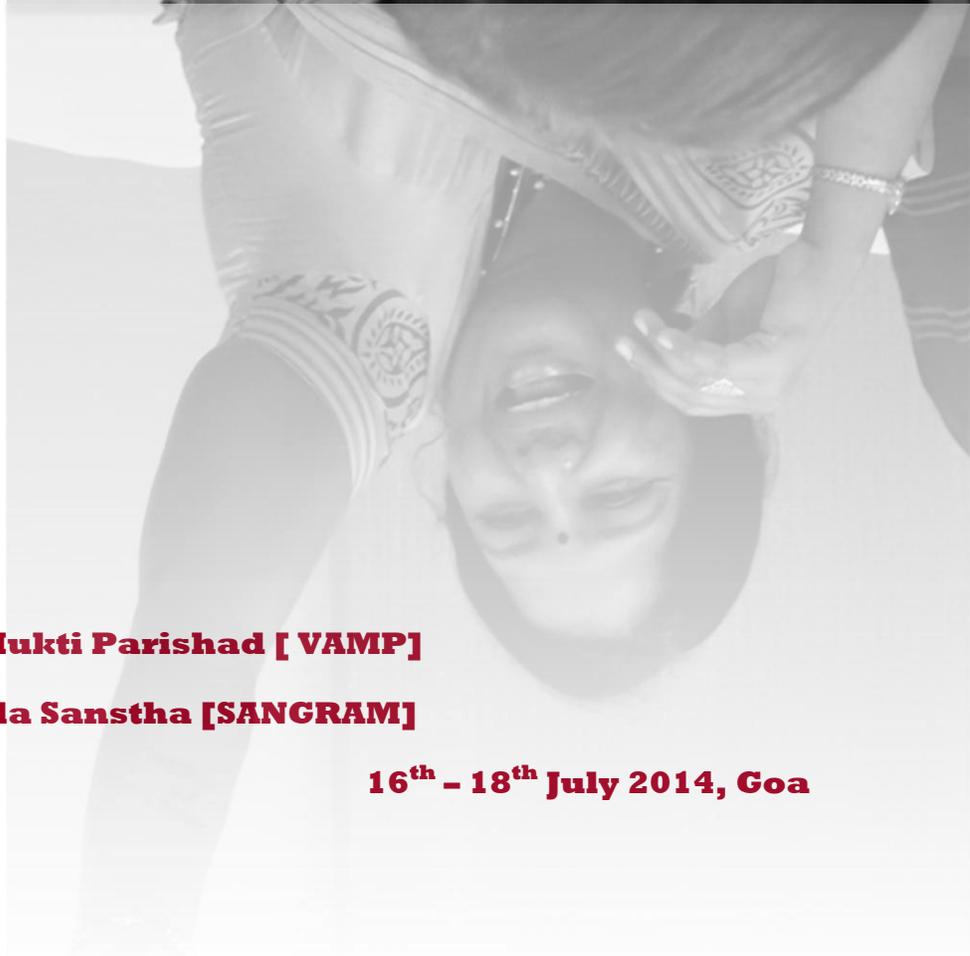


**Strengthening  
Community  
Leadership**

**The VAMP Institute**



**Organized by Veshya Anyay Mukti Parishad [ VAMP]**

**And Sampada Grameen Mahila Sanstha [SANGRAM]**

**16<sup>th</sup> - 18<sup>th</sup> July 2014, Goa**

This publication documents the first three day VAMP institute held in Goa from 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> July 2014. It was commissioned by the Centre for Advocacy on Stigma and Marginalization (CASAM), a project of SANGRAM. It reflects the processes, content, training methodology and experiences of participants' learning from the institute, and of the faculty in designing the modules.

The main narrative of the document describes training methodologies, content of each module and the reactions, reflections and comments of participants to the issues that were under discussion. This document reflects design of modules and experiences as the training unfurled, through informal interviews, interactions with the participants and faculty members over the course of three days. Some reflections of participants and faculty members are also highlighted in text boxes throughout the document.

Cath Sluggett

The VAMP Institute is a capacity building institute for sex work leadership organised by VAMP (Veshya Anyay Mukti Parishad) and SANGRAM. With headquarters in Sangli, Maharashtra these two organisations have a depth of experience in working on grassroots issues and experience of collectivizing for rights, conducting research and implementing strategies for change. Both SANGRAM (an NGO) and VAMP (a collective of sex workers) are members of Asia Pacific Network of Sex Workers (APNSW) and Global Network of Sex Work Projects (NSWP). The VAMP Institute partners with APNSW which is a sex worker-initiated and led organization with over 50 member organizations in 17 countries. The core belief is:-

- Acceptance of sex work as work.
- Opposition to all forms of criminalisation and other legal oppression of sex work (including sex workers, clients, third parties, families, partners and friends).
- Supporting self-organisation and self-determination of sex workers.



The VAMP Institute aims to build the skills of female, male and transgender people in sex work, who have been part of community-led initiatives and engaged with advocacy efforts for policy change at the local, state and national level. In this endeavour, it partners with other organizations to use existing training curriculum around sexuality, sex work, feminism and human rights. These include NGOs working to build social movements on women's rights, right to health, gender-based violence, sexual and reproductive rights.

### What the VAMP Institute does...

- ✚ Discusses the social construction of gender, sexuality, sex work.
- ✚ Nurtures understanding of emerging rights movements in India and lessons learned.
- ✚ Engages with laws, policies, practices and struggles of sex workers.
- ✚ Strengthens skills in community-based monitoring mechanisms of health services and social entitlements.
- ✚ Strengthens skills in documenting evidence.
- ✚ Identifies opportunities for intervening in policy discussions at the local, national, regional and international levels.
- ✚ Develops an understanding of human rights of vulnerable populations, such as emergence of international/regional protocols and agreements concerning sexuality, gender and rights.

The Institute draws on the professional experience of sex work activists from VAMP combined with legal researchers, academics, communication trainers, theatre artists, human rights lawyers and feminist activists from various struggles in India. The faculty delivers basic information modules on rights, social movements and advocacy using pedagogy that prioritizes community to community learning using participatory methodologies.

A key focus of the institute is to develop mechanisms to keep in touch with leaders, supporting them with technical assistance in the initial stage of implementing this work. Course content is continuously developed based on a monitoring and feedback mechanism from the participants.

## PARTICIPANTS, ORGANIZATIONS AND THE TRANSLATION PROCESS

The first VAMP Institute three day training programme brought together 16 participants - 12 women, one TG and 3 men - from 7 sex worker organizations working in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra. These participants were the newly elected board members of the National Network of Sex Workers (NNSW) India and VAMP leaders.

From two organizations in Karnataka were Bharati (*Karnataka Sex Workers Union*) and Sakina and Mukta from Uttara Karnataka Mahila Okkuta (UKMO). Kokila and Shanthi participated from *Vadamalar Federation* in Tamil Nadu. Three participants – Shanthi, Alavelu and Mukta – participated from *Me and My World*, a sex worker organization based in Tirupathi, Andhra Pradesh. From VAMP and MUSKAN<sup>1</sup> included Rajendra Naik (Raju) Amar Bongawe, Sudhir Patil, Sangeeta Ramu Manoji, Kiran Ramchandra Deshmukh, Meenakshi Gopal Kamble and Shabana. In addition, Shashikant Mane, Shantilal Kale and Anamika Dutt participated and translated for VAMP from the host organization SANGRAM.

