VOICE

GENDER JUSTICE: Working towards ending gender discrimination and violence

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Updates from Oxfam India’s regional offices.

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Examining caste-based violence behind the Badaun rapes.

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PARTNER PROFILES
Learn more about Oxfam India’s local partners.

Gulabi Devi, 90, from Didsari village, Bhatwari block, Uttarkashi district

Section 498 (A) of the Indian Penal Code is a measure to stop dowry deaths and provide justice to the woman facing violence at home before she dies. Today, the three decade old law is back in focus, for being allegedly misused by the women it protects.

Bridge the gap between Public and Private

Report Domestic Abuse

From 2012 to 2013, there has been an 11.6% increase in incidents of cruelty by husband or his family.

20-25% men and women believe having daughters justifies domestic violence.

Through Oxfam India’s relentless gender justice work, partner NGOs have impacted:

- 219 Districts
- 600 Blocks
- 6,663 Gram Panchayats
- 10,754 Villages
- 165 Slums

REACHING A TOTAL OF 8,406,110 PEOPLE

39,053 women survivors of violence, have received direct support from counselling, legal aid, and linkages with shelter services.

Only 12.7% men and 14.2% women think forced sex in a marriage is rape. Most accept violence in marriages.

11.6% 20-25% (National Crime Record Bureau 2013)

End discrimination against the girl child

Patriarchy believes in devotion, sacrifice and obedience

12.7% 14.2% men women

The police only register serious injuries or crimes. They have benchmarks for themselves, where a woman must be tortured for a certain period or years to lodge a FIR.

When cruelty cases fall, dowry deaths rise

Uttar Pradesh

Cruelty Cases: 7,121
Dowry Deaths: 2,322

West Bengal

Cruelty Cases: 19,772
Dowry Deaths: 510

Kerala

Cruelty Cases: 5,377
Dowry Deaths: 15
CEO'S NOTE

Three months ago we asked you for your opinion about our newsletter through a survey, and you gave us some very specific feedback. Majority of you responded to the survey; a remarkable feat by most standards.

We listened and now you have in your hands our revamped newsletter. We hope you will like it. No. We hope that you love it!

The revamped Oxfam India newsletter, now published once every quarter will endeavour to showcase the full spectrum of our mission through our on-going work. With our colleagues from Monitoring Evaluation and Learning (MEL) we capture insights, and through the support of our research team, we share with you the knowledge we have gained by working closely with our partners on the ground.

Field notes from programme coordinators in our operating regions, bring to the fore the richness of our work, and the solutions and challenges in the fight against poverty, inequality and injustice.

We hope the newsletter will also start conversations amongst our stakeholders. This time we introduce you to five of our partner organisations and a colleague from our regional office in Odisha who works to solve the huge challenge of violence against women. See if you’ve discovered something new about them!

Also, the new look of the Oxfam India website will be launched in September this year, and we are very excited about it.

Nisha Agrawal
Chief Executive Officer, Oxfam India
Following the closure of the five-year International NGO Partnerships Agreement Programme (IPAP), we had a chat with Ranjana Das, Programme Coordinator (Gender Justice), Odisha.

Q: Take us back to when you joined Oxfam India.
RD: I joined Oxfam India in 2009, when it was just six months old. When I had joined, Oxfam India had launched the IPAP to initiate work on Gender Justice, and concentrate and streamline efforts of all affiliates in a single direction.

Q: Elaborate on your involvement with the IPAP.
RD: I was involved with the programme from the start. I identified the right partners to ally with, designed programme plans, and identified PWDAV as a core focus area under IPAP. I was simultaneously coordinating with Department for International Development [our funder], the state government and partners in Andhra Pradesh and Odisha. I’ve intensified efforts to bring role clarity amongst partners and women groups we need to engage with. I also work to identify civil society resources, lead dialogue with government officials and police departments to set up women support centres in police stations and regularly deliberate activities and debates with partners.

Q: What were your biggest challenges?
RD: Convincing the government on Oxfam India’s model of work and seeking permissions to set up women support centres in police stations were the most challenging parts of IPAP. I ran from pillar to post with our partners, to seek permission from the Home Ministry for women support centers space in police stations. Our partners could have opened support centres in their offices, but it was important for police and judiciary to be responsible and serious towards these issues, so we insisted on police stations, and set up five centres in Odisha in just 10 months.

