

Report on 'Homeless Women' Delhi State Convention – June 14, 2019



About the Convention

The homeless convention was organized by BCF (Business & Community Foundation) and NFIW (National Federation of Indian Women) in the Raja Ram Mohan Roy Hall, 12, Vishnu Digambar Hall, New Delhi on June 14 from 10 am to 4 pm.

The focus was to bring the women and various organizations together so that the people directly involved can take better steps themselves towards the positive change. The aim of this convention was to organize a formal meeting and listen to each other directly and to add inputs, help, suggestions and bring together resource agencies who could offer training, etc. On this occasion 126 women from 17 shelters handed over the demands with their collective signature to the Chief Secretary Mr Vijay Dev.



This report is about the common themes developed throughout the convention with the discussions and engagement of the shelter residents, organization working with the shelters, government departments, civil society organizations.

The convention started with the welcome note by Annie Raja (General Secretary) from NFIW and Amita Joseph from BCF who set out the agenda.

Gargi Chakravarthy, Indu Prakash Singh (Member of Supreme Court Monitoring Committee) and S.K Mendiratta ((retired) legal Adviser to the Election Commission) shared the stage together at the inaugural and gave the opening words, followed by the women's presentation who are residing in the shelters. Helpage India, Azad Foundation, Sahapedia, Inlingua, were some of the resource agencies who presented their work and encouraged women to participate for the training programmes. Salam Balak Trust, Jamghat, Jagori, Shahri Adhikar Manch (SPYM), Humana on the other hand talked about their working areas and homelessness as an issue. SPYM, Aashray Adhikar Manch, Sadik Masih, Safe Approach were the shelter management agencies present in the convention and talked about their engagement in running the shelters.

Harsh Mander (Member of Supreme Court Monitoring Committee) on the other hand talked about the women's situation and their rights. Vijay Dev addressed the women and ensured his priority to work for their cause. Representatives from DUSIB and Women and Child development discussed about their departments and ensured that they will continue doing work for the betterment. Closing remarks were delivered by Indu Prakash Singh.

Awareness, Rights and Unity

The hall echoed with the slogans like "Hum apna adhikar maangte, nahi kisi se bheekh maangte" (We ask for our rights, not begging to anyone), "hum janenge, hum jeeenge" (we will know, we will live) and these slogans exactly show the

spirit and essence of the meeting. Rights, Awareness and Unity came up as the solid way to tackle with the issue of homelessness.



Annie Raja, Gargi Chakravarthy talked about women taking responsibility and involved in own struggle, issues for a better life. She further said, we have so many laws in the country but we need to struggle for accessing it as one need to be aware and even for making laws people have struggled since independence. Indu Prakash Singh also appealed to people to unite, struggle and fight for the rights of homeless, represent their needs to the authorities and we need to find solutions.

Struggles, Hope and Celebration

Shelter Women Residents in their speech focused on the journey from being homeless vulnerable women to the little hope which they get from shelters which protects them from rape and violence. This is not to glorify the shelters which are lacking in so many areas and not ideal but one cannot deny the fact that it's still better dwelling than the other "unsafe spaces" on the streets. A better shelter with basic amenities such as water, toilets etc. is the first step towards achieving the bigger goal of "safe" and "dignified" life. Though women were grateful towards the facility they get in shelter but there are still so many things left to make shelters a liveable and enjoyable place. Shikha a shelter resident from Nizamuddin discussed how she was under the trap of drugs and how she recovered while residing in the SPYM drug deaddiction shelter at Parada Bagh. This case study shows the positivity and the bond they share with this space and this connectedness that can work towards making the space better. Women in the convention continuously pointed out the behavioural issues from other people (authorities, institutions like school, hospitals, government offices etc). Apart from behavioural issues they demanded for crèches to be attached to women and family shelters, documentation and

identity such as Voters card, Aadhaar, ration cards, the need for facilitation of services such as schools, healthcare facilities along with basic amenities (detailed demands is in the appendices section).

The Homeless Women Collective, a new initiative focussing on the women (started in July 2018) representatives from the Shelters spoke such as Radha from Kalkaji Mandir, Pooja from Bangla Saheb, Nushrat from Sarai Kale Khan, Mona, Rani from Nizamuddin, Taranum & Shernaz (Jamghat) from Jama Masjid and Khusboo from Kabir Basti spoke about their life and a few others. The need for identity, entitlements, children education and safety was raised.

Homelessness, Women- Second Class Citizen: Multi-layered Issue

Like homeless people are homogenous, so are the women belonging from different region, religion, ethnicity, caste, class, disability etc. Women in general experience various kinds of discrimination, violence and homelessness adds to the burden and makes them more vulnerable. “The homeless women’s body is supposedly the free body which is also the shared body” these words are the rough translation of Madhu’s presentation from Jagori. The homeless women body which is the site of physical, sexual, verbal violation is somewhat targeted and shows the power equation as women who are shelter-less and poor are usually the ones without any backing or support.

