

People's Watch

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Advocacy and lobbying Vellore & Sivagangai

The District level advocacy and lobbying was undertaken to focus the major human rights violations reported in a year at Vellore and Sivagangai Districts. The aim of these advocacy and lobbying programs are to promote human rights issues at several levels. Therefore there were discussions with local NGOs as well as meetings with the press. It was made public that there have been a total of 244 cases of human rights violations registered in Vellore within the year and in Sivagangai it was still worse with 319 cases. These cases were categorized like; caste discriminations, violence against women and police torture. An analysis of the cases in Vellore district revealed that the highest number of violations recorded in Vellore was cases of police torture. Through this advocacy and lobbying efforts the staff members of monitoring, intervention, campaign and public relations units insisted upon

stringent action by the officials to ensure a district free from human rights violations and action against erring officials. The major concern expressed during this program was that the police stations were turning into torture chambers and places of illegal negotiations to settle the cases with monetary benefits for the officials by blindly taking a stand in favour of the parties that are economically and socially powerful. Similarly in Sivagangai district it was observed that there were violations against the Dalit people in several and different forms. In many villages cases like the Dalits not allowed to walk with slipper, forced to do menial jobs and existence of double tumbler system highlighted the caste issued underlying in the village. The team was disappointed to notice the slackness of the officials who were in charge of implementing the SC/ST PoA Act 1985 in performing their duty.



The 'e-knowledge resource on PRI' a pilot project of People's Watch in partnership with The Hunger Project (THP) organized two training programs for the researchers one for the North and one for the South

zone. The South zone program was organized at Madurai, Tamilnadu from 2nd 6th February and the North zone program at Katni, Madhya Pradesh, from 24th 28th February 2009. Mr. Louis, Director, Programs and HRD and Ms. Catherine Rubina, Social Researcher organized the trainings at the two places.



Mr. Henri Tiphagne, Executive Director, at the EU meeting on 'Consultation with Civil Society on the Mid Term Review of the EU Strategy for Development Cooperation with India' held at Shangri La Hotel, New Delhi on the 26th and 27th of March 2009.

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International Women's Day

The women's committee of People's Watch in observance of the International Women's day organised a discussion forum on 16th March 2009 on the theme "Women in media" at



SOCO Trust, Madurai. Ms. Oviya, Writer and Ms. Sundaravalli Lecturer, Arulandar College, Madurai served as resource persons for the program. The program was facilitated by Ms. Kala Newton. The participants were from different Self Help Groups (SHGs), NGOs, movements, students groups and individuals. The focus was towards the portrayal of women in media enforcing the stereotypes suppressing women empowerment and how media has its influence over the growth of women in terms of socio economic cultural and political rights of women. The participants also took a pledge to respect women and stand against any form of Human Rights violation against women.

Observance of International Women's Day in HRE States

Odisha:

International women's day was observed by IHRE Odisha jointly with "NARI SANGHA" Balasore at Balasore on 8th March 2009. A seminar was organized on the topic "Protection of Girl Child and development" in the society.

Tripura:

International women's day was observed at school level on 8th March 2009 at Agartala.

Andhra Pradesh:

International women's day was observed at Ravulapalem, Andhra Pradesh on 10th March 2009. Mr. P. S. N. Murthy IAS, had been the chief guest

and Mrs. Hemalalitha, Advocate had presided over the meeting.

Bihar:

On March 8, 2008 a discussion on Women's Rights had been organized by the Bihar HRE unit in collaboration with Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS), Patna at ADRI premise.

Tamilnadu:

A total of 90 Human Rights Education schools celebrated women's day. The HRE students and teachers had organised these programs. The celebrations were through different forms based on the guidance from the IHRE. ■



Custodial Torture & Violence

Mr. Ashok Mathews Philip, State Director Karnataka, and Ms. Anitha Princy, Administrative Assistant, National Project on Preventing Torture in India participated in the three day seminar on Custodial Torture and Violence from 17th to 19th February 2009 at Bio Medical Centre, Mumbai jointly organized by Justice and Peace Commission (JPC), Women's Research & Action Group (WRAG) and International Human Rights Education

consortium (IHREC). There were 29 eminent personalities from various parts of the nation and the South Asian countries including human rights activists, educationalists and lawyers. Introduction to Torture and the concept and context of torture in International & Regional perspectives was covered in the seminar. Mr. Ashok Mathews Philip and Ms. Anitha Princy made a detailed presentation on the National Project on Preventing Torture in India an Initiative at Breaking the Culture of Impunity for Torture. ■

Participation of Mr. Henri Tiphagne, Executive Director, in the 'National Consultation on the implementation of concluding observations of the CEDAW Committee organized by the NAWO at The Park Hotels, New Delhi from 25th to 26th March 2009.



Sad demise of Prof. Xavier Arockiasamy

Xavier @ Prof. Xavier Arockiasamy is well known for his social activities and has been in this field of activism for the past 40 years. On January 10, 2009 he died due to a sudden heart attack at Dindigul. Being a Human Being more passionate of Human Rights work he was thoroughly involved in this work. Many of the activists working in field are the people who have been inspired by him through his trainings and ideas. His strength was converting of social concerns to meaningful interventions which reflect his strength and passion for human rights. A person with more warmth, friendliness and a highly cultured Human Being with humanness involved in the cause for people along with his wife Ms. Louise Xavier.