The varied linguistic backgrounds of these participants demanded consecutive translations during each session. Facilitators conducted sessions in Hindi and English which were then translated into Marathi, Telugu, Kannada and Tamil by Prabhakar from South India AIDS Action Programme (SIAPP) in Chennai, Sudha from Bangalore and Meera Raghavendra from WINS (Women's Initiatives) in Tirupati. During sessions participants were seated in their respective language groups. The process of translation demanded that facilitators deliver information slowly, waiting for translations to complete before continuing. Participants commended the translation process, some commenting upon the difficulties that it posed and others expressing appreciation at the commitment of the organizers in making the training linguistically accessible to everyone. Although translation was challenging for resource persons, patience yielded positive results.

### *Participants' experiences of translation*

*"It was good that adequate time was given for translations. This really helped me in gaining understanding of what was being talked about."*

*Kokila*

*"I found it hard to express myself fully because of the translation process, because there was a delay and it was not one to one communication."*

*Raju Naik*

*"For future training programmes some sessions could be given in separate language groups to aid understanding."*

*Alavelu*

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<sup>1</sup>Muskan is a collective catering to the health needs of men who have sex with men and male sex workers.

## RESOURCE PERSONS

Given the limited engagement of sex worker leadership working traditionally within the rights paradigm, perspective building was strengthened by the resource persons. These were selected based on prior experience of interacting with sex workers, and a clear understanding of the intersectionality of sex worker rights and their own domains.

### **Prabha Nagaraja, TARSHI**

Prabha Nagaraja is a Post Graduate in Child Development from Delhi University. She worked with children with dyslexia and other disabilities before joining TARSHI at its inception in 1996. Her areas of interest include sexuality education for young people and the sexual rights of people with disabilities. TARSHI aims to address all people, especially women and young people through its various programmes. TARSHI is one of the few NGOs in India that works on sexuality, without restricting it to a disease-prevention, violence against women or sexual minorities' framework, but rather from an affirmative and rights-based approach. Prabha is Executive Director at TARSHI.

### **Manisha Gupte, MASUM**

Manisha Gupte has been part of the women's movement since the mid 1970s. She has also been an activist in the health and civil rights movements in India. She co-founded MASUM, a rural women's organisation in 1987, after living in a drought prone rural area for five years and has been its co-convenor since then. She spent one year in the Dept. of International Health at the Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore as a visiting fellow. She is actively associated with pro-people and progressive organisations nationally, regionally and internationally as an advisor, trainer or board member. She has participated in and has promoted campaigns related to women's health, violence against women, sexuality and minority rights. She has also worked on policy issues with the state and central governments in India over the past two decades. She was the coordinator of the 10th International Women and Health meeting (IWHM), held in New Delhi in September 2005.

### **Albertina Almedia**

Advocate Albertina Almeida, a practicing lawyer and human rights activist has been actively involved in many complaints committees to inquire into the cases of sexual harassment at work place among others and draft their policy. She is associated with various organizations and advocacy groups fighting for women's rights, children's rights, human rights, self-governance, environment, development and tourism related issues. She was founder-activist of Bailancho Saad, a women's collective organization working on gender concerns, founding and managing trustee of Saad Aangan, a gender resource group and governing body member of Sandarsh, involved in research and training initiatives.

### **Rajendra Vinayak Naik, VAMP**

Rajendra Vinayak Naik is President of MITRA – a collective of children of sex workers. He started his work as an outreach worker and is presently working as a community coordinator at the VAMP Institute. He is founder member of MITRA and an integral part of running the children's hostel under the same. He has been a vital member for collectivising the youth and children in the community through trainings, community meetings, community plays and programmes. His activism and commitment as a community member has brought changes within and for the community.

### **Shabana Kazi-Goundi, VAMP**

Shabana Kazi-Goundi is General Secretary of Veshya Anyay Mukti Parishad (VAMP). She started her journey as a peer educator and presently coordinates VAMP programmes in Karnataka and Maharashtra. She is one of the founder members for VAMP where she has been actively involved in the overall building the VAMP collectives in the six district of Karnataka and Maharashtra. Her engagements in VAMP also include self-organisation, involvement youth issues

within the community and trainings. Her work with sex workers through advocacy and activism vis-a-vis HIV/AIDS, gender and sexuality has been recognized by her peers and individuals outside the community.

#### **Meena Saraswathi Seshu, SANGRAM**

Meena Saraswathi Seshu is General Secretary of Sampada Gramin Mahila Sanstha (SANGRAM), an HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and support organisation working with socially marginalised people in Maharashtra, India. Meena has more than 20 years of experience working with grassroots, rights-based organisations (particularly with people in sex work) on issues related to HIV/AIDS, sexual and reproductive health, violence against women, poverty alleviation, and gender and sexual minority rights. In addition, she has over 15 years of experience working with global movements on violence against women and sex worker rights.

#### **Aarthi Pai, CASAM**

Aarthi Pai is a lawyer and currently working as the Director of the Centre for Advocacy on Stigma and Marginalisation (CASAM). Aarthi has more than 17 years' experience working in the field advocacy and human rights. She works to strengthen the networking and advocacy efforts of the institution, fund-raising, developing institutional policies and practices. She assists in the development and implementation of a strategic plan of action for community collectives like VAMP, MUSKAAN in partnership with the leadership. She has assisted VAMP, SANGRAM and National Network of Sex Workers to make submissions to international treaty bodies reporting processes like CEDAW and the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, highlighting the status of sex workers in India.

RESOURCE PERSON: PRABHA NAGARAJA, TARSHI.

This session was designed to communicate theoretical concepts of gender and sexuality through experiential learning. It examined sex, gender, and sexuality as independent units and looked into how they are interconnected. The aim was to enable participants to differentiate between these concepts and understand their linkages. A critical aspect of Prabha's methodology was to ground these concepts in experience by using interactive exercises.



In the first exercise, participants explored the conceptual difference between sex and sexuality. They were asked to form two circles (an inner and outer circle) and stand facing opposite each other. With their partner standing opposite, they discussed three questions; 1) when they had first heard about sex; 2) how their views about sex had changed over the years and 3) what they understood to be the difference between sex and sexuality. On each of these questions participants in the inner circle moved to the right so that discussions could take place between different partners.

The first question – when did you first hear about sex - provoked a lively response and there was a noticeable variation in female participants' experiences as compared with male and TG participants. The men had more space in their youth to discuss sexuality openly with male friends. For example, with his friends, Raju Naik had been able to look at women and discuss their bodies. In doing this he ascertained how sex between men and women occurs. As young women, space to discuss sexuality was either non-existent or clandestine for female participants. Alavelu narrated that only much later as an adult had she summoned the courage to ask a married

woman how sex between a man and a woman takes place. Growing up in a Muslim family, access to information was extremely limited for Shabana. Awareness of heterosexual sex came abruptly with her first sexual experience in a brothel at the age of 12. A common thread for male and female participants was inculcating the idea that sex was negative and to be avoided. Raju and Shabana were curious about homosexuality and lesbianism but had understood these to be 'bad' and 'dirty' forms of sexual activity. It was only after joining sexuality-rights based NGOs, and learning about the rights of sexual minorities, these ideas were challenged.

