.

This realisation became a challenge to IWID ...which led us towards a search. In that search, IWID started considering land and livelihood rights as an important issue. IWID started interconnecting this issue with Women and Governance and violence against women and started working. The first being land...Ms.DeepthiSukumar was telling us that we are talking of welfare schemes but where is asset creation for women, where is empowerment processes, this lead us towards a search and we started a process - a pilot women's collective farming project in TamilNadu. So it began in TamilNadu....we learnt a few lessons from it.

We learnt that women who were landless could get involved in farming .....it showed that it was not a major issue....it is important to note that already Dalit and marginalised women have been agricultural workers earlier...I would like to share that even the organisation in which I am associated have been investing our time for looking at collective farming as a strategy towards empowerment ...there were doubts if this strategy would work but it has brought results beyond economic sphere – socioeconomic benefits, political benefits, cultural assertions, and it has helped alternate cultural promotions.

Now, in TamilNadu, IWID has initiated an action – oriented research study. 25 farms that have been supported all over the country are being supported all over the country part of the research study. These farms are spread across Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, TamilNadu, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Women's collective efforts in farming could be seen as an empowering sector alternatively .....it could be proposed.

We have not come to the conclusion in this study but the study has been going on for nearly 2 to 2 and half years now, we are in this process of collecting information and we are also in the process of learning.

We want to bring in alternative way of doing things with regard to land rights policies and trying to record our voices, we have been trying to bring in these assertions at the national level. Especially in terms of allocating and Ms.VeenaAgarwal and others who are associating with us have been very supportive.

In this process it is evident that there is an alternative scheme that is available for asset building, assertion of people's rights. With these inputs what is that we are supposed to do. So critiquing has to simultaneously go with alternative proposals ... there is a necessity for us to provide alternatives based on our field experiences.

This is the message that Ms.Neelavalli wanted me to deliver today. Critiquing is important. At the same time searching for alternatives which is practical is also important. Documenting these processes should be taken up. People who feel that there is a need to know more about these process can share their experiences in a different platform altogether.

So with regard to IWID's initiatives, we are looking in terms of gender budgeting and we should have alternative schemes to present before the government. We do not have one field from one state but have many farms cutting across 9 states .....we are now working with 25 farms and our experiences have been many. I can speak with authenticity because we are supporting 7 -8 farms directly and working with them. The situations have been different. The situation soon after harvesting the first crop ....women have said that they cannot continue with this...but in the second process, we have noticed that people are able to assert. We have to see it not only as agricultural we need to broaden our perspective and see how this could be violence reducing .....we have seen experiences of reducing violence within home ....we have profoundly broken down gender stereo typing. We have established a collective farm in Tirukkarai – we facilitate and support this farm – During the facilitation process it could be observed that there were several myths. With regard to first crop, women cannot touch the traditional plough. The whole village said that crop will not flourish, the land will become infertile. We have challenged these myths not by just staying quiet, putting up with it but we said we would do it. We will see what come out of it ...by doing that we were able to tell everybody that rains did not stop, crops did not fail, did our women die or did they get hurt physical.

So using a particular tool, we are providing alternatives for change - Change that is strategic looking at people's long term interests. Change that can impact the way the political, economic, social and cultural perspective on women is being understood.

Ms.Beulah concluded by saying that the speakers from the panel spoke from their hearts, from the pain, from the aspiration for bringing out change – in turn inspiring change.

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Session -2 (Afternoon)

**Alternative recommendations by Activists/Actionists implementing field work among women at the grass root level.**

Session Moderator: Ms.Deepthi Sukumar, Women for Economic Change.

Members of the Panel:

1. Ms.Esther Maria Selvam, Action Aid, “Gender budgeting and the need for socio-economic data on women at the grass root level.”
2. Ms.Sandana Mary, Working women’s Association, “Gender budgeting for the working women who are at the grass root level.”
3. Ms.Vimala, TamilNadu Dalit Women’s Forum, “Gender budgeting and the Right to life of women at the grass root level”.
4. Ms.Sherin, Velicham Kalvi Iyakkam, “Gender budgeting and the Right to education of women at the grass root level.”

