



# LUTHERAN WORLD SERVICE INDIA TRUST

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NEWSLETTER

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## Planet 50-50 by 2030 – Step It Up For Gender Equality

Since its inception, International Women's Day has grown into a global celebration of past and present accomplishments of women. It is also an opportunity to look ahead to the untapped potential and endless possibilities for future generations of women. It is a time for reflections on lessons learnt and to accelerate momentum towards gender equality and empowerment of every girl and woman.

The theme for the 2016 International Women's Day was “**Planet 50-50 by 2030 – Step It Up for Gender Equality**”. The day was observed and celebrated on 8th March across the world. This year the UN reflected on what a gender-equal planet means and how it can be achieved by 2030

through the joint initiatives of the UN, governments, civil society and the private sector.

Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN Women, has emphasised that “*greater participation of women is an essential condition for the success of an inclusive Agenda 2030.*” Hence, this requires including women in all stages of implementation, from national consultations to assessing how the SDGs are benefiting women and girls on the ground.

It is through the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) the world has pledged to leave no one behind. The focus is on building momentum for the effective implementation of the new SDG by enhancing the role of women.

Below is a comparative analysis on how women and girls are doing against some key development issues:

Global scenario		Indian scenario	
<b>Education</b>	31 million girls of primary school age are not in school (UNESCO, 2013)		18.3 % of girls of primary school age are not in school (U-DISE – 2013-14 Provisional)
<b>Violence against women</b>	35% of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual violence in their lives (UN, 2015)		Total crime against women is 11.9% of total IPC crimes. Conviction rate is 21.3. (NCRB 2014)
<b>Literacy</b>	Nearly two thirds of illiterate people are women, a proportion that has remained unchanged for two decades (UN, 2015)		34.54% of Indian women are illiterate (Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation; Census 2011)
<b>Economic empowerment</b>	Less than 4% of CEOs in the world's largest 500 corporations are women (UN, 2015)		Amongst the largest listed companies in India only 17 women are CEO (Economic Times 2016)
<b>Health</b>	Maternal mortality rate is 216 (World Health Organisation 2015)		Maternal mortality rate is 174 (World Health Organisation 2015)

## SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

Women have a critical role to play in all of the SDGs, with many targets specifically recognizing women's equality and empowerment as both the objective, and as part of the solution. Goal 5 is known as the stand-alone gender goal because it is dedicated to achieving these ends.

SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

### Targets:

- 5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere
- 5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation
- 5.3 Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation
- 5.4 Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate
- 5.5 Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life
- 5.6 Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences
- 5.a Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws
- 5.b Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women
- 5.c Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels



## LWSIT's contribution towards gender equality

Since its inception LWSIT has been working with vulnerable sections of society who are in perpetual danger of falling through the cracks in the system. The marginalised sections of the society, especially women and girls, are subjected to multiple levels of deprivation and discrimination. Hence, LWSIT focuses on empowering them to challenge their existing situations.



- LWSIT has been arduously working towards **ending all forms of discrimination against all women and girls**. As an outcome of LWSIT's initiatives to sensitize men and break patriarchal norms, men are now proactively undertaking responsibilities towards household duties while the women are encouraged to attend SHG meetings, leadership trainings, undertake bank transactions, and also take active role in decision-making.
- In an effort to **eliminate all forms of violence against women**, LWSIT partner communities of Bhubaneswar Unit have formed Women's Association for Violence Against Women (WAVAW). It is a federation of 32 women's groups with 1,118 members which is in the final stage of getting registered as a state level forum.
- LWSIT has been **amending its organisational policies** as an endeavour to bring about gender equality within the organisation such as provisions for adoption leave, paternity leave, maternity allowance, and staff security in the Human Resource Policy.

Deep legal and legislative changes are needed to ensure women's rights around the world. In many nations, gender discrimination is still woven into the legal and social fabric of their societies. Women have a right in all areas and this must be embedded across legal systems, upheld in both laws and legal practices, including proactive measures such as quotas. Since gender equality relates to all areas of life, efforts must be made to cut the roots of gender discrimination wherever they appear.

## Celebrating women in LWSIT's partner communities

Throughout history, women have made extraordinary contributions to their societies. Some are well known because of this while others are obscure but nonetheless, all have been trail blazers in their own right. Through this quarter's newsletter, we at LWSIT want to acknowledge and appreciate the ordeal that the women in our partner communities have been through and emerged as being strong and resilient.