Participants perceived sex and sexuality as markedly different. Most equated sexuality with feelings of attraction. Sex on the other hand was understood as female and male sexual organs, and sexual activity. By and large participants were unclear on how the two concepts interrelated, particularly in the context of sex work. If sex is sexual activity and sexuality is related with feelings and desires, performing sexual acts in sex work is usually devoid of the latter. Kiran Deshmukh of VAMP collective elaborated on this; "I can have sex without feelings when I am doing sex work. But I can't separate it if I have feelings for someone. The two come together." This suggested that the expression of sexuality goes much beyond desires and feelings, and is multifaceted.

To conceptualize this, Prabha encouraged participants to visualize sexuality as an umbrella, wherein sexual activity and emotion coincide with a range of other elements including pleasure, consent, gender identity, sexual expression, and perceiving others. She introduced the idea that sexuality is subjective and culturally and historically constructed, and



constantly evolving. Participants were able to relate to these concepts when they began sharing how their relationship to sex had altered over their life course. A participant explained how she had never enjoyed sex before the age of 40, after which she began to feel the pleasure of it. Amar had grown up feeling disgusted at the thought of homosexual sex until one day he tried and liked it. Shabana wondered what would happen to her gender identity if she was to become attracted to a woman. Would it make her feel like a man? This led to a discussion around same-sex attraction and whether it is located in the body, mind or emotion, the group arriving at the conclusion that all three aspects have a part to play.

In the next part of the session, language groups worked on understanding definitions of sex, sexuality and gender. The definition that *“sexuality is influenced by the interaction of biological, psychological, social, economic, political, cultural, ethical, legal, historical and religious and spiritual factors”* provoked considerable discussion. Some participants expressed difficulty in connecting sexuality to the political, economic and psychological spheres. Sudhir Patil shared how the disjuncture between his male body and female gender identity was an example of how sexuality is located in human psychology. Raju Naik spoke about the connection between sexuality and the political by explaining how people are compelled to perform their gender and sexuality in ways that society and religion dictate. While sexuality is influenced by these external forces, people are unable to express their sexuality as they feel from inside, he said. Avelu suggested that sexuality is political because sex workers are rendered silent about police violence and Shashikant Mane highlighted the hypocrisy of politicians who state they are in support of sex workers rights and yet refuse to make these claims public. Synthesizing the participants’ observations, Prabha cited Section 377 as a visible example of how the legal, historical, religious, political and cultural norms impact the lives of men who have sex with men. Kokila expressed that she felt uncomfortable about same sex relations between women because of an experience with a client. Raju pointed out that experiencing discomfort about certain kinds of sexual behaviors and preferences influences the relationship to one’s own sexuality and ideas about it. He gave the example of a man who sexually abuses his own child having a very different relationship to

his own sexuality than most people would have. This prompted Prabha to clarify that a definition of sexuality needs to be neutral, without moral judgment, and that a broad understanding of sexuality is a necessary foundation for talking about sexuality rights.



## Unpacking gender

An exercise was introduced to enable participants to examine the ways in which gender is socially constructed. A series of statements were read aloud and participants thought about whether a particular statement originated in biology, and were as such a 'natural' phenomenon or whether it was rooted in society, as such a social construct. Everyone stood in a line with their eyes closed and moved backwards when they believed a statement was located in biology and forwards if they thought it was

located in society.

Real men don't cry.

Women can give birth to babies men cannot.

Girls are gentle and boys are tough.

Men have greater sex drive than women.

Men are logical and women are more creative.

Women can breastfeed, men cannot.

Women have maternal instincts.

Most wage earners are male.

At the end of the exercise it was clear that many of the statements were socially constructed. A large group discussion took place on which statements were most difficult to establish.

The statement "women have maternal instincts" triggered a long discussion about whether the desire to have children is inherent only to women and hence biologically determined. Kiran suggested that the instinct to have children is biological but that both men and women have these instincts. While she thought that women are more likely to 'naturally' feel like having children, she agreed that social pressures are at play, causing women to feel more compelled to have children. In contrast to this view, the Telugu speaking group was categorical about the fact that only women experience these kinds of instincts. Playing devil's advocate, Aarthi suggested if this were the case then women who do not feel inclined to have children would

necessarily be 'unnatural'. This prompted a discussion on whether gender roles remain so rigidly defined in today's India. Shabana felt they are because women continue to be exiled from their families when they do not bear children, while for men, it is considered legitimate to remarry when their wives do not conceive. Shanthi from the Tamil speaking group spoke about the generational shift in parents who are increasingly more inclined to encourage their daughters to take up professions before having children. Shashikant commented that attitudes towards gender largely depend on exposure. Education and the environment a person lives in are critical factors in determining the ability to circumvent social pressures of gender.

"I understood about the idea that sexuality is fluid by thinking about myself. Right now I am heterosexual. But supposing I became gay then things will change. I will suddenly have to face discrimination in my life. "

Raju Naik

"THE SEX AND SEXUALITY SESSION ENABLED ME TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN THE TWO".

Sakina

"I learnt that sexuality is a complex construct which is influenced by so many things and that it's always changing and fluid because of the social factors."

Aman

"Lack of time meant we couldn't talk about sexual identities in the session, which I normally do because it's important to discuss this given the contextual differences in India as compared with the West. For example, there's usually a lot of confusion between sexual behaviors and identities in the discussions around MSM."

Prabha

“The discussions on gender made me realize that after birth there is so much social pressure on the individual to perform as female or male – this itself is a kind of violence.”

Kiran

Prabha synthesized this session by noting that if generational and environmental factors influence gender norms this would indicate that maternal instincts are not a biological phenomenon and are not universal. Indeed, as she pointed out, thirst, hunger and sleep are the only instinctive habits that relate to human survival. As such ‘maternal instincts’ don’t actually exist; rather society has created this idea to govern the behaviors of men and women. A key learning of this session was that rules about gender conduct exist and yet can be altered. With the knowledge that gender is socially constructed an individual can begin to question the givens about gendered behaviors - such as the notion that male sexual desire is uncontrollable – and with this make a firmly rooted argument for social change.

“I learnt through this training how socialization processes construct the ideas we have about what women should and should not do.”

Sangeeta

“In Prabha’s session on gender I was able to differentiate between the social and the natural aspects. I liked this session very much.”

Kokila

“I OBSERVED THAT THE PARTICIPANTS WERE USED TO TALKING ABOUT RIGHTS IN THE CONTEXT OF VIOLATIONS BUT HAD LESS OF A PERSPECTIVE ON ENTITLEMENT TO RIGHTS. ANOTHER DAY WOULD HAVE PERHAPS ENABLED THEM TO GET USED TO THINKING ABOUT THIS OTHER PERSPECTIVE.”

Prabha

A learning for next time is perhaps to meet translators one evening before to brief them, ask if they need any extra support so that the session is smoother and less time consuming”

Prabha

RESOURCE PERSON: MANISHA GUPTA, MASUM.

The first part of the afternoon session was designed to help participants gain insights on how health – and conversely, ill health - intrinsically connects to quality of life and the social factors that determine its quality. To achieve this, Manisha divided the participants into two groups, inviting half to discuss what it means to be healthy and the other half, what it means to be unhealthy. The healthy group arrived at the conclusion that being healthy is not only defined by an absence of disease, but rather reflects a state of harmony between the body, mind and environment. This is possible through adequate access to the basics of food, shelter, clean air and unpolluted water. A presence of all these factors in a person's life enables them to work, have fun, sex and function properly. When we look at health in this much broader way, the meaning expands to become an indicator of the quality of life. In other words, this points to health being much more than just technologies, doctors, hospitals, and illnesses and so on. It is significantly correlated with other social determinants.

