

# Stakeholder Workshop - GUCCI | MINUTES

23<sup>rd</sup> October 2019 | 10:00 – 5:00 | Meeting location Anna Centenary Library, Chennai

Meeting called by	Women's Indian Association	13 Stakeholders from diverse state departments
Type of meeting	Workshop	25 WIA members from different chapters, office bearers and office staff
Facilitator	WIA	
Note taker	Sruthi S	
Timekeeper		

## Speakers:

Ms. Padma Venkataram, President, WIA

Ms. Kannaki Prabakaran, Member in charge, WIA

Dr. Alby John, I.A.S, Deputy Commissioner of South Greater Chennai

Dr. J Radhakrishnan, IAS, Commissioner, Revenue Administration & Disaster Management, Govt. of Tamil Nadu, India.

Dr. Natarajan, IPS, MLA, Mylapore Constituency

Ms. M Nandhita, Deputy Director, Child Welfare

Mrs. Amul Rani, Advocate, Madras High Court & Honorary Director, Preparatory Learning Action Network and Training (PLANT)

Dr. Narayana Kumar, Principal Scientist, Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute

Dr. Noorjahan, Additional Director, Fisheries Department, Chennai

Dr. R T John Suresh, Founder, Preparatory Learning Action Network and Training (PLANT), Advocate, Madras High Court

Mr L Nirmal Raj IAS, Joint Managing Director, Tamil Nadu Water Supply & Drainage Department (TWAD), Chennai

Mr Veerannan, Additional Director, Tamilnadu Women Development Corporation, TNWADC

Mr A Abdul Rasheed, Former Chief Engineer, Chennai Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage

Mr Thirunavukarasu, Project Officer, CPR Environmental Foundation

Dr Sujatha, Consultant GUCCI project & Director, Karupa Institute of Development Initiatives (KIDI),  
SDG Associate, State Planning Commission

- The session began at 10:00am with the prayer song followed by welcome address by the Honorary Secretary of WIA, Ms Bargavi Devendra, and Presidential Address by Ms. Padma Venkatraman (PV), President of WIA.
- PV spoke about the pressing issue of climate change that is facing the city and impressed upon the audience that the Government alongside NGOs and private organizations should work together to combat the same. She urged the panelists and the audience to contribute to the discussions that are to ensue and provide policy level recommendations.
- Kannaki Prabakaran introduced the GUCCI project to the audience and panelists. The various climate change related activities, both pertaining to the project and otherwise, was also presented in the form of a ppt.
- Dr. Natrajan, touched upon the concept of building resilient communities. He cited examples from a German study on how small communities in Chennai were found to be resilient during natural calamities such as floods. He further claimed that the 2015 Chennai floods proved to be a turning point for the city and state to realize the growing global issue of climate change. He also touched upon women safety in general, but in particular during natural disasters. Since, women shoulder more responsibilities across all ages therefore relief management policies should insist upon peace time planning for women safety during natural disasters.
- Albeit John (AJ), spoke about how the Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) has 'building Chennai as a climate resilient city' as one of its visions. For this the perspective should move away from being in the 'victim mode' and focus on resolving key issues with real world solutions. In order to do this, the GCC is keen to participate and listen to public issues in stakeholder meetings such as the current meeting and seek public support. AJ also stated that India's focus should be 'how to mitigate' the impact of climate change and listed a few examples of GCC's current initiatives such as the setting up of 60,000 new rain water harvesting structures in the last 3 months in Chennai. AJ further added that the main consequences of climate change in Chennai is the rise of floods, drought and the incidence of illnesses due to mosquitoes. For the latter, he attributed the rise in globalization and mobility as one of the key reasons for rising infectious diseases.
- Dr. J Radhakrishnan (JR) spoke about the role of women self-help groups in disaster management for building resilient communities. He began pointing out the hazards, risks and vulnerabilities of women during natural disasters or other consequences of climate change. One of the reasons for the same is the lack of a platform to discuss these issues and decision making powers. JR urged that there is a necessity for women to become opinion leaders and build an ecosystem for not only discussions on these topics but also dissemination of knowledge. For example, he pointed out the need for discussion on relief centre based challenges (such as menstrual hygiene), awareness on facilities and resources available for preparing for extreme situations. To support this, he cited the example of the growing lightning deaths in the city which could have been prevented if the necessary awareness had been providing for the general public. Dr. Radhakrishnan also pointed out that organisations like WIA should help in capacity building exercises and help in training women in prevention, rehabilitation and recovery phases during natural disasters.

### **Technical Session 1:**

The technical sessions started soon after the inaugural session. The first technical session focused on Goal 5- Addressing Gender equality. The session was structured to provide the purview of the schemes and programmes for women and then the presentation of the various issues.

- Dr. Sujata opened the panel discussion by highlighting the Sustainable Development Goals on gender equality. She pointed out that although the SDGs do not define the role of women very

clearly when it comes to equal access to resources, consideration should be given to the various sub-groups such as women with disabilities, single women, widowed women, tribal women etc.