The case stories below reflect the multi-dimensional violence experienced by women in their daily lives:

### **Women in riot torn area stand up for their dignity and democracy**

*SDG Goal 5.5: Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and social life*



Sapkata, a small hamlet nestled in Kokrajhar district of Assam, has witnessed onslaught of ethnic and religious riots over the past many years.

As is often witnessed, representatives of various political leaders usually scare voters to cast their vote in favour of a particular political party. They can stoop to any level to get votes for their political leaders. The situation was no different during elections in Sapkata this year.

One such representative approached the women of **Nabauday SHG** and told them that all of them should cast their vote in favour of his political leader or else these women will be raped as punishment and none can stop them.

The members of **Nabauday SHG** were enraged and the following day called for a rally to the police station, for which they were also accompanied by their village leader. They lodged a General Diary (GD) and the very same day the police forcefully brought the culprit to the police station.

The man finally apologised for his derogatory statement and accepted that the women in Sapkata village were anything but vulnerable.

The women of Sapkata not only raised their voice for their dignity but also stood their ground in order to be able to exercise their democratic rights.

## ***Fighting for their dignity and against violence***

*SDG Goal 5.2: Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private sphere, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.*

Rajashri Pradhan, a young girl who resides in Saradhapalli slum area of Bhubaneswar stays with her parents and sister. Around mid-day on 9th February, 2016 some antisocial persons barged into Rajashri's home and dragged her out on the road and started abusing her. Her family ran to her rescue but to no avail. It was during this time, the members of **Sai Shakti Mahila Samiti (SHG)** intervened. Upon seeing a large number of women dauntingly moving towards them, the perpetrators ran for their lives.



Rajashri and these women were determined to bring these culprits to book. Thus, they lodged separate First Information Reports (FIRs) with the police who did not give them any receipt stating it is not required. From the legal training they received from LWSIT, they knew that without a receipt the police may not take necessary action against the perpetrators. Upon much insistence they were issued a receipt for the FIR they lodged.

The father of the main perpetrator threatened the SHG members to withdraw their FIR which only further reinforced the decision of the women to get justice. They rallied to the police station and demanded immediate action or else they would seek the help of media. Eventually after two days the main perpetrator was arrested and produced in the court.

The women and Rajashri feel that they are now more empowered to fight for their dignity and rights.

## **Celebrating woman's power within LWSIT**

*SGD Goal 5.1: End all forms of discrimination against women and girls everywhere*

Bilkish Rojana Akhtara, an LWSIT Community Organiser from Assam Unit, is an epitome of transformation from being a victim of domestic violence to a strong and confident woman. Bilkish fought against triple burden of being poor, a woman, and belonging to a minority group. Yet she stood strong in the face of all forms of discrimination that she was bombarded with over the years.

Bilkish belonged to a poor family and her father thought that marrying her off to a wealthy family will iron out poverty from her life. In



1999, she was married to a handsome, wealthy young man. Unfortunately, things started to take a bad turn as she was regularly subjected to domestic violence (both physical as well as emotional). Even though her material needs were taken care of, Bilkish's husband was an alcoholic and indulged in an extra marital relationship, which began to take a toll on Bilkish.

In 2000, with the birth of their son, Bilkish thought her marital discord would come to an end, but that was not to be. The thought of divorce crossed her mind many a times but the taboo associated with it for a poor Muslim woman compelled her to silently bear her ordeal. She finally mustered enough confidence and courage to divorce her husband and return to her parents with her two and half year old son.

It was during her financial crisis period that she got an employment opportunity with LWSIT. Determined to provide her son with a better

future, Bilkish left him with her parents and joined work. Over the years, the training and exposure she got through LWSIT enabled her to reach new heights in her career.

Bilkish's son has recently completed his Standard X examination with 78% aggregate marks (and scored above 80% in three subjects). Her son is now enrolled in high school studying Science. She not only wants to ensure that her son pursues higher education and bags a doctorate degree, but that he also grows into a good human being.

Besides being committed to her work in LWSIT, Bilkish is also engaged in counselling women who are battered by domestic violence like herself. She encourages women to stand up for their rights and entitlements and lead a life of dignity.