### Participants' views on what it means to be healthy...

No presence of diseases

There is consciousness about health and rights

There is food, clean water, shelter

Not malnourished

We have stamina in the body

We don't have stress and sadness

Internal organs are functioning well

Sexual system is working well

We can take care of children

We can eat and sleep well

Environment is clean so no infectious diseases

Get diagnosis done in time.

### ...and unhealthy

Lots of communicable diseases

No knowledge of health rights

No clean drinking water

No information about health

Increase likelihood of death

Increase likelihood of addiction

Avoiding mainstream healthcare

Stigmatized and questioned

In a cycle of falling ill often

No access to condoms, exposed to diseases

Economically poor

They will not go to hospital when sick.

Findings from the 'unhealthy' group clearly showed that ill health is not only manifestation of illness. Social factors contributing to ill health include economic deprivation, difficult working conditions, violence and stigma. Therefore being unhealthy reflects poor quality of life, which is compounded by lack of access to resources. Giving an example, Shanthi spoke about how government hospitals are directed to immediately withdraw ARV treatment from people who break continuity with their drug regime. This regulation fails to recognize that some people have to work despite a failing health condition.

Offering further clarity on the topic, Manisha went on to define the concept of health as distinct from healthcare. Health, she posited, is a much broader concept than healthcare because it encompasses the quality of life; thus health cannot be 'given' to anyone, but is a 'result' of one's living conditions. Healthcare on the other hand is about accessing curative, preventive and promotive services, which has to be fought for by demanding it as a right.

This moved the discussion into the realm of human rights and participants were encouraged to consider why health is a human right. The VAMP group suggested it is so because it is linked to the right to life, which is guaranteed by the Indian constitution. Manisha was quick to point out that Indian law currently does not guarantee the right to health and that all human rights are not always protected by Indian laws but are enshrined in international laws and standards. Without a specific law stating that health is a fundamental right, people cannot demand for free health services in India. Kiran from VAMP posed the question of why a government healthcare system exists in India if there is no right to health. Manisha explained the history of post-independence Nehruvian socialist policies which provided education, healthcare, rations (subsidized food under the Public Distribution System) etc. for the economically disadvantaged. While the right to health was not given the status of fundamental right at that time, it was relegated as a Directive Principle in the Indian Constitution. This meant it would become a fundamental right when sufficient resources were available to make it so. However, the fact that it wasn't a fundamental right paved the way for privatization of health services in the country. Manisha clarified that right to health



“SO FAR WE HAVE NOT WORKED WITH OTHER WOMEN’S GROUPS. I WOULD LIKE TO DO THIS NOW, ALLOWING THEM TO TALK ABOUT THEIR PROBLEMS AND THE ISSUES WE DISCUSSED ABOUT HEALTH RIGHTS, TO ENABLE THEM TO SEE HOW THEIR PROBLEMS CONNECT TO THESE”.

Shanthi

would manifest as access to free treatment for all. This meant that universal, comprehensive, quality and timely health care would be made available for all people at all times, irrespective of capacity to pay at the time of seeking health care. This recommendation was put forward by the Bhore Committee as early as 1946. Manisha spoke about the Jan Swasthya Abhiyan which is a nation-wide movement towards making health care a fundamental right in India. Direct taxation, collected on income and wealth would pay for an equitable health care in India, and not medical insurance, as the latter only serves to make health care more and more expensive.

The next question which naturally followed was why after so many years the right to health has failed to become a fundamental right. This edged the discussion into Manisha elucidating upon the impact of 'LPG' - 'liberalization, privatization and globalization' - on the social healthcare system. Because of unrestricted liberalization policies that were instituted in the nineties, the import of high-end diagnostic technologies and expensive drugs have flooded the

Indian market, in which the drug and medical industries are poorly regulated. Replaced by a privatized health sector, the public health system has gradually eroded. Healthcare is now expensive and out of reach for poorer sections of society. The price of CAT and MRI scanning machines for example has increased healthcare costs. To cover these costs, medical establishments have shifted emphasis from the treatment of low-end diseases, such as malaria and TB, to encouraging people to buy in to the idea of using high-end diagnosis tools. In addition, many sections of government hospitals no longer belong to the government, having been franchised out to private healthcare firms. As such, liberalization and privatization have changed the face of healthcare in India, becoming unaffordable for the people it was originally intended to serve. Manisha explained how globalization – which claims to be egalitarian – is actually an illusion. In effect foreign companies are dictating the global markets, forcing developing countries to participate in them, while not allowing them to sell at a rate which is relative to local economies. While foreign companies set the policy and regulate markets, there is no ‘real’ competition, as one would expect in a marketplace.



*Understanding community-led process of right to health and community-based monitoring*

Focusing on the cosmos of sex workers in the second part of this session, Manisha introduced the concept of universal healthcare. She explained this means that all people– including those related to sex worker populations - should have equal access to health services. She added that health services for sex workers need to be diverse, not only restricted to sexual health services, which has tended to be the case. They should include investigative procedures e.g. for TB, malaria, diabetes, hypertension, mental health and cervical and breast cancers. Reiterating the point that good health is contingent upon various social determinants, Manisha also explained the meaning of comprehensive healthcare which should amount to sex workers having access to various kinds of treatments, medication, subsidized food grains and a safe working environment. With these in place sex workers would be in a better position to sustain a reasonable level of health.

This brought the discussion around to the question of violence and the part it plays in jeopardizing sex workers’ health. Violence needs to be thought of less as an individual problem but as a larger public health and human rights issue. Violence perpetrated upon anyone is a human rights violation. And if human rights are for all, then sex workers must also be included in the debates on violence against women. Manisha pointed out that a sex worker is more vulnerable to violence and thus requires greater protection of her/his rights. Violence against sex workers is a public health issue because it is extremely pervasive, longitudinal (across a sex worker’s lifetime) and leads to various manifestations of ill health and increased exposure to HIV.

Bharati raised the question of how the right to health can be made inclusive of sex workers. Manisha reiterated the point that human rights should not exclude groups of people. Clearly there is a case for sex workers to have a right to their health since evidence suggests that many are turned away at public health facilities. The right to health also means that one’s identity as a sex worker should not be disclosed by the health care provider. If this fundamental premise of confidentiality were maintained there would be no reason why sex workers are denied services at medical facilities. Manisha went on to point out that gaining the right to health for sex workers is increasingly important under the new right wing government and the

“IN MANISHA’S SESSION I LEARNT THAT PRIVATIZATION IS INCREASING IN THE HEALTH SECTOR AND HOW THIS AFFECTS HEALTHCARE FOR US, AS SOME OF US WILL NOT BE ABLE TO AFFORD IT.”  
Raju Naik

"I WOULD LIKE TO SHARE WHAT I LEARNED IN MANISHA'S SESSION WITH OTHERS IN MY GROUP. FOR EXAMPLE ABOUT HOW A PERSONS' HEALTH IS AFFECTED DUE TO LACK OF HEALTH RIGHTS."

Kokila

"I LEARNT IN MANISHA'S SESSION ABOUT HOW THE NATIONAL RURAL HEALTH MISSION IS BEING RESISTED AT THE PRIMARY HEALTH LEVEL."

