

Annual Report

2001 – 2002



Published by
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Our Vision: *a society based on equality, equity and peace,
where no discrimination or exploitation based on
class, caste, race or gender.*

Our Mission: *to thrive for eliminating these discriminations
and exploitations prevailing in the present day society.*

We attempt: *to bridge the gap between local and global
events & national and international debates
regarding feminist thoughts and practices.*

We aim: *to mainstream gender in the political discourses of
Kerala and India.*

We affirm: *that women need to be empowered with
information.*

We believe: *that women need to be actively participating
in governance.*

We wish: *men to be gender aware and join women's
struggle.*

Prologue

We are happy to present the report of our activities for the years 2001 and 2002 to our friends and well-wishers. These two years were hectic with so many different activities and involvements. There were crises at times, moments of

happiness and fulfillment, of doubt and disillusionment. The overall scenario of Kerala and of the country also is one of sadness and despair rather than hope and peace. Incidents like that of Gujarat has shaken one's belief in humanity.

The soaring violence against women in Kerala, the headlong drive by the Government into capitalist path of development without any masks of social commitments are frightening. The resistance is weak. The forces seem to be very mighty.

For Sakhi last year was one of many achievements. We successfully completed the project of compiling a *resource directory* on violence against women, organized an *international conference* of Gender and Governance, could *complete and publish books on menstruation for adolescent girls and on child sexual abuse*. We also conducted a *number of training programmes* for elected women representatives, leaders of women's groups, trainers etc. In these two years we brought out 6 issues of the newsletter. We designed and published three types of posters during the fortnight campaign on violence against women and children, which was observed from November 25th to December 10th, 2002.

One extremely encouraging matter was that in 2002, we got our FCRA registration and hence a lot of anxiety on funding and continuity seems to ease a bit.

Initial Years (1996-2001)

Sakhi means woman friend. It is in this spirit that we have created this resource center for women in 1996 in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala. It is

a facilitating and supportive organization for women and women's groups in the state.

The need to start such a center for women arose out of the experience of working with men and women from marginalized communities. It is also a result of the realization that the exploitation based on caste, class and gender is all pervading in our society and gender based oppression is interlinked with other oppressive forces of society. We have to identify and change the historic and cultural roots of this oppression.

We realize that change can be achieved only by empowering women-*with the power of information*. By strengthening ourselves with access to knowledge and by building up a scientific and sustained movement, we can create a more humane world.

The resource center was set up with the support of the John D and Catherine T Mac Arthur Foundation in the form of a three-year fellowship awarded to Aleyamma Vijayan in 1996. Sakhi was registered as a trust in 1999. Sakhi's aim was to act as a '**bridge**' between theoretical debates and happenings at the national – international levels and local groups. Towards this end, we established contacts with numerous women's groups and organizations in Kerala and tried to facilitate capacity building and information dissemination activities. Our library and documentation center is the first of its kind in Kerala, focusing on gender issues. Our efforts to mainstream gender in the public debate in Kerala is slowly bearing fruit. In this period, Sakhi could contribute substantially to achieve its objectives of strengthening the women's movements in the state. Sakhi has now grown as a noted resource center for women in the state.

1. Information dissemination.

One major thrust of our work is dissemination of information related to feminist thinking and ideology to women's groups and to mainstream it in the society. Access to information is very crucial to women. We feel that the events and theoretical debates around women's issues which happen at the national/ international level need to be communicated in simple style and local language to the grass root groups of women.

Information dissemination is mainly through the library and documentation center and through newsletters, articles written for other journals and materials distributed in the training programmes.

The library is updated with the purchase of about 167 books in 2001 and 73 books in 2002. We have total of **3000** books related to women and there are a number of research studies, journals, newspaper clippings etc. Paper cuttings and other documents are mostly used especially by activists and journalists.

Our library is widely used by people from various walks of life, like social activists, research scholars, journalists and students. In 2001, 29 persons and in 2002, 33 persons took regular membership and about 40 took reference membership. Now the library has about 147 regular members. We also have Xerox facility at the center itself.

In the last months of 2000, we published a special issue of the newsletter about 'Political Power and Women' and in January 2001 it was translated into English. In 2001, we brought out two issues of the newsletter. The April-May issue mainly dealt with the Election results, impact of Globalization on women and the National Policy for empowerment of women. The second one, which was a combined issue of four months, contained articles on war, Adivasi struggle and adolescent problems.

