

Me and My world - Andhra Pradesh & Telerana

Supported by WINS, Tirupati, AP & NNSW

Annual Report

2019-20



OBJECTIVES & THRUST AREAS OF INTERVENTIONS

The major objectives of Me and My World and National Network of Sex Workers are based on the demand to pay respect to the people involved in the Sex Work and also to provide them with the basic support they require as per the constitution of India. It also focusses on recognizing Sex Work as a profession and to eliminate violence and harassment in the name of raids and rescue operations. Hence, the objectives of the Network stands as:

- **Recognizing Sex Work as a Profession**
- **Identify sex workers as a professional like any other professionals**
- **Decriminalization of Acts against Sex Workers to Protect Sex Workers' Rights**
- **Integrated action to collectively fight for the rights of sex workers**

GEOGRAPHICAL AREA OF OPERATIONS

NNSW is working in 27 cities and towns in the state of Andhra Pradesh.

1. Guntur	2. Yanamadala	3. Boyapalam
4. Yadlapadu	5. Ganapavaram	6. Chilukaluripeta
7. Bapatla	8. Cherukupalli	9. Koti reddyvpalam
10. Manthri vari palam	11. Seetharamireddy palm	12. Chinna Delax
13. Rambatlavari palam	14. Gudlapalli	15. Vinashram
16. Repalle	17. Angalakuduru	18. Chebrolu
19. Vatticherukuru	20. Pedakakani	21. Chandolu
22. Karlapalam	23. Yajali	24. Kajipalam
25. Ullipalam	26. Nagaram	27. Battiprolu

KEY PROCESSES/ OUTCOMES

Towards achieving the set objectives and as a part of taking the grievances to the notice of the higher officials and line departments the Network is adopting different strategies in the form of (i) Capacity Building Trainings: This is a process wherein the registered community members are imparted with trainings to tackle

the day to day problems they are facing from the society, from the departments etc.; and

(ii) **Lobbying and Advocacy:** Lobbying at different levels and Advocacy meetings with various Government Departments are taken up by community members and the Board Members of the Network. During these meetings the members submit the grievances of sex workers and seek their positive intervention towards stopping of harassment, violence, and enable them to enjoy their Rights like any other professional in the society.

A brief account of different activities, trainings and advocacy and lobbying visits taken up during the period under reporting are briefly narrated hereunder.

THE STATE LEVEL BOARD MEETING OF NNSW / ME & MY WORLD

The state-level (Andhra Pradesh) Board Meeting of the NNSW / Me and My World was held on 3rd January 2019, at Guntur A.P. The key points of discussions and decision taken are documented hereunder.

- Rules - the person should be a sex worker to become a member of the National Network
- Responsibilities of Board Members

The elected Board Member must attend the National Network Meetings; and the Learnings from such meetings must be disseminated with the other members during the State Level Network meetings to be held at different places. This is a must to educate other Board Members on the Network with regard to promoting the Objectives and reach the Goals on a regular basis.

It is also a strict criterion that membership in the National Network will be given only to those who are in working as sex workers. The Network believes and fights to advocate

1. Sex work is a profession (work) like any other professions
2. Enforcing criminal cases on sex workers should be removed from the Criminal Law (Decriminalize the profession/work)
3. The Sex workers should, collectively, come forward to fight for the rights

The members were explained about the Network Objectives and Principles to ensure that they strictly adhere to them and work for the fulfilment of the same.

Objectives and Principles of Network of Sex Workers

- BS Service and Development Society and Me and My world members had CB with 30 State Level board members and seeking to educate ground level community members about NNSW.
- BS Service and Development Society, with the support of Me and My World, aims to develop community groups as a continuation of Sex Workers recognition and Inclusive Inclusion. It also aims at making a strong community-based organization in Andhra Pradesh.
- BS Service and Development Society is strongly involving CBOs to create awareness on Sex Workers Rights, dignity of life as a Sex Worker.
- BS Service and Development Society has created a belief in all the members that sex work is a profession, and it is not a crime.
- With the support of Me and My World Network, from 2019 to till date, the lessons learned in the National Network of Sex Workers training's have been taken to the ground level and striving to create a better leadership and to build a good and perfect leadership within the community members.
- The support of committee members at the LBS Service and Development Society and with the support of certain officials worked hard to make sex workers work together to solve the Crisis Situations at ground level as and when it happens. It is to say that now the ground level community network is strong enough to effectively address crisis situations from time to time.

