

# Civil Society Organisations processes for BEIJING+25

Year 2020, the global community marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA) (1995) and the five-year milestone towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. 2020 is therefore a pivotal year for the accelerated realization of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, everywhere, “leave no one behind” SDGs.

The external and internal environment in the development sector has been very volatile and funding for common platforms for discussions has become difficult. Despite these constraints we continue to pursue the passion we have to make the world a better place for all to live with dignity and assured human rights.

With this background Development Support Team (DST) and Stree Aadhar Kendra (SAK) felt a need to revisit the past work/agenda and see how this aligns with the present development context and highlight the challenges faced in advancing women’s rights in the last two and half decades.



To bring together the grassroots NGOs/CBOs, Academia and Corporates to understand and reflect on the journey of the Beijing Platform for Action to SDGs, DST and SAK organised a one day event at Pune on 24th December 2019.

The event saw participation of 70+ delegates from 40 NGOs, Academia and CSR Foundations from Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Delhi, Rajasthan and Uttarakhand.

Development Support Team, Pune  
Email id: [dstpune@dataone.in](mailto:dstpune@dataone.in)  
Phone no: 020 25887524

Stree Aadhar Kendra, Pune  
Email id: [streeaadharkendra@gmail.com](mailto:streeaadharkendra@gmail.com)  
Phone no: 020 2439 4104

## Process

To prepare the grassroots NGOs/CBOs to build a perspective to participate and contribute at the workshop, the process began with communication with NGOs and sharing background documents. The documents covered the 12 areas of concerns in the BPfA : women and poverty; the education and training of women; health; violence against women (VAW); armed conflict; the economy; women in power and decision-making; mechanisms for the advancement of women; human rights; the media; women and the environment; and the girl child. It also highlighted that the BPfA called for strong commitments on the part of Governments, National Governments, International Institutions and other partners to fully support and realise the advancement of women's human rights and gender equality.

An Advisory Committee comprising NGOs and Academia worked on the design and content of the workshop. The next step was to identify the thematic areas which would resonate with the work done by the NGOs. To identify these areas and document the efforts carried out for various initiatives for adolescent girls and women, a form for data collection was shared with 30 NGOs.

Some of the key findings are summarised below:

- Of the 30 NGOs, 24 organisations work in Maharashtra while the others are from Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan
- More than 50% organisations work on Socio-Economic Empowerment of Women through Self Help Groups/Federations/Credit Co-operatives/Mahila Mandals which has enabled promoting women leadership, gender equity, access to safe savings and credit and assets in the name of the women.
- 50% organisations work on Violence Against Women (VAW) through legal awareness, providing support through counselling and working on sensitisation on menfolk which has led to increased awareness of their rights and the legal provisions to protect them.
- Sustainable Livelihoods through entrepreneurship development, skill development, providing livelihood opportunities and market linkages to women is a major area of intervention for 70% of the organisations. 3 organisations have set up farmer producer companies, with an increase in the number of women entrepreneurs and enhanced income.
- Along with the other initiatives, 30% organisations work on issues related to Climate Change, Water and Soil Conservation, Disaster Mitigation, Sustainable Agriculture and Organic Farming, Natural Resource Management and Conservation. Farmers recognised



**Development  
Support Team**



as “organic farmers”, registered under organic certification of Participatory Guarantee Scheme of the Central Government. and linked to organic markets,

Based on these responses the following thematic areas were identified:

- Policy and mechanisms for Advancement of Women,
- Sustainable Livelihoods,
- Women and Environment
- Violence Against Women.

The sessions were planned with Context Setting, experts sharing their thoughts on the thematic areas and group discussions to reflect and share the work carried out at the grassroots level by the participants. The following guidelines were shared for the Breakaway sessions:

- 1) Policies introduced and helped your work
- 2) Impact of the work in the field for last 25 years
- 3) Partnerships with stakeholders: Government, Private Sector, funding partners and target communities
- 4) Best practices and innovative methodologies.

## Context Setting

### Mrs. Bedi, Development Support Team

The tone of the workshop was set by Mrs. Bedi, Development Support Team by emphasizing on the need to understand the historical perspective of the women's movement, Beijing +25 processes and its linkage with the frameworks of MDGs and SDGs. She also shared that several grassroots women's groups, community organisers, academicians and others from India had participated in the lead-up preparations to the Beijing conference and sought commitments from both local and national stakeholders.