In 2002, we published four newsletters, of which the first one was a special issue on "food security". The July issue included articles on Gujarat Massacre, Domestic violence bill, increasing violence against women in Kerala, Masculinity and on sustainable development. In the third issue in October we started a series on feminist history, in which we are trying to introduce information regarding feminism in Malayalam. Other topics of the issue were women and health, critique of Self-help groups and development of Kerala. The last issue of the year consisted mainly of two important reports- Women and Governance workshop conducted in Kochi in October and Fortnight campaign against Violence against women during November 25th to December

10th. The newsletter is read widely and we receive feedback from our readers regularly.

The news clippings system and the journal section of our library need improvement. We plan to compile clippings on particular topics and bring out publications periodically. Lack of space also is a major constraint.

Suja.P.H till September 2002 and Rema Devi from November onwards manage the library and documentation center supported by all other staff. From 2002 April onwards Rejitha.G joined as the documentation and publication assistant.

2. Training Programmes

A major activity of information dissemination and capacity building is through various training programmes conducted by us directly or organized by us for other organizations on their request.

In Kerala, although there are large numbers of women's groups, very few are working with a gender perspective and analysis. The decentralized planning campaign helped a good deal to mainstream Gender aware planning in the state.

In congruence with our mission of mainstreaming gender in the public discourse of Kerala, as well as facilitating capacity building of women leaders and women's groups, Sakhi has undertaken to conduct number of training programmes on gender, health and development, adolescent issues and leadership development.

2.1 Course on gender, health and development

The number of groups working on women's health, reproductive health and sexual health is steadily increasing in India. Yet there are no comprehensive training or capacity building programmes regarding these issues. Realizing this lacuna, a two weeks course on gender, health and development was planned.

This course has been envisaged and developed in response to the growing need among development workers, social science researchers, health researchers and those working on health issues in the governmental and non-governmental sectors. They had been demanding for a training programme that goes beyond introducing basic gender concepts, and to applying these in the context of research policies and programmes.

The following persons were involved in planning and executing the programme:

1. T.K.Sundari Ravindran - course co-coordinator.
Secretary, Rural Women's Social Education Center, Tamil Nadu and Consultant, WHO.
2. Renu Khanna, SAHAJ and Women's Health Training, Research and Advocacy Center, Baroda.
3. Shagufa Kapadia, WOHRAC, Baroda
4. Nalini Nayak , Social Activist ,Secretary-SEWA Kerala.
5. Padmini Swaminathan, Madras Institute of Development Studies, Chennai.
6. Lakshmi Lingam, Reader and co-coordinator, Centre for Health Studies, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai.
7. Mala Ramanathan, Associate Professor, Achutha Menon Centre for Health Science Studies, SCTIMST, Thiruvananthapuram.
8. Aleyamma Vijayan, Sakhi

Madhavi Panda and Mini Rajkumar assisted the core faculty for organizing the course. The core faculty met in March (29th to 31st) and chalked out the programme. The programme was conducted from **August 12th to 26th 2001**. There were 18 participants from different parts of India.

Besides the core faculty 10 other resource persons conducted sessions during the course. The participants were given a number of reading materials related to the subjects in each module. The feedback was very positive.

In 2002, the course was conducted from **Sept.1st to 15th**. This time, there were 23 participants from various states of India, who are working on issues related to gender and women's health. Ms. Aarthi Khelkar with the support of Mini Rajkumar coordinated the programme. Besides the above mentioned core faculty Dr.Jayasree, Dr.Sukanya, Dr.Amar Jasani, Neena Joseph, Usha, R.P.Ravindra, were the resource persons. A report of the training is available at Sakhi.

In 2003, the course is planned to be held from September 18th to October 2nd. The course consisted of four modules:

- (1) Introduction to the concepts of Gender, Rights, Health and Development
- (2) Social and Gender issues in Health
- (3) Applying concepts and tools to critique information, research, policies and programmes
- (4) Social mobilization and Advocating for change.

2.2 Training of Trainers on Gender

Gender as a concept and tool of analysis is used differently by different agencies. It is found in the documents of international financial agencies like World Bank, donor agencies, governments, NGO's and feminist groups. Many use it apolitically, just as a tool of analysis, without integrating with a systemic analysis of structures of patriarchy.

