

Minutes of the Meeting of Core Group of NGOs held on 13th November 2017

The meeting of the Core Group of NGOs was held in the National Human Rights Commission on 13th November 2017 at 3.00 PM under the Chairmanship of **Justice Shri H. L. Dattu, Chairperson, NHRC**, India.

2. The list of participants is at Annexure I.
3. **Shri J.S. Kochher, Joint Secretary (T&R)** welcomed all the members of the Core Group of NGOs and stated that this meeting is in line with the decision taken in the previous meeting that two/three meetings of the Core Group of NGO would be held each year. He apprised the participants that NHRC was established in 1993 and in 2018 it will complete 25 years. Therefore, participants were asked to give suggestions on what activities may be organized as a part of Silver Jubilee celebration of the Commission. He also stated that members of Core Group would be involved in giving suggestions to formulate Annual Action Plan for 2018-2019 and Strategic five year Plan 2018-2023.
4. **Justice Shri H.L. Dattu, Chairperson, NHRC** explained that NHRC is preparing a calendar for activities that are going to be executed in the coming years and NHRC has its own plans which need to be enriched with closer interaction with NGOs. As a result, meeting was organized to take suggestions of the NGOs to be incorporated in its Annual Action Plan and Strategic Plan for five years 2018-2023.
5. **Shri Manoj Jena, Human Rights Front, Odisha** mentioned about the women empowerment campaign that he has started in 314 blocks in 30 district of Odisha from which three lakh women will be empowered. Following suggestions were given by him:

- i. **Silver Jubilee**

It can be celebrated by undertaking capacity building programmes at state levels for human rights defenders, women leaders, media personnel and student. Further, Human Rights Fair should be organized for five to seven days and various stakeholders can come and exhibit their work related to Human Rights. Cultural programmes on rights based issues should be organized. He suggested that there should be an Award in the name of Justice Ranganath Mishra (or of any other deserving dignitary) to those who are doing excellent job in the field of Human Rights.

ii. **Annual Action Plan**

NHRC can create awareness programmes at university level for students of role and functions of NHRC. Grave violations of human rights like Kundli gang rape case should be taken into consideration by the Commission.

iii. **Strategic Plan**

NHRC can incorporate publication of booklets in regional languages on basic human rights issues which would benefit students and various stakeholders. Open victim meets should be organized so that whoever is left out due to any reason can come and approach NHRC.

6. **Maja Daruwala, Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative**, stated that NHRC's work is not much visible in the public at large. She stated that it is not possible for NHRC to cover the whole subcontinent and sensitizing people through workshops or distributing study material. She gave following suggestions:

i. **Annual Action Plan**

A detailed study and action should be taken on NHRC's impact on the duty bearers. NHRC should develop a mass media strategy for human rights related issues for raising awareness among the people. She mentioned that NHRC should make the duty bearers aware to change the culture of impunity to the culture of accountability. She suggested that certain amount of budget should be allocated so that NHRC could reach through the country. Human Rights defenders like witness, whistle blowers etc. are not getting protected. NHRC should take this into consideration. NHRC should also improve its relation with International Special Rapporteurs on high policy issues. NHRC needs to give support to other NGOs to oversee the human rights related issues. Public hearings organized by the Commission must involve people from the concerned NGOs as well.

ii. **The Strategic Plan**

NHRC should make torture a priority area for NHRC. There is lack of government willingness, legislation etc. NHRC should act in giving access to justice to the victims. NHRC should consider improve the response mechanism. There is a need to bring structural changes within the NHRC which will bring systemic changes outside. NHRC should capacitate the SHRCs and other statute bodies which would reduce the load of working of NHRC.

7. **Dr. Kishore Kumar, Director, Banyan Adaikalam** drew attention toward the state of mental health in the country. There are 517 District Mental Health Programme (DMHP) but it is only confined to these districts and does not reach villages. It is important to take care of mentally ill people and provide care to them otherwise they will become homeless people on streets depleting economic resources. State of Karnataka has provided welfare care to 20,000 mentally ill people. Effective implementation of DMHP can help in curbing the problem of expanding religious faith healing places. Therefore he suggested that:

i. **Silver Jubilee**

For the silver jubilee celebration promoting the two books publish on the topic of mental health by NHRC can be done.

ii. **Annual Action Plan**

It should incorporate regional meetings on mental health must be organized and regional heads should be made accountable. There should be reservation in jobs for people who have recovered from mental illness. Dr. Kumar gave an example of Tamil Nadu government where they have started the reservation for person who has recovered mental illness. There should be competence capacity building in adolescent to take responsibility.

iii. **Strategic Plan**

Dr. Kishore extended his help in preparing five year action plan on mental health for NHRC. He suggested that there is a need for the implementation of new Mental Healthcare Act, 2017.