**Points from Ms. Esther MariaSelvam:**

I would like to share my thoughts on Gender budgeting and the need for socio-economic data on women at the grass root level purely based on my own experience of working in the field for the past two decades.

It is to be noted that off late, the concept of gender equality is gaining importance, at the same time, violence against women is increasing. From our experience, we have a strong belief on the fact that without ending the violence against women, we cannot end poverty.

Gender equality is a very important reason for growth and since morning we have been discussing the research done by Social Watch with regard to gender budgeting.

Through our experience in working in the field, the knowledge on gender budgeting among women is limited (highly questionable).

It is to be acknowledged that organisations have been trying to create awareness on gender budgeting among people, but this information is not internalised. The attitude towards understanding such issues is lacking/backward.

I have had a lot of experience in working with different kinds of marginalised women. For the past 12-13 years, I have been working with Dalit women for the cause of their land rights. When fighting for the land rights of Dalit women, we face challenges with regard to quantitative data.

The land rights movement primarily was based on fighting for the land rights of Panchami lands that belonged to Dalits. The greatest challenge faced by activists and people was the lack of data on the Panchami lands.

So from our side, we not only created awareness among people but we also undertook research on Panchami lands. We started collecting the actual data on the location of these Panchami lands. We shared this data with the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India. When this data was made available in Taluk offices, it was easier for us to collaborate with the government officials in gaining these lands back to the people.

In our experience, we understood that there were many stages involved in this process. In the initial stage, we had to find out the location of these land and the strategy through which these lands could be gained back, the next step was to analyse as to how would the Dalit women use these lands, would Dalit women be able to cultivate crops in these land, will they have space in their budget for farming – All these questions proved to be quite challenging in reality.

It is a known fact that TAHDCO has been giving loans to Dalit women who are into farming. But it is a question to ponder as to whether the schemes of TAHDCO are effective and need oriented.

A recent study conducted among 3 states in India by ILC (International Land Coalition) clearly gives some statistics on land inheritance by women. Even though a law promising land inheritance to women was passed eight years ago, as on date only one among eight women are able to inherit land – this information has been brought out by this study.

Even if women do own lands, Ms.Veena Agarwal has said that only 2% of women own lands in India, this recent study undertaken by ILC is showing that only one in eight women inherit lands. Irrespective of the ownership, more than 80% of Dalit women are engaged in the cultivation of food crops. These women are not formally recognised as farmers.

There is a need for more data in terms of statistics for creating gender budgets. We have to look into various areas that need financing. Even though there are difficulties with regard to owning lands, we need to understand the issues faced by women who are into farming/agriculture.

We need to be clear on the areas that need financing when we are discussing about gender budgeting. There are two ways that would bring in this clarity. One is through the experience gained by working in the field. Another way of getting clarity would be creating an account on the field experiences gained. For accounting of the field experiences, we need a lot of research in the field.

I feel that it is imperative that we are able to pinpoint the areas that need funding for women who are into farming and it is just not enough to say that since they have lands they need funds and it is through field experience that we would be able to highlight the areas.

When we are discussing about gender budgeting, there are many aspects that we should consider. Firstly, even though women are engaged in farming, have they been recognised

as Farmers? Secondly, the women who are into fishing when they are lobbying for better schemes with the Fisheries department (meenvala varium); they are of the opinion that they are contributing a lot of their efforts in fishing. We need to look at various sectors and dissect the budget on the basis of the sectors to which women belong.

We have a lot of experience in working with the women engaged in fishing mainly we work with widowed women on fish processing. In TamilNadu, there is a scheme that is operational during the off season. During the breeding season, when fishing is prohibited, Government pays compensation, but this compensation is mainly available only to men and not to women. Even though women are contributing a lot to the fisheries sector, they are not paid compensation during off season.