Sakhi is committed to enhance skills of gender trainers from women's groups to bring in the right perspective and analytical skills. We decided to select a core group of activists and enhance their skills as gender trainers. The programme was conducted from **Nov.26th to 30th 2001** • 22 women and 3 men participated. Vanitha Mukharjee, Nalini Nayak, Mridul Eapan, Praveena Kodoth, Mini Sukumar and Aleyamma Vijayan were the resource persons. Prior to the training we prepared a manual for the trainers.

The following were the topics covered in the training:

- Ø Perspectives on gender training/qualities of a gender trainer
- Ø Status of women in Kerala
- Ø Understanding concepts of gender, patriarchy, feminism, Sexual division of labour, identities etc.
- Ø Social and Historical analysis
- Ø Development-concepts, approaches and analytical frameworks
- Ø Empowerment-concept, indicators,
- Ø Gender policy analysis; advocacy

Participatory methodology was used in the programme. Materials in Malayalam were given. The course content and methodology used was well appreciated.

In continuation with this Training, we had another TOT from July 23rd to 28th , 2002. 27 persons from various NGOs and Self-Help groups of the state participated in the programme. Nalini Nayak, Mini sukumar, Sonia, Aleyamma Vijayan, Praveena Kodoth, Sudhi, C.S.Chandrika, J. Sandhya, J.Daya were the resource persons.

During this course a group of Parliamentarians, belonging to the Social Democratic Party, from Sweden had visited Sakhi (we facilitated their visit in Kerala). They met the participants of the TOT also. The discourse between them was very informative to both the teams.

We plan to conduct an advanced course for selected trainers from both these batches in January 2003.

2.3 Gender Training for Men

The need to gender sensitize men was emphasized very often in discussions with women. At first we were not so confident about such

an initiative. But when we had announced a three-day programme, about 20 responses came and finally 12 persons participated in the training programme conducted from July 20th to 22nd, 2001. Dr.D.J.Raveendran, A.J.Vijayan, Nalini Nayak and Aleyamma Vijayan were the faculty.

The process was very dynamic and participatory. Using case studies, exercises and experiential sharing the group analysed their socialization process, the society and how gendering take place.

From the participants a sub group was formed to take initiative in leading such process among the youth. Two of them will focus on understanding and studying how masculinity is getting constructed. An article was written in a Malayalam magazine to create a debate.

2.4 Workshops on Masculinities

In January 9th and 10th 2002, Aakar Delhi, the Women's Studies Unit of Kerala University and Sakhi jointly organised a two day workshop on "Exploring Masculinities". It was one in the series of the traveling seminars on the theme organised by Aakar in different parts of India. In the workshop organised at the senate chamber of Kerala University, 125 persons participated. Papers were presented, video films by Rahul Roy and Amar Kanwar were screened and had discussions on these.

As a follow up of this, another workshop was organised from 3rd to 6th May 2002 at MG University, Kottayam. 35 persons participated including post-graduates and research students. This workshop explored the construction of masculinity in the context of Kerala.

A core group of pro-feminist men have emerged out of this process. They initiated a rally of men and conducted a public meeting against violence during the 16-day campaign for violence against women. The theme of masculinities also figured at the workshop organised during the Kerala social Forum in December 2002. Some scholars are now pursuing studies on theories of body/construction of masculinity in the context of Kerala.

2.5 Gender Sensitivity Training for Male Panchayat Members.

Sakhi is interested and involved in the process of strengthening the local Self-Government institutions. It is imperative that all those who are involved in the exercise of power need to become gender aware. Sakhi's interaction with panchayats in the course of our action research on Gender, Citizenship and Governance opened the possibility for attempting to conduct gender sensitivity training for the male *Panchayat* members in 2001. In the first day, the male Panchayat members of two *panchayats* came together and discussed the changes/ constraints/ possibilities after the 33% women's reservation is passed. Based on this, gender analysis was done and the concepts were explained. Next day, the women members from the respective panchayats joined and there was good interaction among them on the points raised by the male members. There was also a Panchayat wise group discussion on how to make the panchayats "*women friendly*". As we continued to work with these panchayats we have seen how some of these recommendations were put into practice. We organized a follow up to this workshop at Kesari Memorial Hall on April 12th 2002. 15 persons participated from both the panchayats in this programme. In the forenoon session Aleyamma Vijayan and J.Sandhya talked about Gender and in the afternoon Santhosh from Campus Circle, Thrissur, discussed about how masculinities constructed and the general concept of society on Masculinity. This process will be carried on again.