Shanthi

looming threat of sex worker and HIV organizations being shut down, due to international politics of funding. This makes it all the more important for the sex worker movement to form allies with the Indian health movement in lobbying for a law that ensures the right to health and healthcare. On the topic of forming alliances, the VAMP participants highlighted the importance of forming allies with local institutions to advance rights of sex workers. They flagged the need for sex worker activists to get onto community-based monitoring (CBM) groups to account for the inclusivity of sex workers' health at the local level. Manisha pointed out how health is largely a state subject and family planning is a central subject and that the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) and its CBM groups are a roadmap that can be used to monitor health services and make them answerable. This prompted a concluding discussion on the specific health needs and rights of sex workers and, depending on these, which movements sex workers can strategically align with. Participants listed out several top priority health issues

for sex workers. These were accessing free condoms and tests, non-discrimination in government facilities and adequate sanitation in brothel areas. It was suggested that the women's movement is already a movement with whom the sex workers movement is aligned. Manisha concluded the session by pointing out how the sex workers movement could also align with the right to food movement and the right to education movement because food security and education are both social determinants of health. She stressed the point that unless all of us get involved in campaigns and movements beyond our specific identity, no one's rights would be fully realized in our country.

"I DESIGNED THESE SESSIONS WITH THE PRESENT GROUP IN MIND, THOUGH I WASN'T SURE ABOUT THEIR LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT WITH THE HEALTH MOVEMENT. I DECIDED TO STICK TO THE POLITICS OF HEALTH SO THAT PARTICIPANTS WOULD BE ENCOURAGED TO JOIN THE MOVEMENT FOR THE RIGHT TO HEALTH. I SAW THE PARTICIPANTS FACES LIGHT WHEN THEY REALIZED THE CONNECTION OF THE RIGHT TO HEALTH WITH THE REALITIES OF THEIR LIVES."

Manisha Gupte

The final session of the day was a screening of the Film "Who Am I" by Naz foundation (India) Trust.<sup>2</sup> The film was made in 2010 and speaks about the social conditions under which LGBT people live in India under the Indian penal code law, Section 377. The film showcases members of the LGBT community in India as well as lawyers and activists who speak on issues faced by this community due to the law.

"THE FILM 'WHO AM I' HELPED ME TO UNDERSTAND THAT FOR A TRANSGENDER PERSON IT IS HOW THEY FEEL ABOUT GENDER THAT IS IMPORTANT TO THEM, NOT THE SEXUAL ORGANS THEY HAVE BEEN BORN WITH."

RAJU NAIK



"This film showed how the public have more information now about the actual reality of TGs such - as their biological status - as opposed to only seeing them only with magical powers. This possibly may lead to more violence against TGs because people are less fearful of them?"

Sudhir Patil

<sup>2</sup><http://www.nazindia.org/news.htm>

RESOURCE PERSON: ALBERTINA ALMEIDA

Albertina's session was designed to focus on the struggles fought by the autonomous women's movement. Her methodology was to highlight a few landmark cases and to share the debates that have surrounded them. Through this the participants could think about the women's movements' critical political standpoints, appreciate the development of the movement as organic rather than linear, and understand how court cases can be used as a platform for creating wider rights-based campaigns.

### *The Matura rape case*

The Matura rape case was one of the first cases taken up by the autonomous women's movement on a national level. Albertina explained the facts around this case of a young tribal woman, Matura from Chandrapur in Maharashtra who had eloped with her boyfriend. Unhappy about this, her family members registered a complaint of kidnapping against the boy and the couple was promptly arrested. Albertina noted that their arrest was based on a social morality that disapproves of women making choices about sexual relationships, particularly when couples are from different caste backgrounds. She reflected that people often find themselves in police stations because of the morality factor.

While in police custody, Matura was raped by two police officers. She filed a complaint and was subjected to a 'virginity' test. Her case was initially acquitted on the grounds that she must have provoked the men and consented to intercourse because the test results showed she had previously had sexual intercourse. Matura took the case to the Bombay High Court which reversed the lower court's decision, ruling that the policemen had misused their powers and sentencing them to imprisonment. In response, the policemen took the case up to the Supreme Court where the judgment was again reversed. It ruled that Matura must have consented to intercourse a) because there were no visible injuries to her body which suggested she had not resisted b) because she had not raised an alarm during the attack and c) because her liaison with her lover was sufficient reason to believe that she would have willingly had sex with the two men.

Participants were invited to think about the grounds upon which the Supreme Court had made its judgment and consider why Matura hadn't raised an alarm when the men were attacking her. Albertina pointed out that several arguments had been made in defense of Matura by a group of distinguished law professors in a letter to the Chief Justice of India. These points were shared with the participants, shedding light on how a human rights framework takes into view the various circumstances incumbent on the aggrieved at the time. In the letter, the law professors had developed the following arguments in order to question the Supreme Court's decision:

- 1) That a legal and common sense distinction needs to be made between the act of submitting to rape (because of inability to resist) and consenting to sexual intercourse.
- 2) That the absence of resistance by the aggrieved does not necessarily indicate consent.
- 3) That in many cases of rape FIR's are not filed, medical investigations are absent, and women have no access to legal services, or community support.
- 4) That in cases of rape there is a need to question the meaning of consent and revise the notion of burden of proof.



Moving on, Albertina spoke about how judgments are frequently influenced by the biased mindset of judges, defense lawyers and police witnesses. High profile cases i.e. those involving politicians, are treated impartially in accordance with due process of law while in cases involving people from marginalized sections of society, stereotyping and disbelief often come into play. Such inconsistencies, Albertina highlighted, reflect hypocrisy and double standards in the courts.

Participants were invited to spend some time thinking about the concepts of consent and agency. How do these differ from each other, particularly in relation to sex work? Sakina viewed consent as something which is given under force of circumstance and characterized by there being no other possible alternative. Conversely, when one is making a choice that is free of constraints, she explained, this is one's agency being exercised. Raju regarded the two concepts slightly differently. For him, agency is characterized by making a conscious assessment of the circumstances surrounding a situation and then making an informed decision based on them. Consent, he felt, is the act of making a decision to say yes, irrespective of the outcome.

Albertina highlighted another key conceptual tool that the women's movement has worked with – the concept of 'choice'. World over, the question of choice for feminists has centered on the right to abortion. The Western women's movement's call for the right to abortion is solely based on the concept that women have a right to choose what to do with their bodies. However in India,

“ALBERTINA’S SESSION BROUGHT TOGETHER ISSUES OF CLASS, CASTE MONEY, AND HOW THESE IMPACT ACCESS TO JUSTICE.”

RAJU NAIK

the debates were complicated by social pressures on women to bear male children. As a consequence, the Indian women's movement had to deal with a major repercussion of the rhetoric 'the right to choose' - the logical argument that if women have the right to choose, then they should also have the right to choose the gender of their child and choose to abort if the fetus is female. Feminists in India have articulated that choice in the context of female feticide is complicated by patriarchal notions of 'son preference'. This led the women's movement to initiate campaigns and to work towards getting legislation that would prevent sex selective abortion.

The second half of Albertina's session focused on the Bhanwari Devi case and the Vishaka judgment. The former centered on a rural activist in Rajasthan who was raped by high caste men while campaigning to prevent child marriage. The accused were acquitted on the infamous judges' statement, "Since the offenders were upper-caste men and included a Brahmin, the rape could not have taken place because Bhanwari was from a lower caste". Albertina highlighted how this judgment prompted the women's movement to challenge certain gendered beliefs that prevent women from accessing justice, such as the notion that rape occurs because men cannot control their sexual desires; that women are raped because of what they wear, or do, and that women from lower castes are dishonest. The Bhanwari case spearheaded a new campaign to institute safety guidelines for women in the workplace.

