



ಸುಗ್ರಾಮ

ಗ್ರಾಮ ಪಂಚಾಯತ್ ಚುನಾಯಿತ ಮಹಿಳಾ ಪ್ರತಿನಿಧಿಗಳ ಸಂಘ-ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ (೮)

On the road to success: Nurturing SUGRAMA and ensuring gender equality

PRESS RELEASE – DECEMBER 13, 2013

SUGRAMA is an association representing the rights and interests of Grama Panchayat elected women representatives of Karnataka. SUGRAMA, a membership based organization, is also a platform where women members can come together in solidarity and support each other to bring about change and advocate for people centered policies. SUGRAMA facilitated by The Hunger Project and with the support of 6 partner civil society organizations, has formed 51 Taluk associations in 17 Districts and enjoys a membership base of more than 3600 elected women representatives.

International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women is celebrated all over the globe on November 25th every year. Violence against women is a consequence of discrimination in practice and persisting gender inequalities. Violence against women continues to be a global pandemic. Violence against women is very evident when a member starts her political journey as a leader.

November 25th to December 10th every year has been most significant dates across the world. SUGRAMA members played a pivotal role and participated in the events during the 16-day campaign to raise awareness on child marriage, female feticide, sexual harassment and violence against women. The campaign concluded on December 10th – International Human Rights Day wherein members undertook jathas, cycle rallies, orange ribbon show (*The caption of the year being 'Orange the World'*) and submitted memorandums to the Government at 15 districts of the State.

SUGRAMA also found hands on support from **Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD), Thailand, Integrated Gender and Development Division and women council leaders from Philippines**. The 4-member delegation is on a 3-day visit to Bangalore to interact with SUGRAMA members. APWLD is a network of women's organizations from across Asia Pacific working on the promotion and protection of women's human rights. The basic premise of their visit to Bangalore is to enable sharing of best practices elected women representatives and women council leaders of Philippines in politics and governance.

SUGRAMA takes this opportunity to put in the following demands with a view to safeguard and protect women's rights:

1. There is an urgent need to **appoint Protection Officers and Child Marriage Prohibition Officers** as per Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005 and Child Marriage Prohibition Act 2006 at the taluk level.
2. Cases pertaining to Domestic Violence/Violence against Women needs to be **addressed within 2 months**.

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3. Ensure **Sexual Harassment complaints committee** is set up at the G P level as mandated under Vishaka Judgment of Supreme Court of India.
4. There is a need to **sensitize police personnel** on gender aspects and women's rights against exploitation.
5. Ensure that state Government opens a **toll-free help line for Panchayat women at the district & taluk levels** to attend to emergent needs (adverse or otherwise) of elected women functionaries of PRIs in terms of police assistance, information dissemination, legal assistance, counseling etc., with a view to strengthen women's participation in local governance.
6. Implementation of the **Women's Component Plan** through Panchayats. There is also a need to ensure that **Gender Budget Cells** are set up in the Government departments at the taluk and district levels.
7. Provide for **stringent provisions in law to deal with those committing violence against women candidates** during and after elections.
8. There is an urgent need for **Legal awareness and Educational Programmes** for women on their rights. Men and children to be sensitized on women's human rights to enable a gender just Karnataka.
9. Make **State Women's Commission** more approachable for women from rural areas by appointing member representatives at the taluk/district level. There is also a need to ensure that the Commission fulfills its mandate through proper mechanisms and policies as mandated under Karnataka State Commission for Women Act 1995.
10. Ensure separate **toilets** for women in Grama Panchayat offices across the state.
11. There is a need to **set up a monitoring group at the taluk level** which shall comprise of representatives of civil society organizations, women's groups and panchayat members to address issues of women.
12. Ensure automatic disqualification of **Members of Parliament and Legislative Assembly** who is found guilty of sexual offences by trial courts.

Members of SUGRAMA earnestly request the Chief Minister and the Minister so also the Cabinet Members to please take note of these demands and make appropriate changes, so as to enable in curbing Violence against Women.

More details can be taken from:

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