CAPACITY BUILDING TRAININGS

During the period under reporting, several capacity building trainings were conducted to the members and leaders coming from different parts of the State of Andhra Pradesh. A brief note on these trainings is presented hereunder.

- ➔ On **10th February 2020**, a Capacity Building Training was conducted for the 30 sex workers in Cherukuppalli Repalle Bapatla supported by the Network and LBS Service and Development Society. During this training various issues of sex workers, and the role played by "**Me & My World**", and functioning of

the Network and its support to the sex workers in Andhra Pradesh were shared with the participants.

One of the major points of discussion was about “What is Trafficking? What is Human Trafficking - the differences in detail?”

The meaning of the clause stated in the Bill was discussed and explained with regard to the terms - “Recruiting, transporting, harboring, transferring, receiving a person or persons, engaging a minor(s) or any person(s) for sexual exploitation knowingly or having reason to believe that such person or minor has been trafficked”

Later, the members were also explained and informed about ‘what is Sex work and who is a sex worker”

The significant changes that have been noticed are that the CBO committees are now able to speak boldly and they are strong enough to address their issues with confidence, which was not the case earlier. Previously, it was not possible for the sex workers and Community Based Organization in Andhra Pradesh to voice their issues and protest any violence against them. But now they are strengthened with the support they are getting from organizations like “Me and My World” - which are giving them the technical knowledge and moral support to openly talk about sex work and live with honesty saying that “sex work is a profession (work) and it is a descent work. They can now say that their work should be considered as a profession like any other professions in the outside world. They are now demanding that they should be treated respectfully, and they too have their Right to live with dignity.



- ➔ **On 20 June 2019,** another Capacity Building training was organized by LBS at Guntur. This meeting was attended by a group of 30 members coming from sex workers community. The training also included



the participation of Ms. Mangamma Devi (President), Ms. K. Rani (Vice President), Ms. Padma Kumari Ms. Nagammani Ratnakumari (Secretary), Ms. Radha Vaishnavi (Treasurer cum Joint Secretary), Ms. Malleswari, Board member. In her interaction with the participants, Ms. K Rani, Vice-President of the society said that the role of LBS Service and Development Society is significant in successfully dealing with several crisis incidents. This was achieved through the Network advocacy meetings with the line departments during which the issues faced by the Sex Workers were taken to the notice of the concerned officials which helped them to get support from them during the crisis situations. She felt that there is a lot more to do in this regard, and that can be done by providing regular capacity building trainings to the ground level sex workers. She also informed the members that there no support from agencies like APSACS or US Swasthi. However, with the Network support, several ground level issues were successfully tackled from time to time.

Several issues were discussed during this training which included the general opinion of the people in the society at sex workers. Members and the resource persons expressed their concern over what people think about Sex Work and Sex Workers. It is a common opinion by the people that it is profession taken up for easy money earning. But, in fact, it is not so and they too have to face a lot of problems in their day to day profession. The people have to understand that like any other work or profession, this profession also has got a lot of risks and problems, and their sufferings are unspeakable and non-sharable with others.

In this context, the members also discussed about the successful interventions of network which had several conversations with many government departments and officials about the sex-workers community rights, and were successful in receiving positive response from them. All the members agreed that there is a serious task ahead, for every sex worker, to fight for their rights and every member should mutually show their consent and support each other.

- ➔ On **13th August 2019**, LBS Society members organized a Training and Capacity Building program for 40 Sex Workers in Jayamma Hospital who come from Chilkaluripet, Ganapavaram, Kavuru, Boyapalem, Edlapadu Areas of Guntur District of Andhra Pradesh.

Ms. Radha Vaishnavi Padma, inaugurated the capacity building training program. Information about the objectives, activities and efforts made by NNSW, and Me & My World were explained to the distinguished guests who

participated in this training. The core work and principles of LBS Service and Development Society were explained by the community members, and they also gave a briefing about how it has been taking forward the Network's principles for the past few years.

It was felt by everyone that there is a lot needed to strengthen the works of the Network and also there is a need to extend the services to the benefit and welfare of new sex workers at the ground level. Everyone agreed that the core values and principles of the Network should be strongly maintained, and every member in the Network should take the responsibility to take forward the aims and objectives and to protect the Rights of the sex workers. It was reiterated that:

1. Sex work is a profession (work) like any other professions
2. Enforcing criminal cases on sex workers should be removed from the Criminal Law (Decriminalize the profession/work)
3. The Sex workers should, collectively, come forward to fight for the rights

LBS Service and Development Society and Network strongly believes in the Network Principles, and it is determined to take them forward with the support of its members. It has been explained that the network can be a complete carrier for volunteers since there are 1476 members who are registered under the Network and LBS Service and Development Society. All the enrolled members are in the profession of sex work. They do sex work from highway's, brothel bases, lodge bases and from undisclosed (secret) places. The members were explained everyone in this community should dare to support other member of the community when there is a problem with police or from any others or other types of problems. They all should unitedly come forward to solve the issue - then only they will become to be real members of network.