Since CSOs have been working very passionately with the communities there are several practices that have proven to be very successful. Sharing of these best practices act as building blocks for development. This workshop is an effort to review the process, identified issues and discuss the way forward.

### Dr. Neelam Gorhe, Stree Adhar Kendra

Dr. Neelam Gorhe took the workshop participants on the journey of women's empowerment from the international level right upto the Panchayat level. The key points are summarised as under:

- Introducing the UN as a guiding organisation for development, the UN is the umbrella organisation and UNIFEM, UNDP, etc. focus on causes like women and children, education among others. Many important decisions emerged from the International Women's decade (1975-85), Beijing Platform for Action Document (1995) with a 12 point agenda for women's development
- Several changes took place after 1995 and it is important to review the work of NGOs, CSOs and Nations. Based on topics that address women's issues, implementation of Beijing manifesto, new challenges faced by women and identification of objectives and aims to achieve the set goals.
- Understand the translation of Global Summit statements/slogans into action by the government at the National level
- A number of actions were taken that saw several new laws being passed like Vishakha, POCSO, Domestic Violence Act which have greatly benefited vulnerable women and children.



**Development  
Support Team**



- Promotion of SHGs for women by the Government and NGOs provided a space for women to address their issues and become financially empowered. This saw the increase in the credibility of women borrowers rise amongst Formal Financial Institutions. Instances of Below Poverty Line (BPL) women graduating to APL status is seen across the state of Maharashtra. Support for these new APL SHGs continued through implementation of new schemes.
- In 2000, Gender responsive budgets for joint ownership of toilets and houses and small enterprises were being discussed for implementation.
- In 2001 a gender focussed census acknowledging and accounting the contribution of the women to the National Economy
- A push towards increase in budget in Women and Child Welfare departments is visible since 2002
- Increased effort at inclusion and retaining of women in several positions in the Police, Revenue and other Government departments. Greater acceptance of women in key positions visible at the state and national level.

Despite the above changes, Dr. Neelam Gorhe mentioned that there are many challenges which need to be addressed. Major among them are listed below:

- Rules and SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures) for the laws enacted for women
- Women still remain bound by social, cultural and religious taboos which are major obstacles in their growth and development.
- Ownership and decision making with regard to reproductive health needs a major boost
- Cyber crime and anti-trafficking still pose a challenge for vulnerable women

Overall women have taken great strides in different fields like Sports, IT, Government, Corporates, Academia but despite the change there is a need for greater support and acknowledgement of their achievements.

## KeyNote Address

### **Minar Pimple, Former Regional Director UN Millennium Campaign and consultant development sector**

The keynote address by Minar Pimple helped to trace the journey from the Beijing Declaration to MDGs leading to SDGs with an international perspective. Minar emphasized on the key principles of Equality, Inclusion and Participation of women in all spheres of development.

During the Millennium Summit 2000, Millennium Declaration was adopted and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were approved. In 2015 at the UN General Assembly, an assessment of Gains and Gaps analysis was undertaken and this led the way forward to the formation of the SDGs. Through the MDGs and SDGs formulation process, women were very vocal about their demands. They ensured that 3 principles were reflected in all the Goals stated below:

- Equality as being non-negotiable
- Inclusion in decision making - no decision without the participation of women
- Participation in all processes including monitoring and accountability

Apart from the above principles, two major issues that cut across women around the globe are as under;

- Violence: at work, in public places, at home, social places and in cyberspace.
- Economic Empowerment: lack of ownership of assets, entitlement and income, women still do not possess the right to property and lack independent financial status.

Due to the assessment of the MDGs, developing countries made collective efforts for an all-inclusive and comprehensive set of SDGs.



**Development  
Support Team**



- All the goals, targets and indicators of the SDGs had to be viewed keeping the women's perspective in mind. Women's issues were not to be looked at in isolation but to be incorporated in all targets.
- The SDGs were developed with the highest level of participation. A campaign was undertaken to gather maximum views and comments on the SDGs from across the world.
- The MDGs had almost no accountability mechanisms and processes, on the other hand SDGs have very strong accountability mechanisms in place. Any nation or CSO can raise questions about the achievements and ask for answers. Alternative reports by civil society organisations are being allowed to assess the progress of SDGs in respect of country reports.
- The SDGs did not set any artificial percentages but laid down the guidelines for zero hunger, zero poverty and sustainability.