Collaborations/ Offers, Rights from various bodies



Resource organizations like Azad Foundation, Helpage India, Sahapedia, Inlingua offered their help to train the women from the shelter in the field of driving, care-giver training, English classes, heritage walk training etc. Apart from these organizations, Salam Balak Trust, Jagori, Jamghat showed solidarity and extended the helping hand. SPYM, Sadik Masih, AAA (Aashray Adhikar Abhiyan), SAM (Shahri Adhikar Manch) talked about their struggle and work in the shelter for the homeless and they ensured better work from their side.

SK Mendiratta explained the whole process of applying for voter ID card and he extended his support in any way possible as he feels strongly for this cause and understands the pain.

Indu Prakash Singh on the closing note attracted the attention towards the DDA shutting down/demolishing the shelters without providing an alternative such as in Nizamuddin. Annie Raja raised behavioural and attitude issue from police.

Vijay Dev appreciated the courage and perseverance of women who are fighting each day with enormous courage. He ensured that his main focus would be towards this cause, to provide better facility and support rights of the Homeless.

More than just Rights

Homelessness itself creates so much trauma and pain and it increases with the attitude and behaviour of others. Throughout the conversation behavioural and acceptance issues was coming up again and again. To tackle this authorities, institutions, people in power need to be reminded of their duties and obligations towards those who are most vulnerable particularly women and children who live on the streets and are exposed to violence, harassment and rape. The demands should be treated as obligation with its attached legality. Respecting Human Rights and the dignity of every individual and their rights irrespective of caste or class is enshrined in our laws and constitution. It needs proactive work by the state, not just by non-profit organisations, requires monitoring, facilitation of benefits and Government schemes and entitlements to those who deserve it.

Shelters are only a temporary intervention that keep people alive until they get access in the long term to Low income/economically weaker housing, rentals, dormitories for working women and men, social housing etc. The Shortage of LIG/ EWG housing is in many million. Shelters in the interim are meant to be a safe space where people can access training, entitlements and be able to rehabilitate themselves. It is only a means to a more just and humane goal of secure housing.

Homeless people sustain our cities with cheap labour and what do they receive?

Appendices

Agenda

Demand Draft

Shelter Analysis

- Agenda

Homeless Women's Convention, 14th June 2019

National Federation of Indian Women (NFIW) / Womens Collective/BCF

Venue: Raja Ram Mohan Hall,12 Vishnu Digambar Marg, New Delhi-2

PROGRAMME	
9.30 - 10.00 am	Registration & tea
10.00 - 10.10 am	Welcome: Annie Raja -NFIW
10.10 - 10.20 am	Agenda Setting: Amita Joseph - BCF
10.20 - 10.40 am	Inauguration: Gargi Chakravarthy NFIW & Indu Prakash Singh (Member of Supreme Court Monitoring Committee)
10.40 - 11.00 am	Guest of Honor : S.K. Mendiratta – EC (retd) Access to Voting rights/cards
11.00 - 11.30 am	Presentation from 5 shelters by women residents (5 minutes each)
11.30 - 12.00 noon	SMAAs – SPYM, Sadik Masih, SAFE, CES, AAA (5 minutes each)
12.00 noon - 12.30 pm	*DCW,* Police, Women & Child Dev, *Childline, Social welfare*, RTI,
12.30 -1.00 pm	Presentation by SBT, Sahapedia, Azad Foundation, Jamghat*, Jagori * (5 minutes each)
1.00 - 1.45 pm	Lunch
1.45 - 2.00 pm	Mr. Ramesh Negi, Chairman, SCMC*
2.00 - 2:30 pm	Helpage, HUMANA*, IGSSS*, SAM, in lingua,
2.30 - 3.00 pm	Presentation from 5 shelters by women shelter residents (5 minutes each)
3.00 - 3. 15pm	Redressal /next steps– CEO –DUSIB *
3.15 - 3.30 pm	Mr.Harsh Mander (Member of Supreme Court Monitoring Committee)
3.30 - 4 pm	Special address by Chief Secretary – Mr.Vijay Dev, IAS
4.00 pm	Vote of Thanks - NFIW
4.10 pm onwards	Tea

* Invited – await confirmation

- Demand Draft

June 14, 2019

To Chief Secretary / CEO DUSIB/ Director Night Shelter,

Punarwas Bhawan, I.P. Estate, New Delhi, Delhi Government.