All new sex workers were trained about community journey of the CBO. They were explained about how the Network got started as a CBO. Then information related to 'Me & My World' and its goals, what the members do, and what they achieved so far in the network, what all learned from network, what was done for this particular community, the main problems faced by the members, and the challenges, and



how they are dealt with on different occasions. The Rights of the sex workers, how to protect their Rights, facing the social, and mental problems that come across in the day to day life of a sex worker were also explained to them. In addition to their, their attitude towards the society, dealing with the officials in case of conflicts were also explained in detail.

ADVOCACY MEETINGS

During the period under report two major Advocacy Meetings were organized along meeting with Mr. Gowtham Sawang, DIG, Andhra Pradesh, and submission of memorandum to him briefing the issues and problems the sex worker community is facing. A brief of the Advocacy meetings is given hereunder:

- ⇒ **Media Advocacy Meeting:** A Media advocacy meeting was organized under the leadership of Lakshmi Bhanusri Sri Service & Development Society at Guntur on 15th April 2019. This meeting was attended by 11 sex workers who are the representatives from different zones; and key media representative. During the meeting problems of sex workers were shared with media body. The community representatives have explained the problems faced by them with the introduction and implementation of Trafficking Bill 2018; and also briefed about the state level protest against the Bill which was held at Hyderabad. They clearly explained about the Bill and expressed their hope that an amendment will be made to the bill before this law being implemented, especially the community work should not get disturbed due to the implementation of Trafficking Bill 2018. The representatives explained to the media that they have taken up advocacy with the line departments and building rapport with officials in their support.

The representative of Laxmi Bhanushree Service and Development Society and Network explained to the media that the main purpose of the Network is to strengthen the CBO's and its community to dare to deal with the problems of sex workers community at ground level through the Govt. departments and media. They also explained that that the members get trained and educated on various issues from the organization called "Me and My World", which provided them most of the Capacity Building Trainings and Cross Movement learning programs through the programs of NNSW.

- ⇒ **International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers:** This event was organized at two places. It was organized in Bapatla of Gunture district in Andhra Pradesh on 26th September, 2019; and again, in Nandigama of Krishna District in Andhra Pradesh on 17th December, 2019.

The main Demands during this International Day on Violence against Sex Workers were to:

- Stop police violence against sex workers
- Stop forced shifting of sex workers to rehabilitation centres
- Stop Raids on sex workers and forced rescue operations

On occasion of Celebrating "International Day to End Violence against Sex Workers", a draft representation letter of hearing on violence has been prepared. It was submitted to Mr. Mondithoka Jagan Mohan Rao, MLA. The members also explained him about NNSW network and Me & My World, its work towards community development, and how they are fighting the Rights of sex workers. The members also explained him about various problems they are facing which included the hardships and harsh treatment the sex workers are facing from the Police and Goons. They also shared their concern on other issues like Anti-trafficking drives, forced marriages, unwillingness to shift from one place to another place, fight against forced sex work. The network is supporting the community during the crisis time and thriving hard on the following key issues and demands

- Day to End Violence against Sex Workers should end
- The Ride and Rescue must be stopped
- Sex work should not be considered as a crime
- Voluntary sex should be viewed separately from trafficking
- People should be forced into sex work
- Compulsory rehabilitation should be stopped.
- Forceable shifting of sex workers to rehabilitation shifting should be stopped
- Voluntary sex work should be treated as a profession (work) and the person involved it should be treated as a professional (worker)
- Insecure Rehabilitation centres should be changed or closed down
- Sex work should not be considered as a crime, and it has to be removed from the criminal law act
- Sex work should be considered as a decent work
- Right to live should be made applicable to sex workers

⇒ **Submission of Representation to the DIG:** In the month of 3rd February, 2020, the members of the network met Mr. Gowtham Sawang



IPS, DIG, Andhra Pradesh and submitted the AIAT recommendations draft document to him with a request to do the needful in the implementation of the same.