The indicators to assess social change in the 169 targets of the 17 SDGs have to be asked using the following questions by CSOs or any worker claiming change:

- What was the contribution towards change in laws and policies?
- What programs, schemes and SOPs were initiated for implementation of laws/policies?
- What is the budget allocation for implementing these schemes?
- What is the linkage with the government particularly for women to enhance their participation and impact the patriarchal system?

The year 2020 is an important year for this change with the UN completing 75 years, Beijing Declaration 25 years, SDGs 5 years.

## Thematic Presentations

### Policy and mechanism for advancement of women -Seema Kulkarni, MAKAAM and SOPPECOM

This thematic presentation was focussed on Maharashtra and the various policies, interventions and institutions over the past two decades.

Maharashtra has a long history of social change which worked for women's development. From the pre-independence era leaders like Jyotiba Phule, Savitribai Phule, Tarabai Shinde worked for women's emancipation. Maharashtra has witnessed a strong women's movement along with a good CSO and state interaction. This has resulted in positive spaces for women and strengthening the cause.

Maharashtra has been a pioneer in enacting major laws that have supported women's rights and freedom.

Some of the landmark laws are stated below:

- Establishment of MAVIM (Mahila Arthik Vikas Maha Mandal) in 1975 on the occasion of the International Women's Year. It was formed with the objective of bringing about gender justice and equality for women, investing in human capital and the capacity building of women, to make them economically and socially empowered and enabling them to access sustainable livelihoods
- The Mathura Rape case resulted in amendments in the Indian rape law via The Criminal Law Amendment Act 1983 (No. 43)
- National commission for women (1994) with Maharashtra being the first state commission for women focuses on:
  - Improving quality of women's lives
  - Eliminating social, economic and political constraints
  - Acknowledging women as a productive member of the society
- In 1994 Maharashtra amended the Hindu Succession law to include equal property rights of daughters and sons where as at the National level it was brought out in 2005
- PCNTDA (Pre-Conception & Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act, 1994)
- Domestic Violence Act 2005
- POCSO (Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012)
- POSH (Prevention of sexual harassment at work 2013)
- National Women's Policy (2014), prepared by the Union Ministry of Women and Child Development recognised the importance of land rights for women.



**Development  
Support Team**



Despite the above policies and Acts women still faced situations where:

- They were coerced to write off their property claims.
- Questions about marital property remain complicated
- No rehabilitation of single women
- Migrant women workers issues not addressed
- Institutions and systems not in place to enforce many of the laws
- Women not considered as contributors to the productive members of society, there is no gender disaggregated data available on women land holders.
- As defined by the Government of India (2007), a gender-responsive budget acknowledges the gender patterns in society and allocates money to make policies and programmes gender-equitable. But Maharashtra is yet to come up with a gender responsive budget

Therefore there is a need for a continuous review of policies from 1995-2020, mechanisms for implementing progressive laws, establishment of state supported institutions for agriculture and other socio-economic activities and gender budgeting.

## Women and environment: Ajay K Jha, Pairvi

SDG5 which talks about the gender is the only goal without time bound targets. There has been some progress on gender that must be acknowledged, however, there is still a lot of resistance on many issues, more so on the sexual and reproductive rights, which is among the core issues in gender.

Women and environment have an integral connection. However efforts of women in environment and climate change not recognised. Environmental degradation, whether you consider climate change, impact on agriculture and biodiversity or disaster, it is the women who bear the brunt.

Disasters affect women disproportionately. Climate change is manifested most prominently by lack of water. Extreme water shortage is expected by 2030. Women bear the burden in collecting water, fuel or fodder in most families. During floods or drought like conditions, the stress is most on women.

Even in situations where women are most literate and conscious in Kerala where water is boiled before drinking, it was seen that women had to boil water not only for drinking but also for



**Development  
Support Team**



household chores. During the recent floods one can imagine the burden women had to bear in fetching water and fuel for boiling water several times.

Any natural disaster also compels men to migrate to cities, leaving the women to take care of the family which will include the aged and children. The agricultural activities have to be handled by the women. Women in these situations often take up tasks to generate additional income. Women constitute around 80% of farmers and farm workers today in many developing countries including India. However, they are not acknowledged as farmers in policies or even within their families, which implies that they do not benefit from many schemes aimed at farmers. It is also seen that since most women do not have land ownership they lose out on the benefits from programmes and schemes for farmers.