“The sharing on the Matura rape case made me see that we need to start working on this issue within our organization and at a district and state level. one way to start is to identify human rights commissions and become members.”

Shanthi

“AS SEX WORKERS WE FACE A LOT OF HARASSMENT AND HUMILIATION IN THE VILLAGES. I WOULD LIKE TO SEE THIS REMOVED AS I SEE IT AFFECTING OTHER WOMEN TOO.”

Shanthi

“From this training I feel I can now talk to non-sex worker women about what our issues are as women in sex work, and to hear about what their issues. I realize many of our issues are similar, though I feel they face more problems than we do.”

Alevelu

“ With the case study of Matura, I would have liked a more open discussion on the case itself. as an activist i would have liked to have looked at it from where things went wrong and what could have been done differently.”

Shanthi

In the cases of rape, I learnt that when it goes up to the court, the questions being asked to these women are sad. And we as ordinary women we should get together and help each other.

Alevelu

The Vishaka judgment on sexual harassment in the workplace came into being after a number of sexual harassment cases came into the public view, including that of an IPS officer who was sexually harassed by KPS Gill, a former chief of the Punjab police force. Cases such as this brought to light how sexual harassment in the workplace affects women’s productivity in the work force and their mental health. A number of women's rights activists and lawyers filed a PIL in the Supreme Court, arguing that sexual harassment in the workplace affected the right to livelihood, dignity and right to life. Under the collective platform of Vishaka, the petition led to a judgment stating that guidelines and committees are set up in all workplaces to monitor and deal with sexual harassment. This landmark judgment provided the basic definitions of sexual harassment at the workplace and the Vishaka guidelines.



“I felt it was necessary to seize the opportunity to talk more about consent and agency because these are fundamental concepts that underpin an understanding of women’s rights. It was good that the group got to link these concepts to their own lives by talking about agency and consent in sex work, so they could internalize and ask themselves how one increases ones agency.”

ALBERTINA ALMEIDA

RESOURCE PERSONS: MEENA SESHU AND AARTHI PAI, SANGRAM/CASAM

Meena's session focused on providing an overview of the key positions that have evolved in the sex worker rights movement. She began by talking about how sex workers rights have largely been excluded from the women's rights discourse. This is because sex workers have not been regarded as women with rights, but rather constructed as women who need to be rehabilitated. To illustrate this impasse, Meena narrated the story of the demolition of Baina, a sex work district in Goa.

Baina had evolved as a slum and sex work area over several generations. It housed over 250 brothels situated among 4000 other households. In an attempt to rehabilitate sex workers, a local anti-trafficking NGO approached the High Court for an order to intervene and 'rescue' the women.

Local women's organizations welcomed this move. However instead of authorizing this, the court issued an eviction order to clear the entire slum. The hidden agenda was to clear the slums situated as they were on prime development property. Thousands of sex workers and their families were forced to leave Goa as the bulldozers razed their homes. Under police orders they were told to return to their native places. This story points to the need for sex worker organizations to gain support from civil society groups because it is difficult to push for rights in isolation. Meena emphasized the importance of strategy in forming these alliances. One way, she argued, is to encourage those who have demonstrated an anti-sex work stand to meet with sex workers. By dialoguing with sex workers, this will help them build new perspectives on sex work.



### *Constructions of sex workers*

Meena introduced an exercise to demonstrate the degree of negativity that surrounds sex work, and how negative constructs of sex workers have become normalized. In their language groups, participants were invited to think of at least 5 words that represent a sex worker. This exercise helped participants to observe how many pejorative words exist (particularly to women) in relation to sex workers and how these words are generally used to denigrate women who step outside of socially acceptable norms. It was interesting to note the similarity of words across languages (see Annexure 1). Meena concluded that natural alliances could be formed between non-sex worker women and women in sex work based on the fact that both experience stigma.

“When I saw Aarthi’s PowerPoint in the afternoon I realized that over the years society has tried to suppress sex workers. Still, we have prevailed and we continue to fight. I felt very great about this”

Shabana

“Meena’s session explained how the various movements impact sex workers and how we operate within these movements as a community.”

Sangeeta

To conclude the session she delivered a Power Point presentation illustrating the various approaches to sex work from pre-Victorian colonial era to the contemporary moment. Participants were able to see how various perspectives on sex work have emerged and had a direct impact on social policy and legislation in India. The presentation focused on the ways in which feminist standpoints around sex work have evolved with Christian-Victorian moral values as a backdrop, converging on the major point of contention between anti and pro-sex women’s groups on whether sex work should be considered exploitation or choice. It was shown how this bifurcated view has translated into policies that promote the rescue and rehabilitation approach to sex work and burgeoning anti-trafficking laws. It was further shown how HIV interventions have helped a discourse to emerge on sex workers rights, which prioritizes collectivization and the inclusivity of sex workers in deciding policy that influences their lives.

“THE COURTS - THEY ARE NOT FOR US. THEY ARE ONLY FOR THOSE WHO HAVE SOCIAL POWER. I HAVE REALIZED THAT WE CANNOT DO THIS ALONE. WE NEED THE SUPPORT OF THE FEMINISTS AND OTHER GROUPS.”

Bharati





Before moving to the session, Meena summarized the previous days' learning by reiterating the following points:-

- The women's movement has worked slowly and systematically, particularly in the work it has done amending the justice system.
- The sex workers rights movement is well placed to act fast and strategically because of the other movements that activists have been aligned with.
- Organizing around sex worker rights is rooted in the fundamental principle that sex workers have the right to decide what happens to them. This emerged from a feminist principle of the right to self determination.
- Despite shared oppression, it is a challenge to get non-sex worker women onto the same platform as sex workers to discuss shared issues. The belief that most non-sex worker women hold about women in sex work is that they do not choose to be in this line of work.

Shanthi pointed out an interesting paradox regarding the last point. She argued that in fact non-sex worker women have far less access to support than sex workers. They are often estranged from their families and do not have Sanghas to support them when in need. She added that sex workers not only have various kinds of spaces to speak about themselves, the very fact that they sell sex enables them to confront hostility. An ordinary woman would generally be fearful about attracting attention if she was verbally degraded, because of the risk of being further stigmatized. In this sense, she concluded, non-sex worker women are more disadvantaged than sex workers, and hence the need to support them.

ADVOCACY – MAPPING RIGHTS VIOLATIONS FACED BY SEX WORKERS

10.00AM – 12.30PM

RESOURCE PERSON: AARTHI PAI, CASAM

The focus of this session was on global movements on sex work.

Aarthi began by outlining some important conceptual links that sex work leaders have made in developing a critical rights-based approach to sex work. These include:-

- 1) That criminalization of sex work is the dominant legal approach and that this leads to stigma and discrimination and violence. Around the globe, 110 countries currently have laws that criminalize sex work.
- 2) That HIV has been an entry point to get governments to recognize the relevance of law reform to prevent HIV. However, we need to be aware that the HIV ticket is a means to change rather than an end.
- 3) That law confuses sex work with trafficking and leads to an extremely warped perception of sex work. The conflation of sex work and trafficking is global.