Q: And achievements?
RD: After my long association with IPAP, it’s satisfying to see we’ve made advancements with breaking the silence on domestic violence, which often goes unreported. Now people talk about it openly. Oxfam India gave me the space, autonomy and colleagues to work with. I feel proud to be part of the Gender Justice team.

Q: One thing you love apart from work?
RD: I love experimental cooking, and routinely combine Bengali and Malayalam cuisines for a medley of fiery tastes.
Editor’s note: Every issue of the newsletter will have an article by an expert, research scholar or academic on an area of Oxfam’s work. For the first, we are reproducing an op-ed written by board member Farah Naqvi, a writer and activist working on public policy for rights of the most marginalised. This article on the Badaun rape cases first appeared in The Hindu, in June, but we consider it is and will continue to be extremely relevant to dialogues on violence against women.

Hanging bodies from trees is what white supremacists routinely did in the American South after the Civil War. Emancipated black men were lynched and strung up like animals for the world to see. It was the sport of power. Slavery had been abolished, but the masters of a slave society were determined to crush the quest for liberation. These were not crimes in sense that we understand crime. For crimes committed under the cover of darkness, by stealth, signify something else entirely; they signify the existence of a legal and moral order, howsoever weak, that enforces secrecy and concealment; that forces perpetrators to slink away and hide. But these hangings were part of a public drum-beating semiotic of power; unspoken racial social laws enforced by terror.

Human to Animal
Stringing up human beings, as opposed to simply beating them to death, was also a signifier of something else — of de-humanising and making carcass of the Black body. The victim was often killed by other means — shot, strangled, beaten, tortured to death. But the act was not complete until they were also converted to mere hanging carcass, hands and feet tied, swaying in the wind, exposed to the elements, a body profaned, stripped of the ceremony of dignity accorded to a human in death. Through this one simple act, the White master converted the Black human into animal, and trumpeted his complete power over it. Much like the hunter plants his heavy boot on the body of a dead tiger, and poses for the camera, revelling in complete submission of the beast. Or nails its disembodied head on a display trophy wall. For these are public acts, that have no meaning unless they are publically consumed. Those who do and those who watch are intrinsically part of the same codified messaging. The objective is display of the might of one, submission and subjugation of the other.

This is what has happened in Badaun in 21st century India. The consumption of the living bodies of two young ‘low-caste’ girls [in the act of gang rape] was completed by the consumption of their de-humanised, dead, subjugated, ‘low-caste’ bodies as public and media spectacle. The media came to town, as did a cavalier array of politicians. They all came, participated in a codified spectacle,
The state system foot-drags and trots out the same minimalist responses with banal regularity — suspension of police officials, rape crisis centres and offers of compensation to the family. Where is the core of alarm in the moral body politic?

Need for a Maximalist Response

Two ‘low-caste’ girls were hung on a tree like slaughtered animals. Yet the state system foot-drags and trots out the same minimalist responses with banal regularity — suspension of police officials, rape crisis centres and offers of compensation to the family. Where is the core of alarm in the moral body politic?
EVENTS
REBUILD UTTARAKHAND
Exhibition
A year after the cloudburst and flash floods that affected 150,000 people in Uttarakhand, Oxfam India commemorated the tragedy with a photography exhibition on India’s mountain state disaster and recovery. A collection of photographs by documentary photographer Sharbendu De, “Rebuild Uttarakhand”, held at Select Citywalk in New Delhi, brought alive stories of struggle and resilience.

Conference
Oxfam India’s Lucknow office organised “ReBuilding Uttarakhand” conference in Dehradun, to discuss how despite an early response post the disaster, government apathy has meant the issue has been on the back-burner. Stories from survivors and possible government measures, were followed by talks on disaster management, long-term development, integrating agriculture and alternative livelihoods and sustainable development agenda in Uttarakhand.

REPORTS
LIVING VIOLENCE FREE
Three booklets, released in June-July 2014, under the project “Promoting Violence Free Lives for Women in India”, to bring positive change in policy and the social environment.

We highlighted
- Heart-wrenching ‘victim to survivor’ stories of brave women who confronted violence in their homes and outside, across Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh.
- Analysis of Section 498(A) of the IPC with a study group of 20 cases.

What we learned
- Uncover the systemic, social acceptance of daily abuse faced by women in their homes, reduce the social acceptance of violence.
- Acknowledges counselling and rehabilitation provided by support centres and local networks, and contributions of local partners, Vanangana, Sri Ramanand Saraswati Pustkalaya, Sahayog and Sajha Manch.