Our demands to Delhi Government and DUSIB –

We the women residents living in the homeless shelters request from Delhi govt. and DUSIB to address and fulfil our demands written below:

- **Basic Amenities:** Safe drinking water and water for toilet/washing purposes. Clean and functional toilets, bathrooms with drainage /sewerage
- Mosquitoes, Rats, Lizards etc. remain the constant issue which requires regular pest control services/ devices/ systematic garbage disposal and cleaning is necessary. We require mosquito nets.
- **We need adequate space,** beds, blankets, mattresses. Bunk Beds would increase capacity of shelters which gets full in winter and in rainy season. The repairs of cooler, fans, water cooler, TV etc to be attended to weekly.
- **Facilities:** We demand the security of our belongings and need secure lockers/ boxes, racks, etc. Community kitchens in family / women's shelter are required. The Shelter and Commissioners manual has specified all this.
- **Rights and Schemes:** Voter identity card (without a Homeless Tag), Aadhaar, Ration card camps be held in all 190 shelters.
- We also want to know / avail various **schemes** provided by government and assistance in getting **pensions** - Old age, widow and disability pensions. We need enrolment of children in schools that should be accessible to us and connected to Aanganwadi centres where possible.
- **Our Requirements:** Presently there are only 19 shelters for women in Delhi and the capacity is less than for 1000. We require at least 33 more shelters so a total of at least 50 shelters in Delhi for women. We estimate at least 5000 women on the streets.
- **Services:** Setting up of **Creches** alongside women shelters should be the priority as most women feel the need for day care center or crèches so that they can work without worrying about their children.

- Access to **healthcare facilities** such as Mohalla clinics, regular check-ups in shelters, gynaecological services, mental health care from IBAS and Referral services to Govt Hospitals, is required.
- We also asks for the set-up of 1 maternal care centre in each district for pregnant women where we live under protection before/ after delivery.
- We need counselling support (psychological) through IBAS, etc and more deaddiction centres. Parada Bagh is the only women deaddiction centre
- **Adult literacy** has to be a focus with livelihood training programs such as tailoring, driving, computer classes, NIOS tie up for adult and continuing education to build-up our skills and work. Nursing care training / any care- giving training would boost our chances of better work. Certificates must be given after each training conducted by DUSIB without delays. Placement must be facilitated by trainer agencies. **Skills training needed.**
- Zero Balance bank accounts are necessary so we need banks to open our bank accounts and banks be asked to hold enrolment camps in shelters.
- **Para Legal training** / a connect with the National Legal services authority/ will help sort out issues such as Birth certificates and access to Schools
- **Police:** Facilitation by DUSIB with Crime Against Women Cell/ DCW with regard to women and family shelters will help us in legal matters such as rape, violence & molestation which many of us encounter often. We continuously face different form of violence so cooperation from police authority particularly women cell would be really helpful. We women face harassment from Police when we try to earn our living through a weighing machine/ Mehandi counter in Hanuman Mandir etc. The Police becomes abusive and aggressive with us. We have dignity and human rights. The police cannot violate our dignity or human Rights as citizens.
- **Social Housing:** There is a need for different social options such as working hostels with creches for women with children/ single women in long term, economically weaker/low income rentals, shared housing, etc.

Please ensure regular DUSIB/JAAC meeting with SMA fortnightly as per Supreme Court orders. All this will ensure rehabilitation can happen and we can aspire one day to move out of Shelters if there is access to Low income/Economically weaker housing/ safe rental settlements for women.

Thanking you,

Signed by

126 Women Shelter Residents from 17 Shelters

▪ Data Analysis of Shelter

purpose	no. of shelter
Children	4
Disabled	1
Drug Addicts	4
Families	18
General	147
Recovery Shelter	3
Women	17
Total	194

Shelter type	no. of shelter
Porta Cabin	115
Rcc Buliding	78
Tent	1
	194

Agency wise list

Agency Name	Total no. of shelters	general	women	families
Aashray Adhikar Abhiyan	11	8	2	1
Sadik Masih Medical Social Servant Society	46	39	5	2
Safe Approach for Nascent Termination of Social Hazard	42	37	2	3
SPYM	56	32	7	10
Rachna Women's Development Association	21	20	1	0
Prayas Juvenile Aid centre	15	10	0	1
Centre For Equity Studies	3	1	1	0
	194	147	18	17

Capacity

women shelter	1220
recovery shelter for women	100
total capacity for women	1320

Reference

<http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2397200918763087>

“VIOLENCE AND VIOLATIONS: THE REALITY OF HOMELESS WOMEN IN INDIA” by Shivani Chaudhary, Amita Joseph, Indu Prakash Singh

SHAHRI ADHIKAR MANCH: BEGHARON KE SAATH- THE TRAJECTORY OF A STRUGGLE report (2014)

BASRERE ki KAHANI- A Study of the Problems in the Night Shelters in Delhi Using Participatory Research (2002)