2.6 Other training programmes.

2.6.1 Workshop on Feminist Legal Practice

The judicial system in our patriarchal society is also heavily biased. To challenge and reform the subversive sites of law, social reformers and feminist activists have been lobbying for many years. As a part of the violence intervention programme Sakhi conducted a three-day residential workshop for practicing women lawyers on feminist legal practicing.

The chief facilitator was Flavia Agnes from Majlis, Mumbai. She is a practicing lawyer specializing in women's rights and author of many books on domestic violence, feminist jurisprudence and minority rights.

The programme consisted of 6 sessions: Relevance of Gender in law; Role of law in Indian women's movements; Different models of equality; Looking at our experience; Feminist legal theory and feminist legal practice strategies; New strategies/new issues. The participants decided to form a network of lawyers and to meet occasionally. The network is an autonomous entity now.

2.6.2 Leadership training.

A training for women leaders of various organizations was conducted on June 30th and July 1st, 2001. 60 women took part in this programme. This was

meant to familiarize the state level leadership of the network, with the thinking and understanding on gender and feminism. Through group exercises and interactive sessions, the discussion on concepts was introduced. This was enriched by the contribution of the participants and their rich and diverse experiences.

2.6.3 Monthly trainings.

Monthly meeting for activists of women's groups from Thiruvananthapuram are conducted occasionally. This covers topics of current relevance. 20-30 women activists participate in these sessions.

In 2002, we conducted two classes, one on April 8th and another on May 6th on Gender Health and Development for the members of various women's organisations based in Thiruvananthapuram. The first class held at Sakhi premises and 25 women participated in the programme. The second class was at AICUF Centre and 17 women participated. Nalini Nayak, secretary, SEWA facilitated both the classes.

2.6.4 Self-Defense training.

We organized a two-day self-defense training programme for women at AICUF center Thiruvananthapuram on 28th and 29th. Githa Ridder from Canada was the resource person.

2.7 Training Programmes jointly organised with other groups

2.7.1 Dissemination of the National Policy on Women

The year 2001 was declared as the 'Women's Empowerment Year' by the central Government. A national policy on women was announced. We translated the policy into Malayalam and published it in the April- May issue of our newsletter.

In October, 2001 the All India women's Conference, Thiruvananthapuram branch and Sakhi jointly organised a two-day workshop to disseminate the national policy, focusing on 'women and environment'. Ms. Padma Ramachandran I.A.S inaugurated the seminar. Dr. Sobha, Smt. P. Radhamony. Smt. Aleyamma Vijayan and Smt. S. Anitha, presented papers. On 23rd we chose to have an exhibition cum demonstration on 'Alternatives regarding energy and waste management'. The Director, ANERT demonstrated and talked of solar energy and its applications. The Director, SEUF, Alappuzha spoke of rain water (roof) harvesting and vermi composting for waste disposal. Ms. Latha Raman INSPIRATIONS, Kochi explained the environment friendly housing and energy applications. And INFAC, Pala presented about Alternative farming systems: possibilities and practical applications.

2.7.2 Workshop on Concerns and Prospects for development interventions

This two-day colloquium in the last week of January was organized on request from **Ceras & Think soft Consultancies**, Hyderabad. It was a regional consultation towards a national Consultation to be held in Hyderabad later in the year.

Four theme papers were prepared and presented in the workshop by Dr. John Kurian, (CDS), Ms.Nalini Nayak, Mr.Oommen John (SIRD) and Prof. Nandakumar.

The themes discussed are,

- a) Basic needs (health, shelter, Employment)
- b) Local Governance & Democratization
- c) Gender Equity
- d) Environment

35 persons from different parts of Kerala had participated in the programme, which was held on Jan. 26th and 27th 2001. Two representatives from this group participated in the final meeting in Hyderabad in March 26th and 27th. Deliberations of the workshop was later integrated in to the national report prepared towards *CIDA*'s perspective paper for India.