After hearing all from community members he agreed to hold a consultation on Gender, sexuality, human rights in the month of March, 20, and also expressed his readiness to pass Government Orders/circulars etc. This will help the members to enable in claiming human rights of sex workers. The members thanked the committed Police chief for this and are hopeful that he will bring down the violence on sex workers.

⇒ **Meeting with the Chairperson, State Women Commission:** On 3rd March 2020 Ms. Devi from LBS, met The Chairperson, State Women's Commission, Govt. of Andhra Pradesh in

the occasion of International Sex Workers Day. During this meeting the members have handed-over the note about NNSW. The chairperson paid her best attention to listen to the problems faced by the Sex Workers and their position in the society. She



expressed her willingness to do her best to address the situation and to discuss the matter with the concerned officials at the State Level Meetings. She listened to the demands documented on behalf of the sex workers and the work extended for their welfare by the state network and its activities in their support.

⇒ **Submission of Representation to Local Police:** In Tenali the Network

members met the local police officials, and submitted a representation regarding the problems faced by the Sex Workers. They also submitted a memorandum to the Circle Inspector of Police on women trafficking taking place in this area. The police officials have



responded positively, and assured that they will look into the matter and do the

needful towards the safety of the women and women sex workers, and also about the cases against the sex workers and their Rights.

- ⇒ **Crisis resolved in Chilakaluri Peta:** In Chilakaluri peta a conflict arose between the local leaders and the sex workers. The issue took a very serious turn as there was a heated exchange of words between both parties. With both the parties insisting that there is no fault from their end, and as the confrontation started taking a serious turn, the local CBO SMSWS network members have taken a lead role in resolving the crisis. They met the local leaders and discussed with them. Later, the issue was taken to the local police station, and in the presence of the local Sub-Inspector of Police and both the parties an amicable settlement has been made between both the parties. Thus, the issue was settled without further escalation of tensions.



It is also significant to mention that the LBS Service and Development Society is involved in supporting the member CBOs in the dispute and conflict resolving aspects. During such situations, the members have a meeting to discuss the issue, to understand the situation and where the problem has occurred. Basing on that the members were advised with regard to the action they need to initiate or the steps required for settling down with the issue without making it too serious.



- ⇒ **Advocacy meetings with the Sex Workers:** While advocacy with government officials and allied departments were organized on one side, SLB has also organized Advocacy meetings with sex workers of different CBOs. During these meetings the Network members have explained them about their Rights and how they can demand and protect their Rights. The Dos and Don'ts on

various issues, how to interact with people, officials, and self-management aspects were explained to them.

EVENTS AND CELEBRATIONS

State Level Training on Mental Well-being: The members of the Network have participated in the state-level training on the Mental Well-being of the community. This programme was organized in Guntur on 17th and 18th of August 2019.

The basic issues of discussions were related to the problems faced by the sex worker. These problems can be classified as (i) mental problems, (ii) social problems; and (iii) physical problems.



The physical problems are related to the hardships and suffering faced by the sex workers physically which may involve physical pain and abuse which are visible externally. However, the mental problems faced by them are non-visible and have an indepth impact on each individual. They are either triggered from among themselves, or their families or the society in which they are living in.

Facing the mental problems is a big challenge as it impacts on the mental health of a person which has a very severe results at the end, which includes arising of health issues, mental unbalancing, agony etc. It needs a very strong mind to overcome the mental problems and withstand to them. Hence, this programme has focused on how to analyse them and face. Ms. Anitha and Ms. Meera, the resource persons have explained the process of analysing them, and how to cope up with such issues to ensure mental balance thereby



ensuring mental-health and well-being.

They tried to explain the attitude of the people to hurt others instead of understanding their problems and helping them to overcome. Every person in the society feels that they are better than others, and they have the right to advise and insist on following their advises. Otherwise, they try to provoke through making unwanted comments which will create suffering in the other people. Hence, to overcome these issues, there are several ways like - ignoring such derogative comments or suggestions; analysing our own situations and respecting ourselves for what we are doing and for whom we are doing, and looking at the long-term result of our work towards the welfare of our family members and other dependents. In addition, we should also understand that we are a part of this society and we are not forcing anyone for anything, nor advising anyone to obey us. We are the people who are working for others, in which we are ensuring our own future.

Hence, they explained us to set aside any remarks or comments or hurting behaviour and get ready for their day to day work. It is always better to engage ourselves in our work than to focus our attention on what they others say. This training was of a great importance for all the participants, as it helped in boosting their moral in facing such pinching situations that they go through in their day to day life.

