

21 July 2016

C. No. 42/ Resume No. 11 / 2016-17

To: All Members of the Committee

Members of MCCI Ladies Forum

All Members

Dear Sir,

Re: Brief Proceedings of the Seminar on Empowering Women.

Please find attached the Proceedings of the Seminar on 'Empowering Women for nation building and sustainable development' held on 20 July, 2016 at Taj Bengal.

Thanking you,

Yours faithfully,

Haimanti Banerjee
(Assistant Secretary)

Encl: Attached below

Proceedings of the Seminar on 'Empowering Women for Nation building and sustainable development' on July 20, 2016 at Taj Bengal, 3pm

MCCI-MCC Ladies Forum organized a Seminar on 'Empowering Women for Nation building and sustainable development' on 20 July, 3 p.m. at Taj Bengal. Dr. Shashi Panja, Hon'ble MoS, Women and Child Development & Social Welfare (IC), Health and Family Welfare, Govt. of West Bengal graced the occasion as Chief Guest. Smt. Sharmistha Mukherjee, Media Panelist, INC, Smt. Agnimitra Paul, Fashion designer and entrepreneur, Smt. Ushoshi Sengupta, Miss Universe India and founder, TES were also present and addressed the Seminar.

Smt. Seema Agarwal, Chairperson, MLF in her welcome address spoke of the empowered women we have today including our dynamic lady Chief Minister, Smt. Mamata Banerjee and several women entrepreneurs. She suggested more presence of women in the Parliament houses. She also raised the problems faced by women in economically backward sections of rural areas despite the empowering schemes in place.

Dr. Shashi Panja in her address said that the West Bengal's policy for Women Empowerment rolled out many supportive policies for them.

- One of the women oriented policies is the 50% reservation in the Panchayats - "***I do support reservations***", she said. According to Dr. Panja reservation was important to provide a level playing field to the women.
- She mentioned the convergence of the 'Sabala' and Kanyashree scheme which is supposed to benefit the adolescent girls who are not otherwise privileged. The girls who availed Kanyashree could also enter the Sabala program which teaches them life skills and then they could gain from the much needed school education.
- Dr. Panja also mentioned the 'Swabalamban' program which is intended to empower the economically underprivileged women of rural areas and the state is working through NGOs to implement this. In this program the government is facilitating several unconventional training among women such as driving, geriatric care and even preparing them as mental help workers.
- The low cost housing scheme also empowers women because it conditions the property to be in the name of the woman in the family.
- Healthcare sector is also institutionalised where women are now coming to the hospitals for their delivery of babies and other treatments. Waiting spaces have been built in the hospitals for women coming from remote areas.
- However many cases of abuse and discrimination also occur in closed walls, she urged every office to keep an ICC (Internal Complaint Committee) for protection of women's security. This Committee could work with the local Complaint Committees which would raise awareness about the issue.

Smt. Sharmistha Mukherjee observed if there was an economic value for the domestic help provided by the women in household chores, then the nation's government spending would have gone up higher.

- Smt. Mukherjee also mentioned the poor implementation of the gender budget. The spending on women has come down to 4.5 % of GDP in 2016-17 budget from 5% when it was implemented and 5.8% in the revised budget of 2013-14.
- While the 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' campaign has been launched, the allocation to Ministry of Women and Child Development has been only Rs. 17804 crore, a 57 crore increase, which is not adequate. The budget allocation towards increasing welfare of women should go up.
- The Women Reservation bill passed in Rajya Sabha and raised during the UPA I regime should be passed soon by the Lok Sabha.
- She suggested that smaller community based models of development could be developed and encouraged.
- Environment and eco-development are important and a holistic approach to development will automatically resolve the gender issue.

Smt. Sureka began her address with the words, "***Birth was not our choice. Death is not our choice. But how we live the journey from birth to death is definitely our choice***". A woman performs multiple social roles as daughter, sister, wife and also functional roles of friend, philosopher and a manager. Education is important. With her calm, gentle and fiery qualities she is equipped to lead magnificent roles in all spheres. It is the daggers of the mind, prejudices of the past which hinders their acceptability in all kinds of roles. We need a 21st century mentality for women's participation in the economy.

Smt. Agnimitra Paul observed that discrimination against women begins at home where she has to face many restraints for being a woman. She also mentioned the importance of sanitation along with education because many rural schools lack in sanitation facilities which hinders girls from going to school. She provides vocational training to women of rural areas in embroideries and making baskets. Once a lady begins to earn her confidence goes up. They can know about their right, decide about their children's nutrition and other needs and even look after their own health and well being.

Smt. Ushoshi Sengupta said that women are natural multi-taskers and more than gender equality it is important to understand that '***we are not here to compete with men; we are here to do what men cannot do***'. Gender equality is not same as gender competition. Nation is like a child and needs to be nourished and built, and women are natural at achieving that.

The session ended with a hearty Vote of Thanks offered by Smt Prapti Jhajharia, Co-Chairperson, MCCI Ladies Forum.

- Haimanti Banerjee
(Assistant Secretary)