2.7.3 People's Health Charter/World Health Day

In preparation for the People's Health Assembly held in Dhaka, Bangladesh several preparatory meetings and post assembly meetings were held and we actively took part in these process. We conducted discussions on Kerala Health Policy in the meeting at Animation Centre, Kovalam.

On World Health Day, a public hearing was conducted on Health care facilities and service delivery in Kerala.

2.8 Training programmes organised for other groups

Aleyamma Vijayan was asked to be a resource person/ key faculty to organise staff trainings for the following organisations:

- (1) Kerala Sasthra Sahitya Parishad, Women
leaders training at *Parisara Kendram*,
Thrissur on May 23rd & 24th, 2001
- (2) Mahila Samakhya, Kerala: Gender training- June 25th to 27th 2001
- (3) Institute of Management in Government
(IMG) : Gender and Development
issues on July 9th 2001
- (4) IMG: Need of Empowerment on July
23rd 2001
- (5) Anweshi, Kozhikode: Leadership
training- Sept.14th & 15th 2001
- (6) Preparation of Gender Training module
for Elected women: KILA-September

17th and 18th 2001

- (7) SEDS seminar: Pakil, Kottayam on September 21st 2001 topics: women's participation in the local level development in Kerala.
- (8) Training for students: AICUF Centre, Thiruvananthapuram on Sept. 22nd 2001
- (9) Paper presentation: Cochin University, RUDAT October 9th and 10th 2001, topic: Women and sustainable development in the context of Kerala.
- 10) Training for Police by Jananeethi. November 13th 2001
- 11) Addressed the Women's day celebrations of Janajagruthi, Alappuzha
- 12) On 9th March, 2002 addressed a gathering of SHG's of CHASS, Changanasserry on "Women and Rural Development".
- 13) Key note address on 'Violence against women in Kerala' in the annual meeting of TRADA, Kottayam on November 30th 2002.
- 14) Delivered a Speech at the seminar on 'women and communalism' organized by Cost ford Thrissur

3. Life skill programme for Adolescent

The most delicate period of a lifetime is identified as adolescence. The character of a person is moulded in this period. But the adolescents are now living in a more complex society than ever before. They have become victims of violence, including physical, mental, sexual and communal violence. They experience inequality and lack of information and their unique health needs are not properly met in the present society. Therefore Sakhi thought it necessary to involve in developing a **life skill education** programme for young people. Responding to the needs expressed by the young people, we published two booklets namely 'My Body and Me' and 'Child Sexual Abuse'. We are facilitating the teen clubs organised in many villages and slums of Thiruvananthapuram.

Since the thoughts and feelings of the adolescents are too fragile there is need for trained personals for their education, not only regarding sexual health but also gender and social perspectives. As we understood the need for such trainers we conducted an Adolescent Training of Trainers programme in 2001.

The programme started with 'need assessment' among adolescents from urban schools and rural and coastal areas. An advisory team consists of doctors and psychiatrists met regularly to review the programme and give us suggestions. Based on this interaction and using modules prepared by other groups and organisations, we put together a training manual. It has 36 sessions in 11 modules with exercises, games and other participatory tools.

We organised an Adolescent Training of Trainers programme at Kovalam Animation Centre from **Nov.21st to 24th 2001**. 25 persons representing various NGOs in Kerala participated. The programme focused on understanding issues of adolescence and how to approach them. The prepared manual was also used. Dr. Elizabeth Vadakkekara, Dr.K.Raju, C.S. Chandrika, S.Jayasree and Aleyamma Vijayan were the resource persons.

In the year 2002 we organised a follow up training for the facilitators who work among the adolescents. It was conducted on **May 15th and 16th** at Animation Centre, Kovalam. In the opening session of the first day the participants shared their experience they got after the last year's programme. In the second session they prepared a module on 'Communalism and Gender'. The forenoon session of the second day was lively with the class by Ms. S Anitha, on issues of environment and Santhosh from 'Mediact' took the session on media in the afternoon. With these inputs the trainers prepared another three modules to be used among young people.

This experience was shared when the Kerala Child Welfare Council invited us to assist in formulating the Training of Trainers in their adolescent project called '**Raksha**'. Sakhi assisted in their training of trainers and also in developing modules on Gender. Aleyamma Vijayan was the resource person representing Sakhi in this programme.