DEBATING SAATA MARRIAGES
Ahmedabad Women’s Action Group (AWAG), the Gujarat-based NGO conducted an empirical, qualitative evidence gathering study, on the practice of saata marriages, where girls are exchanged between two families. Deeply rooted in patriarchal values saata undermines, undervalues and commodifies the women being “bartered”.

We highlighted
- Parents often carried out threats to their daughters-in-law, in the interest of their own daughters.
- Girls who returned to their parent’s homes found it tough to live with the other couple, and often girls were compelled to stay in violent marriages, just to save their brother’s relationship.

What we learned
- This documentation uncovered the need for more research into the practice, to develop strategies and programmes for change.

Visit www.awagindia.org, for more info.
LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER

In Chhattisgarh, Lok Astha Sewa Sansthan, Khoj-Sajag and Mahila Adhikar Manch undertook an exposure visit to Gujarat’s sangathans and sansthans, to understand strategies, processes and challenges of nari adalat, nyay samiti and support centre. Knowledge sharing was facilitated on issues of violence against women.

CLIMATE CHANGE

A two-day capacity building event on climate change was organised by Oxfam India in Lucknow on 25th and 26th June, to develop deeper insights into issues like international negotiations on climate change, climate resilient agriculture and strategic frameworks for advocacy and stakeholder roles.

THE FOREST AND THE ADIVASI

The historical injustice meted to Adivasis due to regimental and archaic laws, and the Forest Rights Act’s potential to reverse this was closely analysed, at a media interface organised by Oxfam India’s Raipur office. Local media converged to discuss the Act, its relevance to the forest, initiatives of civil society and media. Strategies focused on marginalised communities through planned and thematic intervention while collaborations with partners, ineffective implementation and failure of the FRA to reach the most needy were discussed.

UPCOMING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>WHEN</th>
<th>WHERE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consultation on Ending Violence Against Women (EVAW)</td>
<td>Police, government officials, lawyers, commissioners and partners meet to understand structural reforms for violence against women.</td>
<td>1st September, 2014</td>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
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<td>Community based mapping exercise</td>
<td>Organised with Community Based Organisation and frontline Civil Society Organisation members, for better understanding of violence issues at the state, district and village level and to develop, based on this outcome, a road map ahead.</td>
<td>Early September, 2014</td>
<td>To Be Decided</td>
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<td>Dialogue on stakeholder engagements</td>
<td>Sajha Manch, government representatives and stakeholders explore better government participation.</td>
<td>1st October, 2014</td>
<td>Uttarakhand</td>
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<td>Oxfam Trailwalker</td>
<td>The ultimate team challenge will kick off with the Oxfam India Mumbai Trailwalker. Log onto <a href="http://www.trailwalker.oxfamindia.org">www.trailwalker.oxfamindia.org</a> for more details. The Oxfam India Bengaluru Trailwalker will be held from 23rd to 25th January, 2015.</td>
<td>5th - 7th December, 2014</td>
<td>Pune, Maharashtra</td>
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Munni Devi from Kuali village, Tehri Garhwal district

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Our partners are our heroes. Here are stories of the people and organisations that make Oxfam’s pan India work on issues related to violence against women and gender discrimination, a success.

**JUMAV MANCH | Jharkhand**

“People would say “yeh toh ghar torane aa gayi” [they’ve come to break up homes],” remembers Shachi Kumari of Jumav Manch, a statewide network of twenty NGOs, working to end violence against women. Post the cabinet approval of 50% reservation for women in the Panchayat, the network shifted focus to strengthen women’s leadership in governance. “People recognise child marriage, trafficking and women abuse, as issues, but not discrimination,” says Kumari, herself a poster-child for the “victim to survivor” narrative. Forced to marry at 14, Kumari’s harassment continued when she had daughters. However, instead of submissively giving up, Kumari chose to work on gender justice.

**Victories**
- The Panchayati Raj Institute, predominantly headed by men, has women’s reservation.

**Challenges**
- Police only register serious injuries or crimes. They have benchmarks for themselves, where a woman must be tortured for a certain period to lodge a FIR. Even women commissioners lack sensitivity.

**ARPAN | Uttarakhand**

Setup in 1998, the Uttarakhand-based NGO Arpan started out by commissioning studies for Oxfam on forest and land rights, slowly expanding work to end violence against women. Their key motivation, says Arpan’s Renu Thakur, was that domestic violence, despite the large number of cases, still wasn’t a recognised crime. In Kumaon, six districts were identified, and a women’s collective formed with a base in District Pithoragarh. Arpan works on a state-level network to strengthen the system that implements laws addressing violence against women. Through networks and support services, member linkages are built between victims and the justice system. At the community level, focus is on reducing the social acceptance of violence.