Celebration of International Women's Day: On 8th March 2020, International Women' Day celebrations were organized in Cherukupalli Bapatla Repalli. This event was attended by about 50 sex workers who are involved in their profession. The significance of the Day and the Rights of women were explained by the resource persons, who organized this meeting. It is also a day which brings attention to gender parity and women's Rights. The speakers explained the participants that it is a day celebrated throughout the world to highlight the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women. The women are said to be the persons with strong at heart and kind in deeds. Their strong heart is their greatest strength. They called on the women sex workers to fight for their Rights and not to be afraid of any comments or ill-remarks to demoralize them or defame them. They have to stand strong to achieve and enjoy their Rights.



Follow-up of Sex workers: As a part of educating and capacitation of the sex workers, Laxmi Bhanushree Service and Development Society and Network has organized a small group meeting on 10th December 2019, with the sex workers. During this meeting, such of those sex workers who are under pressure and facing mental problems were personally given counseling. A team of counselors interacted with each sex worker to understand the situation they are passing through, analysed it in front of them, and explained them about how to tackle such situations. They were explained about how best they can handle the pressure, if they do small adjustment by way of understanding the situation, their abilities etc. Such of the mentally suffering sex worker was asked to be in touch with them from time to time, and to speak out their problem instead of suffering among themselves. The aspects of stress management, self-control, and self-analysis, situational-analysis were explained to them. As per the target sex-workers, this effort made by SLB has made a significant difference in their mental status, and they were feeling relieved of the tension.



International RE Conference: RE Conference is held annually at the international level. This year, this conference was held at People involved in various sectors and involved in different types of activities / programmes will participate in this conference. The conference aims at recognizing sex work as a 'Professional Work'. Members of NNSW also participated in this conference. The representatives shared their experiences with the participants.



Ms. Arundhathi Roy, the Noble Awardee, also participated in this conference, and said that the challenges she faced in her life made her to become stronger and stronger. She said that they inspired her to



stand stiff and face them till she wins them. These challenges have taught her several lessons about life and she learned about how to live in the present world with undaunted will-power.

The conference put-forth their basic demand that Sex Work must be recognized as a "WORK." The persons involved in this work should be supported with stigma free testing & treatment, accessibility of social benefits under un-organised labour sector, Right to register organisations and unions in Indian.

Participation in Sex Workers and Alias South Asia Convention: The representatives of NNSW have participated in the Sex workers and alias South Asia convention held on 3rd and 4th January 2020, in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

The convention had a wide-open debate on the topic 'What is Sex'. Meena, Sheshu and Anjali Natarajan speaking on the occasion explained that the word sex is used by one-and-all, but none of them have a proper understanding about the basic knowledge about the meaning of this word. They both explained on this and differentiated about Sex and Sexuality.



There was a discussion about when did or at what age the participants have heard or come across the word "Sex" in their life. The response from majority of the participants was that they have heard this word between the age of 11 to 18 years.

For centuries, there was a clear discrimination on women and girl children. The women or the girl were kept under several controls and conditions even in the expression of their feelings like smiling, laughing, or expressing their opinions about marriage or their willingness towards their choice of bridegroom. They were not given any choice even in taking decision about their families, having children etc. They were controlled in all these aspects from time to time. During the in-depth discussion, the resource persons referred to the books of "Kautilya Sastram", wherein a women, who being involved in sex with several people, is called as "Vesya". Later, during the period of European regime these women are called as "Sex Workers".

The convention felt that sex should be an issue of confidentiality, and there is a need for sex education among the communities.

Annual General Body Meeting of NNSW: The Annual General Body Meeting of NNSW was held on 10th April 2019 at Guntur. It was attended by all the Board of Directors.

The meeting presented the progressive works taken up by the Network during the year, and had discussions about various programmes taken up by the connected groups, problems confronted by them, and how they were solved through convergence.



Information regarding various convergence meetings held with various government departments, taking the sensitive issues regarding troubling of the sex workers by the law-makers, and lack of protection for them in their day to day life, were also discussed in the meeting.

At the end of the AGBM the members elected new Board of Directors for the Network. The new BoD elected by the members for the year 2019-20 is:

- Kiran Deshmukh - President
- Nisha Gullur - Vice President
- P Devi - General Secretary
- Sudhir Patil - Treasurer
- Shyamala John - Joint Secretary
- Kokila - Board Member
- Lalitha Kumari - Board Member
- Lalitha Satheesh - Board Member
- Reena Firoj Khan - Board Member
- Lakshmi - Board Member
- Seema Sharma - Board Member