## Glimpses of the Quarter

### Events, meeting, training and workshops attended

1. Mr. Bibekananda Biswal was nominated to the ACT Alliance Advisory Group of Humanitarian Policy and Practice Group (HPPG). He attended the HPPG Advisory Group Meeting of ACT Alliance from 1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> March, 2016 held at Utrecht, The Netherlands.
2. Mr. Mukunda Sutradhar, - visited Dhaka from 28<sup>th</sup> March to 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2016 to attend AZEECON supported four days ToT follow-up program on **“Facilitating Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation among Smallholder Farming Communities”**.
3. Strategic Planning (2016-2020) Meeting of Sphere India was attended by B N Biswal at Delhi on 19<sup>th</sup> February, 2016.
4. Quarterly Review Meeting was attended by all Unit Managers at the National Office from 27<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> January, 2016.
5. On 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> February, 2016, Mr Anil Tudu attended State level conclave on **“Impact of Disaster (natural and man-made) on protection of children in Assam”**.
6. Ms Esmatara Eli, Ms Bilkish Rojana Akhtara and Ms Polly Mondal attended a 21-day long training on psychological counselling organised by University of Calcutta.
7. On 2<sup>nd</sup> March, 2016, HCDCI partners organised a training cum orientation on **Child Protection Policy** at LWSIT NO, it was attended by 6 staff members.
8. Debriefing of the Country Strategy evaluation and organisational assessment was on 30<sup>th</sup> March, 2016.
9. Board meeting was held on 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2016.

### Visitors

1. Church of Sweden (CoS) Fundraising team - Ms. Karin Bodin, Ms. Sanna Elina Bülow, Ms. Jonna Stockman, Mr. Erik Magnus Aronson visited Bhubaneswar and Cuttack units from 19<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> January, 2016.
2. Mr. Anders Salomonsson of CoS, Ms. Andrea Erdle (BfdW), Mr. Gladstone Rajkumar of Normisjon and Mr. Sanjay Patra (FMSF) attended the Evaluation de-briefing meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> March, 2016 at BMS.
3. Mr. Oddvar Holmedal, Mr. Gladstone Rajkumar, Ms. Lopacki Birgit Nersten, Ms. Storesletten and Ms. Elie Kathrine Seierstad (Normisjon/Digni) visited Assam, Kolkata and Birbhum units from 1<sup>st</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> March, 2016.

### Initiatives undertaken by Resource Mobilization team

1. Project proposals were sent to Kotak Bank and Federal Bank
2. Meeting was held with Shri Sadhan Pande local MLA/Minister for Consumer Affairs & Self Help Group & Self Employment and Dr Shashi Panja, Minister of State for Women and Child Welfare and Social Welfare) for possible GO-NGO partnership

### Forthcoming events

1. Quarterly staff review meeting to be held from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> May, 2016.
2. Quarterly ICC meeting to be held across the organisation
3. Review of Units and staff capacity building program to be held for STEER Rural Units in western Odisha from 22<sup>nd</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> June; for GEP (Bhubaneswar and Cuttack Units) and STEER Rural Units of Kendrapara, Puri and Keonjhar from 7<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> June; for GEP Kolkata Unit, STEER Rural Birbhum Unit and DSSQC Birbhum Unit from 28<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> June, and for SEEPRP Assam Unit from 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> July, 2016.

## My Space

As Narmada Swain looks back at her life, she cannot help but recount with a lot of pain what she endured. It is the twinkle in her eyes which gives way to the strength she acquired over the years.



Narmada's trauma started soon after her marriage as her father was unable to meet the dowry demand. It reached the zenith when she gave birth to a dead son. The unfortunate demise of her son was due to lack of proper nutrition and care for Narmada when she was pregnant. She was mentally and emotionally tortured by her in-laws. Unable to bear the pain she went back to her parents. Her husband too did not support her.

She resumed studies and got a job too. But her world came crumbling down when after seven years, out of the blue she receives a court notice from her husband for divorce. It was during this time, she got an offer of employment with LWSIT. Her senior in LWSIT counselled her as well as her husband which ensured that the divorce case was withdrawn. Eventually their marriage was registered the following year.

With this, Narmada's life took a complete turn and now she is leading a happy peaceful life. She is very passionate about working for the rights of women and is fulfilling her mission of empowering vulnerable women through her work in LWSIT. She is also closely associated with the State Legal Aid Cell and Women's Commission through which people in distress are rescued.

Narmada has bagged a few awards for her exemplary social work over the years – in 2009 she received an award from **“We Can Odissa”**, and in 2011 she was awarded as the **“Brave Woman of the Year 2011”** - at the state level.

The LWSIT family cherishes Narmada's valuable contribution towards **empowering the last, the least and the lost.**