

30 July, 2014

C.No. 48 / Resume.No.19 /2014-15

To: All Members of MCCI Ladies Forum

All Members

Dear All,

Re: Brief Proceedings of the MLF session on 'Empowering the Prisoners' held on July 28, 2014 at the Chamber Premises

Please find attached the Brief Proceedings of the MCCI Ladies Forum session on 'Empowering the Prisoners' held on July 28, 2014 at the MCCI Conference Hall with Mr Haider Aziz Safwi, Hon'ble Minister of Correctional Administration, Government of West Bengal as the Chief Guest. Ms Jillian Haslam, Kolkata Born British Adversity Survivor, Entrepreneur, Celebrity Author & Philanthropist, Ms Alokanda Roy, Dancer and Social Worker and Sister Mary Lobo, State Coordinator, Prison Ministry India in West Bengal were the other speakers.

Thanking you,

Encl: Attached below

Yours faithfully,

Muroti Chatterjee
(Assistant Director General)

Brief Proceedings of the MCCI Ladies Forum Session on 'Empowering the Prisoners', held on July 28, 2014 at The Chamber Premises

MCCI Ladies Forum organized a Session on 'Empowering the Prisoners' on July 28, 2014 at the Chamber Premises. **Mr Haider Aziz Safwi**, Hon'ble Minister of Correctional Administration, Government of West Bengal was the Chief Guest. **Ms Jillian Haslam**, Kolkata Born British Adversity Survivor, Entrepreneur, Celebrity Author & Philanthropist, **Ms Alokanda Roy**, Dancer and Social Worker and **Sister Mary Lobo**, State Coordinator, Prison Ministry India in West Bengal were the other speakers.

Ms Divya Agarwal, Chairperson, MLF in her welcome address highlighted the gradual transformation of prison administration in line with the modern correctional philosophy and rehabilitation approach towards the jail inmates, is **resulting into a wholesome and healthy environment in the correctional homes**. Quoting the National Crime Records Bureau data she stated that out of 385,135 inmates in 1,394 jails in India, 52,228 have been trained under various vocational training during the year 2012. Madhya Pradesh recorded the highest number of trained inmates with 1,766 inmates receiving training. **West Bengal with 164 trained inmates recorded as 6th highest**. She also advised that 'We all need to come forward with a reformed and refreshed attitude to acknowledge, support and supplement the efforts of the Government so that it turns into a 'social movement', which alone can transform the Prisons and society as well into a better place to live in'.

Mr Haider Aziz Safwi said '*Families of inmates and ex-prisoners are still untouchables to the society. Ministry is seeking volunteers from NGOs and Corporates to adopt and look after them. We assure to provide all permissions and support to whomsoever is keen to 'train the incumbent and ex prisoners'*'. Mr Safwi continued '70% of the inmates are under trials and the rest convicts. We are ready to share the list of those inmates *about to be released* in 1-2 months time grouping them as those *who can be rehabilitated* and those *who have no one to be looked after*. NGOs may receive these lists and start to work on them. Efforts of Government need to be supplemented by NGOs in terms of funds and training. Mental upliftment is the prime training sought and only two or three NGOs are truly working well specially an NGO in Berhampur which is providing hands on training on Computer Skills" and the rest provides false assurance.

Mr Adhir Kumar Sharma, IPS, Assistant Director General and IG, Department of Correctional Administration, Government of West Bengal said that West Bengal is the **second highest in the country in prison expense** which is projected to touch Rs 200 Crores in 2014-15, for retaining 23,000-24,000 inmates across 58 correctional homes. According to him NGOs are required to conduct meaningful women oriented training programmes /activities with upgraded skills.

Ms Jillian Haslam announced that she manages the NGO Remedia Trust as the trustee, which pools in money from all walks of life to help the underprivileged. The Trust is currently functioning with 5 dedicated Teams, viz, 'Youth Team', 'Aged Team', 'Disabled Team', 'Children's Team' and 'Inspiring Women's Team' to work on 'five key areas' under respective Team Leaders. 'Pre assessment and Employment', 'Educational - Functional Skills, Soft Skills', 'Empowerment through Computer Skills, Speaking' and 'Employability Programme through assessment of their current skills, selling and interview skills' are the steps of the comprehensive Ex Prisoner (E3) Programme advocated by Ms Haslam. The trust also provides '*Certified Vocational Training, Internships and Placements for Ex prisoners and Job Skills training for Family Members*'. It focuses on '*Capentary, Tee Shirt Painting, Beautician Training and Tailoring*'.

Ms Aloknananda Roy stressing on the dire need to train the prisoners commented '**They need to be trained and motivated inside to face the world outside**'. 'I use their unused energy in my team by making them dance, but they need a certified training to be recruited in Corporates' **suggested she**. She further added that '90% of the women prisoners are from humble background and we need to do something to help them since even after release, society disallows them to relegate to normal life'. Ms Roy has **adopted 6 Boys of Jail Inmates who are currently going to Don Bosco Murshidabad** and she is also running a creche and pre primary school for children below 6 years belonging to the inmates. She sought Government assistance to arrange for boarding school for these children once they are over 6 years old. **Education is important-** highlighted Ms Roy since idle mind is devil's den.

Sister Mary Lobo said ' Counselling' is the key to 'unlock the minds' of the Prisoners to bring them out of their 'shell' and boost their 'morale' developing the 'urge to learn'.She brought to the fore that Prison Ministry India (PMI) has already commenced organizing 'Volunteers' Meeting', 'Workshops', 'Training Programmes', 'Social Welfare Activity', 'Legal Help', 'Cultural Programme' and 'Counselling Session' in few of the 58 Correctional Homes, like Krishnanagar, Kalyani, Ranaghat, Tehatta, Balurghat,Jalpaiguri, Burdwan,Sikkim.'Over all Preparedness', 'Welcome home Meeting and Greeting', 'Vocational Needs Analysis' and 'Mainstreaming' are the five important steps in assisting the ex prisoners during their process of 'release and post release period'.

Ms Divya Agarwal,Chairperson, MLF proposed the Vote of Thanks

The session was well attended by over 70 Participants comprising: MLF Members, MCCI Members, Corporates and Media.

- **Muroti Chatterjee**