The women involved in fishing need to be allocated finance. The finance allocated should reach them. They should be recognized as fish workers....since they are not recognised, they are not allocated finances in the budget. There are many areas that need a lot of attention and work.

There is a perspective that the Tribal community, Dalit community, unorganised sector, fisheries sectors are getting some benefits. Even if its men at least these communities are getting some assistance. This is because the women in these communities are not recognised. There is a need to think/implement alternatives for women. It's important that we are able to understand the challenges and also the actual statistical data among the marginalised women in order to plan and implement alternative development strategies for their development.

If we refer the census 2011 for information on unorganised labour, we are not able to get sector wise data on women involved in various sectors of unorganised labour. Even though there are several welfare schemes, accessing them is a very challenging for women. After a point in time, the officials tend to say that period for accessing these schemes are over because they have achieved their target. The point to be noted here is whether the term 'target achieved' is inclusive of Dalit women.

For example, if there is a scheme for providing maternity benefits to women working in the unorganised sector, we need to know the number of women who are working in the unorganised sector.

In the morning when Mr.Devaneyan was speaking, he brought in the point of unpaid care provided by women. One research points out to the fact that women work for more than five hours in maintenance work at the domestic front compared to men who may work for 20-25 minutes every day. But this work is not considered when calculating the GDP of the country. Therefore it is clear that women's contribution is not accounted for and women have not been provided for properly in budgeting. Whenever, we are advocating for better budget allocation for women, we need to do more base work. We need to provide more details as to the various sectors that need financing.

It is challenging for women to claim for their rights because of the gap in the information/data available on them. With regard to the disabled, I would like to share our experience; there is awareness among the disabled that 3% of the budget is reserved for them. The disabled participate in the budget allocation exercise, monitor the effectiveness of finances spent on their welfare. They are able to ensure that the allocated finances are spent on them.

Similarly, from the side of women, we need to see that statistical data on women that is available, the primary data that is available with experts working in the field is put to use effectively.

Ms.Beulah summarized the points.

### **Points from Ms.SandanaMary's Address:**

In today's discussion, the idea that has been put forward is that the women are eligible for 3% of the budget, but they are not able to claim and use this benefit. If we consider the working women who are at the grass roots, if we consider their work related activities, it can be described as construction workers, women working in brick kilns, women working in shops, educated women who are unemployed also work in shops in our district, they work for a salary / amount of Rs.1000 – Rs.1500.

Women who work as domestic workers, conservancy workers, women who are working in the 100ays (MNREGA) programme, tribal women, fisher women, I can share the experience from Ramanadapuram district which has a coast line, it can be seen that women are involved in a lot of hard work ...after sending their men for fishing they are into collecting fish and processing them which involves a lot of uncivilized work...their contribution is tremendous in this area of work.

We must also consider women who have been working as farm labourers for daily wages. Women who are working in industries, particularly in small industries, in industrial towns like Coimbatore and Thiruppur. In these towns young women are taken and employed in industries for a 3 year period or a 5 year period....and this scheme is known as the Sumangali Scheme....women are promised a lump sum amount for work after a period of five years and literally the women are made to toil a lot, their health is terribly affected.

These working women who are at the grass root level mainly comprise of Dalit women. All the speakers when talking working women by default are also talking about Dalit women. In Ramanadapuram, Madurai, women who have been working as conservancy workers a few them who are involved in manual scavenging also need to be included in the list of unorganised workers. The question to ponder is about the schemes that have been brought about by the government for their welfare. Many of the speakers were talking about self-help groups. These groups are supported with loans from the government.

If we look at the castes of women particularly the leaders of the SHGs, it is clear that the working women at the grass root level are not into leadership in the SHGs. The women



who are managing the SHGs are from the so called higher castes, many are from the dominating castes, many of them from families that have political influence, many of them are supportive of government forces.