Following this, Kokila initiated a discussion about the definition of trafficking. Her definition of trafficking can be seen in the box below. Aarthi took Kokila’s definition and demonstrated how it reflected the way that trafficking is defined in law, involving three elements 1) fraud and deceit 2) movement of persons and 3) an end purpose - which could be organ donation, sexual exploitation work or marriage. However, an essential part of the puzzle is missing in this legal definition; that most people have aspirations for a better life, a desire to move to facilitate this, particularly when they cannot fulfill their aspirations in their native place. The trafficking discourse wholly ignores these aspirations. They are clouded over by hysteria surrounding trafficking for purpose of the sex trade or the abuse of children. In reality, people often pay agents to help facilitate the travel of families, including children. However, the trafficking framework views such children as ‘victims’, confusing their movement with kidnapping. People move for all kinds of reasons. Yet, the movement of women –whether internally or across borders - is only viewed as for the intent and purposes of being ‘sold’ or ‘forced’ into prostitution. As such, the conflation of kidnapping with trafficking and sex work with trafficking makes a clear response difficult, particularly if abusive acts occur in transit. Adding to the confusion is the fact that migration policies fail to provide protection to those who do travel. Aarthi invited the participants to consider the following case scenario and debate whether it exemplifies trafficking;

“PEOPLE ARE DECEIVED BY PEOPLE INTO BELIEVING THEY ARE GOING FOR JOBS FOR A BETTER LIFE. THEY ARE TAKEN FROM ONE COUNTRY TO ANOTHER, AND THERE THEIR ORGANS ARE REMOVED, OR SOME ARE FORCED INTO BEGGARY, OR SOLD FOR LABOUR. IT IS VIRTUAL SLAVERY FOR THEM AND THEY LIVE IN BAD CONDITIONS. THERE IS NO OPPORTUNITY FOR THEM TO GET OUT.”

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*Kokila’s definition of trafficking*

A group of tribal women in Jharkhand had taken loans to buy tickets to travel to Bombay to get work. They were stopped from boarding the train by local police who assumed they were being trafficked. The women said they had consented to go. They had paid an agent to do so because they wanted better jobs and a better life.

Kokila felt this was not a trafficking case because the women were traveling of their own accord. Sakina remarked that, if the police were in doubt as to why the women were boarding the train, they should have questioned them before acting upon their assumptions. She added that the women should have been allowed to make a choice to travel as it is their right to do so. Raju intervened by reiterating Aarthi’s point that migration needs to be made safe. This would mean freeing the agent from the equation, making working conditions safe on arrival and providing a helpline. Sakina also pointed out how sex workers who migrate are often sent back to their native places by NGOs and the police which escalates their problems. When they are accompanied by strangers or policemen they are recognized as sex

workers in their locality and are stigmatized.

At this juncture, an adaptation was made to the original agenda to enable participants to engage deeper with the problematic aspects of the trafficking discourse. It was felt important that, as sex worker leaders, participants should be clear on these issues to counter the current positions of the trafficking movement, for example the drive to criminalize third parties.

Time was allotted to learn experientially through an exercise. The group was divided in two, and half were invited to think about trafficking from the agents’ position, the other half from the position of those who wish to travel. Participants in both groups were requested to think about the women’s motivation for wanting to move, what they would need to facilitate their travel, and they listed out the necessary requirements to prepare for this transition. The agents group came up with the following list of how to get business from people who wanted to move and the preparations prior to transit:

- Keep informed about and identify people in the village who may want to migrate for work.
- Interact with those who want to migrate.
- Have discussions with potential itinerants about their documentation i.e. passports, birth certificates.
- Inform family members that there will be a legitimate job at destination.
- Talk about the cost of travelling, stay and food at destination.
- Help in opening bank accounts.
- Explain the financial arrangement and inform them that they cannot break the contract and come home.
- Inform about how to do the money transaction.
- Aid in giving loans and explain the terms.
- Explain what will be given in terms of security and protection.
- Convince them this will be a lifetime settlement.
- Inform them how to deal with the police if they are detained, i.e. not to hand over passports etc.
- 

The village women's group came up with the following 'to do' list when thinking about migrating for work:

- Talk over the idea of moving with female friends.
- Talk with partner/s about wanting to migrate for work.
- Convince partner to accompany.
- Identify an agent who can source work and negotiate a good financial deal.
- Be aware of the pretence of an agent who may suggest marriage to cover up sending for sex work.
- Try to connect with neighbors who might be able to provide the means to travel.
- Talk to brothel owners about potentially lucrative cities/areas to work in.
- Look out for advertisements in newspapers.
- Source better paying work via existing friend's network and known clients.



These presentations opened out a discussion, raised by Alavelu, on whether women who transit via agents commonly experience being forced into sex work. Bharati felt this only happens to a small percentage of women who migrate for work. Sakina added that the question itself is flawed because, of those who are coerced, many decide to continue doing sex work of their own volition. Meenakshi Kamble shared the VAMP experience of working on trafficking cases in the Sangli district. The collective made a conscious effort to identify suspected trafficking cases by being vigilant in noticing young women entering the brothel areas. Activists intervened in suspected cases by checking documentation and ages to establish whether young women had been trafficked. Over the course of several years, VAMP observed a decline in the number of trafficking cases, as compared with earlier.



Aarhi went on to explain how the trafficking discourse prevents safety mechanisms from being put into place. For example, in the case of those who wish to find sex work on reaching a destination, an unofficial contract is entered into with an agent, with zero labour protection. In the event that something goes awry, women have no recourse to legal help to resolve breach of contract. This, Aarhi pointed out, is one of the reasons that sex worker leaders have been advocating that sex work become recognized as a legitimate form of work. Within the trafficking discourse offenses by agents are entirely obscured by the persistent focus on sexual exploitation in sex work. Because ITPA defines trafficking as prostitution it too is unable to deal with situations of fraud. Despite India ratifying the Palermo Protocol in 2000, which has a meaningful definition of trafficking as “the exploitation of prostitution” (as opposed to defining prostitution as exploitation), trafficking cases, are usually dealt with in the lower courts, where no one has heard of the Palermo Protocol. This has meant until recently that women travelling of their own free will - particularly when found arriving at a destination linked to sex work - have invariably been assumed trafficked.

Concluding this session, Aarhi took the participants through events

surrounding changes in the criminal law amendment Bill 2013 which in effect should reduce these occurrences. Initially the amendment had been drafted in such a way that continued to conflate the definition of exploitation with prostitution. NSW took issue with this thereby resulting in the word prostitution being dropped from the explanation of exploitation and replaced with “any act of physical exploitation or any form of sexual exploitation”. That the amendment carries this definition and was passed as an Act in 2013 is a major milestone towards securing the rights of sex workers in India.



“WE ARE ALREADY THINKING ABOUT HOW WE CAN PUT TOGETHER A STREET PLAY SO THAT WE CAN TALK ABOUT THE ITPA AND ISSUES OF TRAFFICKING.”

MUKTA



RESOURCE PERSON: RAJU NAIK AND SHABANA KAZI-GOUNDI, VAMP

Afternoon discussions centered on the screening of *Save us from Saviours*, a documentary film directed by Kat Mansoor.<sup>3</sup> Meena spoke about the interesting trajectory of this film having been jointly produced by Institute for Development Studies, Brighton (UK) and SANGRAM. This collaboration was unique in the sense that sex workers in the film had equal control over its content and most importantly, how they were to be represented in the film. Given that most films on the subject matter of sex work have portrayed sex workers in a relatively grim light, this portrayed the community as strong and critical of the way that 'saviours' have viewed them. Another interesting aspect of the film was how the story line had evolved through the director observing the community, rather than entering it with preconceived ideas about the shape of the film. The film centers on stories of empowerment from VAMP suggesting that becoming a sex worker is about business, not desperation. The film sends out a clear message that sex workers do not want to be 'saved' by foreign organizations, but want respect as human beings.