The shocking case of women farm workers from Beed District in June 2018 who underwent hysterectomy so as to avoid breaks in employment during their menstrual cycle. Studies estimate that many more women die in disasters as compared to men (14:1). Mortality rate is high amongst women as they rarely have life saving skills. Though India has a disaster management plan in place, it still has not considered women and their needs either as victims or contributors in disaster mitigation.

A Gender Policy Framework for State Action Plans on Climate Change was submitted to the Central Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) by the Climate and development knowledge network (CDKN). Based on this policy brief, MoEFCC has asked all States to incorporate gender dimensions in SAPCCs.

## Women and Sustainable Livelihoods, Anita Paul, Grassroots

Vision of a sustainable world with gender equity was the cornerstone leading to the adoption of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and later in the formulation of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In 1995 Beijing Platform for Action highlighted 12 critical concerns where immediate action was needed to ensure greater equality and opportunities for women and men. Women and Economy was one such critical area flagged for urgent action. Women contribute significantly to the national economies and to combating poverty provided an enabling environment is created for facilitating equal access to resources, employment, markets and trade.



**Development  
Support Team**



Promoting women's self-employment and the development of small enterprises and strengthening women's access to credit and capital through the scaling-up of institutions dedicated to promoting women's entrepreneurship, strengthening the role of the State to develop a policy of equal opportunities for women and men, promoting microenterprises, expanded markets and other employment opportunities, especially in rural areas, were some of the factors identified as instruments of change.

India has also been focusing on the agenda of inclusive growth and gender equity in all its development plans. While much has been achieved in the past couple of decades, gender gap in different spheres of society and economy still persists which prevents women from getting a fair share in political, economic and other social spaces. This gap severely impacts livelihoods and unless livelihoods are secure, women are not able to contribute to the wider development agenda to their full potential. Role of Civil Society Organisations for achieving the 2030 agenda is well appreciated and in reality CSOs have been providing the blueprints, by leading the way for achieving and establishing equitable societies based on justice and inclusive growth for all. Microfinance sector and SHG movement based on appropriate gender strategies is a good example of contribution from the social entrepreneurship sector.

In India 6.6 crores MSMEs are reported and 90% are microenterprises, mostly led by single person and they contribute 30-40% of our national income. Of these 20-30 % are owned and operated by women entrepreneurs. There has been a shift from papad, achar and embroidery clusters to other non- conventional skills and product lines. Recent surveys reveal that rural women participation in the labour force has reduced to 15% today from 23% over a decade ago which is a major area of concern. Gender wage gap in India is 35% which is believed to be the highest among South Asian countries.

In recent times promotion of Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) is being viewed as a mechanism for enabling small and marginal farmers to access markets effectively and get a better share of the consumer rupee. From being a topic of discussion and grassroots engagement by civil society organisations a decade ago, FPO has become the new buzzword for the coming years due to a shift of viewing agriculture as a value-led enterprise. Based on the spirit of a cooperative with the operational flexibility of a private company, FPOs have emerged as an alternative to state sponsored coops.

Corporate India is also talking of the need for formation of entrepreneurship clusters in rural India. States are also talking and taking steps in formation of state level FPO policy. Various awards are also being instituted to acknowledge FPOs and social entrepreneurship.



**Development  
Support Team**



Growth of FPOs has remained slow and engagement of women on such platforms is still low. Most preferred organizational structure has been the Farmer Producer Company (FPC) - 84% of FPOs registered as FPCs with the Ministry of Corporate Affairs. Estimated 8000 FPCs incorporated until 2019, however, due to lack of gender disaggregated data women's participation in these forums remains to be ambiguous. Some studies indicate that 92 %of the members are small and marginal farmers and only 16% were women members.

Diversity of FPOs in terms of organizational form, crops, products, purpose is a challenge to club under one category. Unlike SHGs financial support to FPOs is still a challenge. Governance of producer collectives, capacity building and need of trained human resources are the other major challenges.

Women and economy agenda would need to rethink investments along with creation of appropriate ecosystem support like start-ups and angel funds. Potential of multi stakeholder dialogues – recognizing diversity, complexity, collaborations, exchange of best practices are some mechanisms that needs to be center staged in order to create an atmosphere for - Ease of doing business.