The women affected are working women who are at the grass root level. They do not understand the accounts of the SHGs. The budget allocated for them which is being given as a loan to them is given like alms to them. Every year they are given Rs.5000 to Rs.10000 in two instalments as a loan. But these women have to pay the loan back with the interests. I am unable to understand the concept of budget allocation for women by the government.

Another aspect that needs to be remembered is the way women are affected by the caste violence in the southern districts of TamilNadu. Recently, in TamilNadu, in Nadupatti, there were communal clashes because of casteism. In Nadupatti, thousands of Arundadiyar families were violently attacked and made to take trains and escape to their relative's residence for the safety of their lives. In these clashes, men escape from the villages.

Similarly in districts such Ramanadu, Sivaganga, who is getting affected because of caste clashes/violence? What has the government done reduce these conflicts? During such clashes, Government says that they are allocating finances for tackling the communal violence .....Nothing is being undertaken. The protection of women, children...are not taken up. Atrocities by Police who have been deployed for protection is an added threat. We have undergone a lot of trauma in such situations.....protecting young women in such situations is very difficult and challenging.

We need to voice out/stress that the government should allocate finances to rehabilitate women who have suffered atrocities because of caste clashes and who are daring to live in the same area despite the threat of more clashes.

Another aspect to be noted is health and cleanliness/hygiene of the body among the working women at the grass root level. It is a cause for concern that such women suffer due a lot of diseases today. We are doing a lot of propoganda for AIDs....women are used to stage street plays, cultural programmes to spread awareness on AIDs, not to discriminate people living with AIDs. But people forget the basics involved in spread of diseases. What is the basic reason for an individual to get a disease?

Many women in my own village, 15 women out of 80 women suffer from uterine cancer. As they work as field labourers, many women are susceptible to cancer because they work closely with pesticides that are chemically very strong. Many of them have to remove their uterus and are struggling to meet the expenses....it will cost around Rs.20000 to Rs.25000. The treatment is offered in Government hospitals but is delayed by nearly a month's time.

Government should start and run health centres in each village....not depute Doctors who run away but employ women from women's groups. Government should allocate funds for these health centres in their budget.

We have been speaking from different angles with regard to allocation in the budget for women, we must remember that women at the grass root level needs to be informed/trained about budget by women leaders. Many women who are leaders have come here and Social Watch is giving us training on budget and other aspects...there is a lot to learn from such discussions. Women leaders must take this knowledge forward to the women in their communities.

Ms. Deepthi summarised the points.

### **Points from Ms.Vimala, TamilNadu Dalit Women's Forum**

This month as we are commemorating the International women's day, we are discussing about equal pay, eight hours of job/duty every day and other work –related benefits to women. In the area where I work, across all the sectors of Women such as domestic workers, women working in fishing, agriculture, adi dravida women, Irular women – equal pay is a major challenge faced by these women. More than equal pay, many women face difficulty in getting a job.

Many agricultural lands are being converted to be used for Special Economic Zones, sold as real estate parties and because of this there is a major problem with regard to availability of agricultural lands in our area. As women who were dependant on jobs available due to agriculture are not getting those jobs, they are moving towards cities in order to get jobs. It can be observed that more than ever, more women are travelling from small villages to towns where they board a train and reach Chennai City where they work as construction labourers.

While travelling they carry a small tiffin box with very little food, they have to work at home to prepare food for children, travel long distances over many hours to work in construction sites. Just like how women work in organised sector or government jobs, these women also start from their home after doing domestic work and travel with all their equipment in the suburban trains. If they work the whole day, they are paid Rs.300/-. The men who along with get paid around Rs.450/-. The head of the team gets Rs.700/- for one day of work. The man who mixes the concrete mixture gets paid Rs.450/-, the woman who carries this concrete gets paid Rs.300/- and the head who works with this mixture gets Rs.700/-. Such drastic differences are to be found when it comes to the wages given to men and women.

For this kind of work they come away from their homes. They do not get good nutrition. They look very thin and weak. It is doubtful if they could do labour work because of the lack of good health. Because of malnutrition, they suffer from anaemia.