8. **Smt. Bharat Ali, HAQ, Centre for Child Rights** states that there is need to do more research and especially in the line of trafficking related issues. NHRC must probe in the Kundli gang rape case as there were many human rights violation in this case.

i. **Silver Jubilee**

It can be celebrated by organizing Cultural fair at the national/state/regional level.

ii. **Annual Action Plan**

There should be a Status Report on Human Rights in states on different areas such as disability, dalits minorities, custodial death, third gender, prisoners etc. as information on all such issues is scattered and not available at the same place. India has been falling short on sending its report to various international human rights treaty bodies. NHRC must tie up with such treaty bodies. Commission can take up social audits to check on human rights violations. Good practices need to be documented and some kind of certification should be attached to such practices. Human rights education must be promoted and there should be an online course for the same.

iii. **Strategic Plan**

It should focus on the need to ratify Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the Third Optional Protocol to the CRC on a Communications Procedure (OP3 CRC), Therefore commission should push the government to ratify them.

9. **Shri Bejwada Wilson, Safai Karamchari Andolan** stated that there are various workshops/consultations/meetings organized by NHRC. Follow up on such events must be mandatory and there should be constant monitoring on the state government. He drew attention on various sensitive issues and cases based on open defecation, manual scavenging, mass lynching and caste based discrimination. For the **Annual Action Plan** he suggested that instead of calling regional or national consultation, six states where manual scavenging is still prevalent must be called for the consultation/conference.

10. **Shri Ambuj Sharma, Secretary General**, NHRC stated that Action Taken Report of meetings will be maintained in future by the Commission. Major cases can be intervened by Special Rapporteurs and investigation team of NHRC. He also stated that the States where manual scavenging is prevalent as mentioned by Shri Bejwada Wilson should be given immediate attention. He informed the members of NGOs that NHRC is planning to organize conferences at international level. NHRC will be taking up Annual Oath Programme for the probationers of law enforcement agencies. State Human Rights Commission will be included although there are funding constraints. Efforts will be made to bring stakeholder under one roof by NHRC. Small working group could be constituted to make strategic plan.

11. **Shri J.S. Kochher, Joint Secretary (T&R)** concluded the meeting stated that all the suggestion were important and would be considered. He mentioned that NHRC is making best efforts to do follow up on all the issues. He apprised the participants that NHRC has signed a MoU with IGNOU which have a provision of an online course on human rights. He suggested that **all the member of Core Group of NGOs can send suggestions within a week and the Commission would take them into consideration.**

12. The **Chairperson** thanked the Members of the Core Group for their participation in the Meeting and for their valuable suggestions.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

NHRC, India

1. Justice Shri H L Dattu, Chairperson -- [Chair]
2. Justice Shri D Murugesan, Member
3. Justice Shri P.C Ghose, Member
4. Smt Jyotika Kalra, Member
5. Shri. S.C Sinha, Member
6. Shri. Ambuj Sharma, Secretary General
7. Shri. Surajit Dey, Registrar (Law)
8. Shri. Sunil Arora, Joint Registrar (Law)
9. Shri. J S Kochher, JS (T&R)
10. Dr. Shri Ranjit Singh, JS (P&A)
11. Dr. Sanjay Dubey, Director (Administration)
12. Shri. B. S Nagar, Under Secretary(Coordination)
13. Shri L Haridas, SO (Coord.)
14. Ms Pritika Sejwal, Junior Research Consultant
15. Ms Papari Saikia, Junior Research Consultant

Members, Core Group of NGOs

1. Mr Bejwada Wilson, *Safai Karamchari Andolan*
2. Ms Bharti Ali, *HAQ, Centre for Child Rights*
3. Dr Kishore Kumar, *The Banyan Adaikalam*
4. Ms Maja Daruwala, *Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative*
5. Mr Manoj Jena, *Human Rights Front*