In his early seventies, Mr. Xavier was more attracted towards the

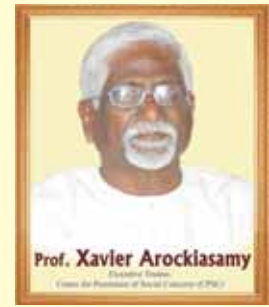
leftist ideologies. During his work with the All India Catholic University Federation (AICUF) he had played a major role in bringing out the 'Thenmalai' a monthly publication which was very popular then. After moving from Chennai to Dindigul he continued the process of educating people through the publication 'Senra Vaaram' meaning 'Last Week' containing news on social aspects. Also he had played a vital role in analyzing the social and political issues in the right sense taking it forth to the people in a more simplified form. Had been instrumental in creating many NGOs and after a certain stage when they had gone beyond the reach of the common people he was also very much disturbed.

Being in public life, he was a person who also valued and cared for relationships. At trainings he would

speak from his heart being more expressive. He hated a

materialistic life and gathering wealth or property was never his concern at any point of time. People's Watch owes its gratitude to Prof. Xavier who had been its Executive Trustee. As an Executive Trustee he had played an imperative role in ensuring the accountability and transparency of this organization.

On 26th January 2009, a memorial meeting was organized in Dindigul in which all his writings were compiled into a book named 'Maanbudan Vazha' meaning 'To live with dignity' which was released by Dr. Devasahayam, Financial Trustee, People's Watch and Director, Institute of Human Rights Education and received by Mrs. Louise Xavier. ■



Social Action Movement (SAM) Second State Level Conference

In today's scenario, in Tamilnadu, many NGOs are working towards addressing issues concerning the basic needs of the marginalized section of people of our society both at the rural and urban areas. The Social Action Movement (SAM) is a

platform for these NGOs to come together, to discuss, to identify the challenges and to work together as a joint force. The Second State Level Conference of SAM had been held at Dindigul from 17-19 February 2009. Various committees to take care of the coordination, research, finance, souvenir, and cultural programmes had been set up thus sharing of the responsibilities. The Inaugural address of the conference was given by Former Supreme Court Justice. V.R. Krishna Iyer through video conferencing. The conference theme being 'Impact of Globalization' there had been various speeches by renowned speakers on Human Rights, Women, Children, Dalits, Tribals, Fishermen, Farmers, unorganized labour, environment, special economic zones, and communalism which added more essence to the conference. The conference was concluded with the 'Dindigul Declaration 2009' which emphasized on the need for a joint action of NGOs in creating alternatives against social odds mainly due to the impact of globalization. ■



Human Right Education In other States

The Institute of Human Rights Education & Salasian Congregation, Gwahathi jointly introduced Human Rights Education in the North-East states from 2009.

The inaugural of the National Program on HRE in the schools of North-East India held was at St. Antony Hr. Sec School, Shillong on 20th February 2009. Mr. Manas Choudhury, Higher & Technical Education Minister participated and released the module "Introduction to Human Rights". Megalaya Education Officers, Head Masters representatives from Shilong Martin Luther University & Volunteer organizations participated in the meeting. Following this, the two phases of trainings for Human Rights teachers were held at Gawhathi Bosco Reach

out training center from 21st to 25th February 2009 and 31st March to 4th April 2009 under the facilitation of Dr. Devasagayam, Director, Institute of Human Rights Education.

State Level Advocacy and Lobbying - Kerala

The Kerala State Advisory Committee had its meeting on 13th February 2009 at Ernakulam. As a part of the advocacy and lobbying efforts at the state level, Dr. Vasanthi Devi, Chairperson, IHRE, Mr. Henri Tiphagne, Executive Director, People's Watch, Dr.N.A.Kareem, Kerala, Mr. Ashok Mathew Phillip, Executive Director, SICHREM, Ms. Ashifa, State Coordinator, IHRE Kerala had met Justice. Krishna Iyer regarding strengthening HRE in



Kerala. As an immediate response Justice Krishna Ayer had immediately spoken to the Minister M.A.Baby and impressed upon him the need for extending the full support of the state government to this programme. As a follow up of the above meeting a team had met the Minister on 16th February 2009. The major suggestions that had come from the Minister were to provide the 8000 schools in Kerala with two to three sets of the modules as a first step. After getting the government permission, all the trainings programmes were asked to be conducted by the SSA. The materials in the modules were said to be inculcated into the state syllabus with SCERT. ■



National Level State Coordinators Meeting:

The meeting was held at United Theological College, Bangalore on 8th & 9th of January 2009. 13 coordinators from 11 states had attended this meeting.

Staff Capacity Building Program:

The 16 of our Coordinators have joined the PG Diploma Course on Child Rights Law offered by National Law School of India University, Bangalore, from January 2009 to October 2009. All the coordinators had attended the first contact classes held at the university campus from 10th to 12th of January 2009.



Dr. Monisha Bajaj, Assistant Professor of Education, Department of International and Transcultural Studies, Columbia University, USA visited the various schools where our Human Rights Education programs are being implemented to study the impact of Human Rights Education Program. Human Rights Education teachers, students, school authorities, and advisory committee members were met by Dr. Monisha Bajaj to assess the impact of HRE at schools. The study area includes the states of Tamilnadu, Karnataka, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal.

Participation of Mr. Henri Tiphagne, Executive Director and Dr. Vasanthi Devi, Chairperson, IHRE in the National Conference on Human Rights Education (HRE) at School Level organized by the NHRC at Shangri Lâ Hotel, at New Delhi on the 20th of March 2009.



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