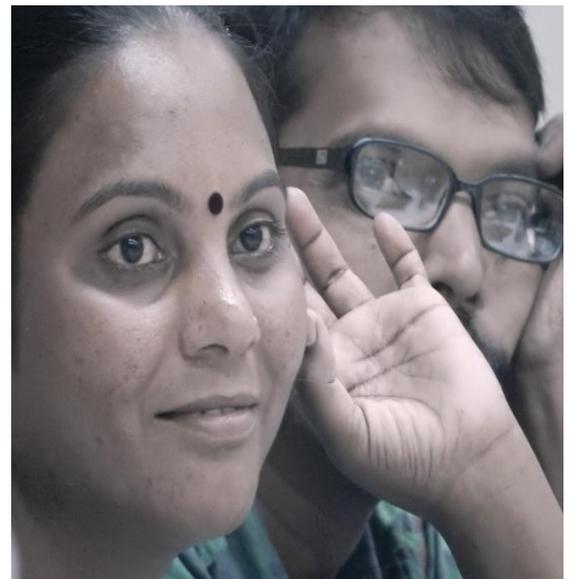
"AFTER THIS TRAINING WE PLAN TO UPDATE OUR BOARD MEMBERS ON THE INFORMATION WE HAVE LEARNT, AND HAVE ONE-ON-ONE CONVERSATIONS WITH OTHER SEX WORKERS. WITH THE INFORMATION I HAVE NOW I FEEL MORE ABLE TO TALK CONFIDENTLY TO THE POLICE AND INITIATE DIALOGUE BETWEEN CBOS AND THE POLICE."

SAKINA



prevent confusion as they grow up. Meena concluded the session by contextualizing these challenges. She spoke about how Indian society views sexuality very narrowly, which contributes to the barriers to talking about sexuality in general, thus making it difficult to share such information with our children.

The screening provoked hearty applause from the participants and an engaging discussion followed. In response, Kokila shared her story of empowerment when she filed a police complaint against a police driver who had extorted money from her, raped her and put her into a police cell for 15 days. After filing an FIR, she made an appearance in the media to criticize police violence and action was taken against him. Several participants commented on the pride with which Raju had expressed his identity as the son of a sex worker in the film. Raju narrated his journey towards acceptance of his mother and how this helped him persuade other young men like him. Sakina responded to this by sharing that for her the most difficult aspect of being a sex worker is talking to her children about what she does. Sangeeta from VAMP talked about her experiences of openly telling her son that she earned through sex work as a means to provide for him. Being clear and open with children, she argued, is important to



<sup>3</sup><http://www.animalmonday.co.uk/documentary.php>.

RESOURCE PERSON: AARTHI PAI, CASAM

This session was designed to give an overview of relevant human rights instruments and how they can be used to further the rights of sex workers. Aarthi began by offering a historical background to the concept of human rights, which emerged after the Second World War and the ethnic genocide of Jews in Nazi Germany. After the war ended in 1945, a decision was made by Western nations to never allow another world war or mass genocide. The basis of human rights was thus created; that every individual has human rights by virtue of being human and that these are indivisible and universal. With the creation of human rights, the question arose of needing to institute a body that would try to bridge the gap between countries and prevent them from going to war. This became known as the United Nations. Currently 282 countries have membership in the UN. Every country member is bound by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Organically the concept of human rights started dispersing into various specific rights - civil rights, economic rights, children's rights, women's rights, refugee rights, political participation, political rights etc. Thus formed the various branches of the UN - UNICEF, UNFPA, UNAIDS, UN Women, WHO, World Bank, UNDP, UNODC. These agencies were established to ensure adherence to human rights standards by all member countries. The United Nations monitors every member country that has signed any UN treaty. Each country has to report to a committee for every four years.

Aarthi elaborated on the importance of conducting advocacy at the International level with the UN, particularly when India has ratified many of the human rights treaties. CEDAW for example is a particularly significant treaty that India is party to and sex workers need to know about this since it applies to the rights of women. So far reporting on adherence to CEDAW in India has not included the status of sex work. This year for the first time, NNSW, VAMP and SANGRAM decided to write a chapter for the CEDAW Shadow Report on 'Status of Women in Sex work in India'<sup>4</sup>. This highlighted violence, discrimination and denial of civil liberties experienced by sex workers in India and was submitted for consideration at the 58<sup>th</sup> session at UN Geneva. In response to this report, the UN has asked the Indian government about the steps it plans to take to prevent violence against women in sex work. The Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women is also asking how the ITPA is being monitored to prevent from sex worker's being harassed.

On this point, Aarthi and Meena released the Status of Women in Sex work Report and Raju gave closing comments for the training.

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<sup>4</sup>[http://www.sangram.org/resources.aspx?res\\_id=1](http://www.sangram.org/resources.aspx?res_id=1)

## EXPERIENCES OF THE VAMP INSTITUTE

“ Although we were talking about things that we know about and words that we have heard, this training helped me to directly relate concepts to the work I am doing in the field. “

Sudhir Patil, MUSKAN

“BY SPENDING TIME IN THIS INSTITUTE I CAME TO KNOW HOW MANY DIFFERENCES THERE ARE BETWEEN WOMEN AND REALIZED THAT OUR PRESENCE WITH NON-SEX WORKER WOMEN WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THEM UNDERSTANDING OUR ISSUES AND US THEIRS”.

Shanthy, Vadamar Foundation



“A onetime training like this is not enough to get all the information across about law. Repetitions of this training are needed.”

Sakina, UKMO



“HAVING VAMP PARTICIPATING IN THIS TRAINING WAS INSPIRING AND INVALUABLE BECAUSE OF HOW THEY ARE SO FAMILIAR WITH MANY OF THESE ISSUES.”

Mukta,  
UKMO



“ I think that having inter phase with the police and the media in this training could have been very helpful. The media portrays sex workers in a bad light. The training could help them to be more sensitive towards us.”

Alavelu, Me and My World

“Basically people need to hone their communication skills. So far they have been talking to people within their own communities, and from their own socio-economic background. This has influenced how they communicate, which is often through confrontation. The next step in this training program could be getting people in from other communities and backgrounds so that participants have the opportunity to address them in a safe space.”

Prabha Nagaraja, TARSHI.



Annexure 1

Tamil	Marathi	Telugu	Kannada
Prostitute	prostitute	Langa (bitch)	Munde (widow)
loose woman	Bhai (Brother)	A person who lies a lot	Sude
sexy dressing	dhandiwalli (woman who does business)	gaandlanga (ass fucking bitch)	street woman who is strong and left everything
not ripe still	nalayak woman (worthless)	a whore who cheats	bad for society
new song	veysha (prostitute)	veysha	black marketing in society
affection	Rand (derogative)	Randi (signifies respect)	woman with no respect
Happiness	dirty woman	bazaar manchi (everything open in the bazaar)	
Love	chinaal		
	bhosedi		
	chaalbaaz( to make you mad)		
	bad chall (bad walk)		
	Nashabaaz (addiction)		
	ass fucker (used to describe male and female SWs )		
	tawaif		
	Makachod (sucking mothers vagina)	Madarchodlanga	