In Irular community, it could be observed that children do not have access to schooling. As government wants to promote education for all and has schemes for residential

schools, we are running one such residential school. Our school is a transit school where we educate school dropout children from the Irular community for one year and then we admit them in the regular school as per the Child's age and other factors. In my experience, I have seen that two out of three among the male children continue education and female children do not continue at all. The reason being girls are made to stay at home in order to take care of their younger siblings.

The community was known for its deep family bonds where only the husbands used to travel to work but now both the couples are travelling and therefore they feel that there is a need for the older child to take care of the younger one. On our part we have been offering counselling to such families and the ward members. Even though 17000 crores of money has been budgeted for women's education, education of women continues to be a challenge. There is a lot of talk about freebies given by the government. By giving freebies, the various political parties are removing the attitude to struggle against issues and thereby politicising the women's right to vote.

With regard to self-help groups it can be seen that women are taking loan only to be spent for domestic expenses or marriages and do not use the loans for entrepreneurship development/economic development. With regard to housing, there are schemes under state government and Central government (Green homes/Indira Awas Yojna). But it is available only to the 'high caste group' women and not to the Dalit women. The number of such sanctioned homes is very few, only around 5 in our area and the beneficiaries had to pay a commission of Rs.10000/- to the officials for get the sanctioned amount of money under the scheme.

It should also be noted that due to the use of pesticides in horticulture farms, many women who are working as labourers in these farms undergo severe damage to their health. The men spray pesticides and move away, women start working in the field. These women are prone to uterine cancer and many of them are from the Dalit community. Children also get affected. Many of these women are prone to eye allergies, skin diseases because of the pesticides used.

The existing Primary health Centres can offer more facilities for women who are undergoing health problems. Budgetary allocation is to be made for the above mentioned purpose.

Ms.Deepthi Sukumar summarised the points.

**Points from Ms.Sherin address:**

Explaining the real meaning of education as much more than just getting degrees, the need to understand education from Dr.Ambedkar's perspective is to be highlighted. The Speaker shared that her organisation is funding around 1250 students towards their higher education. She informed that these students were meritorious scoring more than 1000 marks in their school finals, not only students belong to scheduled castes/scheduled tribes but also student from all categories who are first generation learners.

Speaker wanted to highlight that students who were getting selected for jobs in multinational companies were not from the Dalit community and Muslim community. Dalit students were not selected by these companies.

Even though there is reservation of jobs for the SC community in the government there are no job openings available. The private sector that has job openings does not have reservations.

The government is fully aware of the ground realities, the pathetic situation of the dalit communities. But they are not taking steps to resolve the issues. The question as to why the government is not resolving this issue needs to be asked and discussed.

It is reported by the Hindu newspaper that 75% of Dalit children are weak. The children do not have a chance for better nutrition as there is no scheme available. The report says that this not a problem of Dalits, but a problem for the Indian society's social democracy. The article goes on to say that the promise of social justice by the constitution is not being implemented politically.

Using several biographical narratives from Dr.Ambedkar's life, beliefs and works, the speaker brought out the following arguments that It is the State's duty to uphold non-discrimination and special schemes for the welfare women and children.

All this is not being implemented because of the caste system in our country. The caste system which is 2000 years old is about caste hierarchy. This casteism is the very philosophy that is the foundation of all the budgets.

There is a discussion that Reservation being practised for the past 40 years is used by Dalit community and it should be abolished. But what about the reservation being practised for the past 2000 years? Casteism prescribed that Dalits should not get educated and if they try to gain education, they should be punished and the women of the Dalit community should not wear blouses/not cover the upper portion of their bodies. Until a Court in Travancore ruled that Dalit women could wear blouses in 1919, they were not allowed to wear blouses. The caste system clearly discriminated and prescribed that a group should have access to education, a group should own lands, a group should do business and a group should be designated as slaves, a group should take up the menial work of cleaning.