**Victories**
- Ultrasound centre carrying out pre-sex determination were shut down.

**Challenges**
- Changing societal mindsets that consider domestic violence as acceptable, and not a crime.

**BHUMIKA WOMEN’S COLLECTIVE (BMC) | Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh**

The daughter of an illiterate farmer, Kondaveeti Satyavati, who was working in Andhra Pradesh as a writer, decided to start a helpline for women, in 1998, when an advocate committed suicide after being harassed by her boss. “She had nowhere to turn,” realised the Hyderabad based activist, who had for years been highlighting issues of women empowerment and demanding justice, with Bhumika magazine. After forming Bhumika Women’s Collective (BWC), with zero funds and just Oxfam India’s support, they setup a toll free number. “We received 145 enquiries, the first day!” said Satyavati.

**Victories**
- Short-stay shelter homes for women, with free legal aid.
- Conducted trainings for police and judges and developed a pocket diary for them to consult.

**Challenges**
- Insensitivity amongst judiciary and police, especially Rakshak police who are deployed for women 24x7, yet clueless if someone actually approaches them for help.
Ahmedabad Women’s Action Group (AWAG) | Gujarat

In the aftermath of the Bhuj earthquake in 2004, Oxfam India came together with AWAG on gender issues at the community level. From working with earthquake survivors, AWAG started focusing on issues of violence against women. “Raising awareness is the first step towards empowerment, and income generation the second,” says AWAG’s Sara Ben. Then come a woman’s right to her body and her health. “We approach women’s empowerment and domestic violence in India holistically. For example, we promote the kitchen garden in Kutch”, says Ben, whose proximity to community issues also helps put their root causes in perspective. “Satta and child marriage happen because of sex ratio differences. When boys remain unmarried, people promote child marriage and satta marriages, where girls agree to get married so that their brother can also,” adds the activist.

Achievements
• Sensitisation of community leaders towards the repercussions of child and satta marriage.

Challenges
• The time-consuming exercise of working with the government.

FRIEND’S ASSOCIATION FOR RURAL RECONSTRUCTION (FARR) | Odisha

When her relatives stopped her education, and tried to get her married, Promila Swain, the founder of FARR, ran away from her village home in Odisha. The runaway teen met Ramadevi Choudhary, a freedom fighter who became her mentor, and biggest advocate. Closely associated with Oxfam India since 1977, when both organisations were working on the Odisha drought, they share a common goal to focus on women empowerment issues. “We value our association with Oxfam, for their focus on gender, and also the support provided to small and medium NGOs whose mission is to end violence against women,” emphasises Swain.

Victories
• Alliance of civil society organisations formed to work on women’s issues.
• State government allocated a budget for EVAW work.

Challenges
• Local work is tough, because community members are often relatives.

ALL FUNDS RAISED AT OXFAM INDIA’S TRAILWALKER ARE USED TO SUPPORT SIX PROJECTS A YEAR. LEARN MORE ABOUT THOSE PROJECTS.

Society for Peoples’ Action and Development | Improving access of Dalit and Muslim women of Bengaluru to health services.
Addressing denial of access to quality health care services to Dalit and Muslim women in urban Bengaluru.

Yuva | Redefining inclusiveness in governance from urban poor context in Mumbai – Part III
Working for poor and vulnerable communities within a city. Advocating for inclusive cities where the urban poor have a definite identity, entitlement and voice in the government system.

Sewa Trust Delhi | Empowerment of informal sectors workers of Delhi
The project aims to focus on economic and social empowerment of women workers in an informal economy, implemented in five Delhi urban slums.

Apsa | Ensure children in disadvantaged situations, especially girls, remain in school in Bengaluru
The project provides remedial classes for dropouts. The girl child receives special training to become financially independent and empowered.

Sathi | Improving public health system in Maharashtra
To consolidate and expand health rights and community monitoring activities related to public health system focusing on the maternal health rights, and advocating with the state to regulate the private medical sector.

Samparc | Education Maharashtra
Working for rehabilitation, care and educational development of orphan children, children of sex workers and other needy, poor and disadvantaged children.
**CYCLE OF VIOLENCE BEGINS AT HOME**

Bridge the gap between Public and Private

**REPORT DOMESTIC ABUSE**

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**End discrimination against the girl child**

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