### Case Study

Mahila Umang Producers Company is a collective of Self Help Groups and producer- members engaged in promoting sustainable livelihoods through establishment of micro enterprises. Environmental degradation has negatively impacted traditional food security and enhanced risk to human health. To find a fresh balance in the quality of lives for such marginalized communities, Umang has been spearheading the establishment of an effective network of women entrepreneurs in the form of a community owned social enterprise which leads to supplementing family incomes. These pro poor enterprises are directly controlled by producer members, based on the principles of fair trade and guided by the concerns of ecology, economics and equity. The organization is guided and governed by a Board selected from the producer members and led by a team of development professionals from the local region who are selected and trained as social entrepreneurs, with the aim to reach the maximum share of the consumer rupee to the producer. Today Umang has a membership base of 1500 women producer members who are contributing significantly to their household incomes and also to their local and regional economies by adopting value chain approaches for linking farm gates to distant markets. This has also resulted in developing local social, human and economic capital of the region, enabling women to also take leadership roles in the overall development agenda.

## Women and Domestic Violence - Dr. Neelam Gorhe, Stree Aadhar Kendra

Starting with the challenges that women face, Dr. Neelam Gorhe highlighted the following:

- Lack of legal literacy among women, police and even medical circles
- In case of rape survivors, only 26% go through the process of justice and whether they get full justice is questionable. The remaining 74% cases simply disappear.
- The protocols for filing an FIR conducting medical examination and judicial process is not known to the officials and the people.
- There is a lack of safe spaces and shelters for survivors and the victim is exposed at every stage during the investigation process.
- Support to the survivor through all the stages is missing and despite the Evidence Protection Act, the witnesses turn hostile in court due to fear
- VAW laws have changed but gender sensitivity amongst law enforcement agencies is inadequate
- There is an overall increase in violence in society. There is a total lack of sensitivity for women who have been sexually assaulted. Violence has become an attractive emotion and society at large is fascinated by it. This is very evident from the violence portrayed in films/tv serials. Their popularity rating are far higher than films/tv serials with positive social messages
- Social media is being used to sensationalise and spread false information on victims. There is a total lack of sensitivity towards the victims and their identity.

Much needs to be done to ensure safety and complete justice to women. Some of the points that need to be implemented with immediate effect are as under:

- Gender sensitisation at all levels from the police to the judiciary, even at the society level there is a need to ensure a genuine empathy towards the victim's privacy
- Despite providing safe spaces to vulnerable women, NGOs have not received recognition.
- Honour killings, mob lynching, caste discrimination are rampant and NGOs and women organisations are not enough to handle these different types of violence. A collaborative arrangement between the government and NGO in identifying and recognising such NGOs as shelter homes is essential.
- Setting up of a data centre to collate information of pending cases and ways to reach them to final justice is essential



**Development  
Support Team**



- Similarly National Crime Records Bureau maintains data on conviction rates. It has shown a very poor rate of conviction at the national level. Maharashtra has shown a change from 5% to 50% in the past few years. Such data should be regularly recorded for an assessment of the judicial system
- Counselling and rehabilitation needs community support and formation of a survivor support group that will help victims to seek and avail justice.
- Social media needs to play a positive role in promoting a message to the masses. There is a need to conduct research on the ill effects of negative social media
- Opportunities for participation at the UN is very limited for people at the grassroots level. Translation and demystification of the UN processes and statements is important as a continuous and constant interaction with NGOs.

## List of Organisations

Sr. No.	Organization	District Name
1	Lokpanchayat	Ahmednagar
2	Yuvagram vikas Mandal	Beed
3	Krushi Vikas	Buldhana
4	Cecodecon	Jaipur
5	Sandhan	Jaipur
6	GMVS	Latur
7	PIRD	Latur
8	VSP	Mumbai
9	Yuva Rural India	Nagpur
32	AFARM	Pune
10	Anthra	Pune
11	CASP	Pune
12	Chaitnya	Pune
13	CYDA	Pune
14	Development Support Team	Pune
15	Forbes Marshall	Pune
16	Ishnya Foundation	Pune
17	Janvikas Pratistan	Pune
18	Jeevak	Pune
19	KKPKP	Pune



**Development  
Support Team**



21	Seva Sahayog Trust	Pune
22	Shelter Associates	Pune
31	Shramjivi Janata	Pune
23	Social Action	Pune
24	Stree Aadhar Kendra	Pune
25	Yardi	Pune
26	SAKAV	Raigad
27	Abhinav Manavikas Sanstha	Satara
33	Gramparivartan	Satara
28	Shramik Janata Vikas Sanstha.	Satara
29	Abhinav Bharat Samaj Seva Mandal	Solapur
20	Bharatiya Khadi Gram Sanstha	Wardha
30	Maharashtra Shetkari Vikas Sangh	Wardha