- Ms Nanditha, spoke about the various current government schemes available for women and how such schemes are not known to the larger public. She listed out the various schemes that provide financial assistance for healthcare and education; skill development; maintenance grants; and wedding funds; for women under all categories (single, widowed, tribal, women with disabilities).
- Ms Amul Rani (AR) spoke in depth about the issues involving women within the fisheries sector. She began by pointing out that the responsibilities of fisherwomen begin right after the fish is caught and ranges from processing to sales. However, there is no data or documentation on their economic contribution. While the families of these women do not support them to pursue other or alternative careers, outside fishing, they are given decision-making powers and are respected. But when man-made and climate change consequences are more pronounced such as oil spillages, tsunamis etc, the livelihoods of these fishing communities are deeply affected. AR highlights several reasons for this some of which includes:
  - ✓ Lack of capacity building
  - ✓ Limited knowledge and awareness on government schemes and subsidies.
  - ✓ Lack of traditional knowledge documentation and therefore limited knowledge transfer

AR went on to add that there is a pressing need to create local knowledge register which can have valuable information passed on by fishing communities. Such knowledge may prove to be useful to set up early warning systems, such as hazardous geographical knowledge, during natural disasters. Furthermore, with respect to disaster management, AR pointed out that more emergency flight ambulances are either not allocated or do not reach fishing communities, which contributes to the loss of life, and there is a growing concern for women safety against sexual harassment. AR urged everyone to envision a future where there is no loss of life due to man-made inactions within this sector and the need for educating women and girls in this community on safety and sexual harassment.

At the close of the first technical session, there were numerous questions from the audience on the accessibility of the various government schemes. The Deputy Director, Department of Social Welfare said that there is a strong need to create awareness on the various schemes and it would be useful if the stakeholders who are present here actually took the messages forward.

## **Technical Session 2**

- Dr. Narayana Kumar (NK) discussed the various features of the fishing community that can contribute towards the empowerment of the women within this sector. This includes retail marketing, manufacturing, the role of self-help groups in facilitating fishing based occupations for women, microfinancing and other value adding roles. NK claimed that collective thinking for positive effect is needed to go forward and for this one has to go back and seek guidance from history. NK also highlighted the need for indigenous knowledge that encompasses technical knowledge, geographical knowledge and resource conservation in order to preserve the industry.
- Dr. John Suresh (JS) spoke about the role of innovation in protecting and re-building the fisheries sector, if and when disrupted as a consequence of climate change, by showcasing the various ongoing scientific projects in the sector. JS reiterated the role of women as a key stakeholder in the fish business, who are involved in all aspects of the business. JS pointed out that, as a consequence of climate change, the community suffers from lack of fish harvesting and is forced to learn alternative trades there is an enhanced danger of safety when it comes to women. He

cited a recent case study on how fishing women who underwent training in a non-relatable trade, such as beauty parlour business, got caught in illegal trade and had to face several financial and legal challenges to overcome the same. While these issues also concern the lack of legal aid, awareness and knowledge, JS pointed out that such instances are primarily on the rise due to a mismatch in skill development training and the needs of the community.

- Ms Noorjahan shared some insights on the various government schemes available for women working within the fisheries sector and once again emphasized on the need for collective thinking to influence policy level changes. She, however, claims that despite the presence of several self-help groups present there is a lack of interest towards building community business opportunities which can also receive several benefits and subsidies from the government. She states that women within the sector prefer only individual earning and benefits to support the same as opposed to group or community business. This attitudinal barrier prevents the empowerment of the community as a whole and does not receive the many subsidies and schemes available from the government for capacity building. She further claimed that training alone is not sufficient but also support to enable transition from skill development to economic activity. The latter needs to be measured and monitored to encourage future development. She called for an ecosystem based management with the participation of the community to develop sustainable livelihoods and break attitudinal barriers. Furthermore, she urged the stakeholders to focus on problem solving instead of grievances and to also set up community regulations to preserve their ecosystems.

**Technical Session 3:** The technical session 3 focused on the sustainable development goal 6- clean water and sanitation.

- Mr Veeranan spoke in length about health and sanitation issues currently facing the country and how several policies are in place to combat some of these challenges. By citing the example of eliminating the open defecation issue under the Prime Minister's Swachh Bharat campaign, he spoke about the TN government's focus on achieving sustained use of toilets in the state to keep the region free from open defecation. To achieve this innovation that caters to the rural sector is actively encouraged. However, he pointed out that such innovations need to take into consideration the impact or consequence of climate change to ensure such solutions are sustainable in order to handle human waste.
- Mr Nirmal Raj (NR), discussed the need for continuous public support and active interest in addressing the pressing issue of water scarcity in the city. He pointed out that rain water harvesting systems can only help save limited water but the future relies on agriculture, crop rotation, micro irrigation and such practices. He stated that sustainability relies on re-use and collective support is required for preparing for the future. He claimed that there are reusable water schemes currently under development by the government and people should have the mindset and the right attitude to adopt such measures when they are implemented.
- Abdul Rasheed summarized the discussion by highlighting the key points – the need for sustainable community driven solutions, the role of women to participate in such discussions, become opinion leaders and spread awareness within their communities to address climate change consequences.

During the discussion, it was pointed out by the several participants that the water quality that was supplied to the people in North Chennai was not upto the expected quality. The complaint mechanism for such queries were pointed out as being inadequate or ineffective. It was also requested that the timings of supply of water is fixed in consultation with the area, where supply is effected, in order to avoid wastage of time.

DO NOT COPY