A recent report by government of India says that 70% of land is owned by Kshatriyas, 70% of government jobs belongs to the Brahmin community. 635 top jobs in the civil services were occupied by Brahmins. 96% of businesses is owned by Vaishyas. As long as Brahmins are in the centre/ruling, this is the structure that is going to exist.

It was Dr.Ambedkar who fought and got voting rights for all the people in 1937. Before 1937, it was only three groups that had voting rights – people who owned lands, people who were educated and people who paid taxes and this also falls in the pattern of Kshatriyas, Brahmins and Vaishyas respectively.

Ms.Deepthi summarised the points.

### **CONCLUDING SESSION: ACTION PLAN**

Ms.Qudsia Gandhi, IAS, (Rtd) – Member, TamilNadu State Women Commission - Moderator.

With regard to Gender Budgeting, Social Watch has been working with the Government of TamilNadu and we have generated a lot of awareness at the level of Chief Secretary.

We can forward our recommendations to the planning commission so that gender budgeting is integrated in the 15-16 budget.

I invite the prominent members to think about this plan of action.

5% budget should be allocated for women in all the schemes. We must not ask for 50% but look at the actual situation in education and agriculture and demand accordingly. For this we have to take survey. With data in our hands, we can demand allocation.

Ms.Sheelu Francis continued:

- Disaggregated data on women should be made available. This should be information on specific groups such as differently abled, marginalised women, Dalit women etc.
- Three areas need to be focussed on namely: education, health and rural development.
- Another important area of consideration has been asset creation for women.
- Land rights of women
- Livelihood rights of women
- Political representation of women
- Need for a law to be created in order to enforce gender responsive budgeting
- Access and control of Government property and resources

Ms.Sheelu requested participant to share information/points and any input on step by step approach towards approaching the government with recommendations.

Ms.Qudsia Gandhi added that women entrepreneurs who need bigger funding than funding available through SHGs need to be provided support. As women who need medium sized loans do not have collaterals, (as property belongs to the husbands) could be supported with loans.

Ms.Saraswathi, advocate shared that litigation costs are not provided to the victims but the money is taken away by officials. The SC/ST atrocities act is not implemented properly, the government does not provide the travelling allowance provided by the act. As an advocate working in the Mahila court, I was not given the allowance that is provided by the law in a timely manner. She insisted that monitoring of the gender budgeting should be undertaken by women.

Ms.Revathy, Media informed, activism/launching of a movement could publicise this issue, a legal struggle in the form of public interest litigation that provides a historical perspective to the problem could catch media's attention and could help in mainstreaming this discussion in the media.

Social Watch or organisations working as a coalition could conduct workshops for media persons. A multimedia presentation on the need and importance for could be given during a short (2/3 hour) workshop for media persons.

Apart from the fact that women need reservations, women are to be provided with schemes, women have a right to demand for budgeting as their contribution to the economy/GDP is very significant. There could be unemployed man but no unemployed woman. Women have been offering their services free of cost and that needs to be looked into.

Mr.Devaneyan expressed that activists, organisations need to give news/ stories to media, resources need to be provided. The research that was carried out on Anganwadis by our organisation was beautifully brought out by the media.

He informed that he has been meeting members of the legislative members and informing them on field level issues. He gave information on the issues of nutrition of Anganwadis to the members of the legislative assembly, following which there was a major positive change announced by the Chief Minister. So he felt that if we use the media and also work with the MLAs we can bring in change.

In the the issue of gender budgeting, he said that organisations/activists should conduct discuss with the members of the Parliament – show them a lot of records, give them a lot of information and perspective. He said that we must continue the pressure and we must keep the media in the follow-up of the issue.

Ms.Bimla informed that there is no scope for gender responsive budgeting in TamilNadu. She said that we must use this election phase and request TamilNadu government to incorporate gender budgeting. She said that a gender budget cell should be created in all the departments of the government which will help in monitoring.

Ms.Qudsia Gandhi sought that gender sensitisation programmes should be arranged for (budget officers) government offices and corporate houses.

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