Ms. S.Jayasree is co-coordinating the adolescent programmes of Sakhi. She is assisted by a team of 6 volunteers for conducting programmes for young people at the urban slums, rural and coastal areas. In the fortnight campaign on violence, the team could visit a school and interact with children on child sexual abuse.

4. Women's day celebrations

The Women's day celebrations are organized always in association with the network organizations. The celebrations of 2001, focused on the theme, women & Media. The focus was on portrayal of women in the visual media. Taking clippings from two films, 'Ayyal Kadha Ezhythukayyanu' and 'Oru Maravathoor Kanavu' and some ad. films we prepared a video programme and this was used to explain the stereotypical portrayal of women in media. It also highlighted how the images are analysed by the visual media. The method of using video clippings and discussions based on that, was found useful. The Women's day Celebrations-2002 focused on Communalism. R.Parvathy Devi, Chief News editor of Kairali T.V, delivered the opening talk. It was on "Women and communal violence in India". On the background of women's day we had announced an essay competition on Feminism for college students of Thiruvananthapuram district. One girl from Engineering College won the prize and we distributed the cash award on women's

day. Then a documentary film, “Father, Son and Holly War” was screened. In the afternoon there was a panel discussion, in which Dr.Michal Tharakan spoke on development crises of Kerala, Dr.C.R.Soman on women and health, Nalini Nayak on pesticides and Ms.T.Radhamani on women in development.

5. Other collaborative projects-2002

5.1 ODS- South Asia exchange programme

North East Network, Delhi initiated this programme, where by 7 feminist organisations in India are networked to jointly undertake learning through exposure and exchange programmes. A part of this is exchange visits to other South Asian countries to learn from feminist organisations on strategies to counter violence against women.

The first planning meeting took place in Delhi in July. Aleyamma Vijayan attended it. Mercy Alexander represented Sakhi in the first exchange visit to Bangladesh.

5.2 Streenet a virtual course on feminism

The four resource centers in India, Akshara in Mumbai, Alochana in Pune, Jagori in Delhi and Sakhi in Thiruvananthapuram, have joined together to launch this innovative course in feminist studies on the Internet. “Streenet” the electronic learning course will introduce participants to the Indian women’s movement, feminist theory and practice and current debates and campaigns in the struggle for women’s rights. It offers space for 20 learners in each city to enter the virtual class room with an instructor teaching them, hold discussions with co-learners, learn through interactive games, test oneself through exercises and written assignments. The planning process and preparations are going on. The course is expected to start on February 2003.

5.3 Study on Cashew sector

Ms. Anna Linberg, Dept. of History, Lund University, Sweden, visited Sakhi in the beginning of 2002. She had done a detailed study on the cashew workers in Kerala. This was towards her PhD and the book is published under the title “Experience and Identity- a historical account of class, caste and gender among the cashew workers of Kerala, 1930-2000”. Anna is interested in continuing her involvements with cashew workers and is seeking Sakhi’s collaboration on how meaningfully women in the sector could be helped.

Our interaction with women panchayat members from Kollam district had convinced us of the need to engage with cashew workers and Anna’s interest and theoretical analysis propelled us to explore our search further.

Meanwhile Dr.Nazreen Kanji from Mozambique also visited Sakhi. Her interest was to study the cashew sector from the perspective of trade liberation and globalization. She was aware that raw cashew nuts were imported from Mozambique. The study will be a collaborative effort with Centre for Development Studies and Sakhi had agreed to help the study for a few months especially in data collection. Daya.J have been holding the assignment.

5.4 Seminar on Muslim Personal Laws

Dr.Syeda Hamida, former member of National commission for women requested us to organise a seminar on rights of Muslim women. We translated the background papers prepared by her and with the help and support of V.P.Suhra of Nissa, Streevedi and Anweshi, organised the seminar in Kozhikode on March 7th 2002. It was well attended and in the afternoon there was a public hearing of Muslim women who were victims of dowry harassment, desertion and ‘talaqu’.

6. Gender and Governance

The 73rd and 74th Constitutional reforms concretized the constitutional promise of making the Panchayathi Raj institutions as true Self-Government Institutions. Through the constitutional reforms women are also to be active participants in the decision making process at the local level.

In Kerala, the new approach of decentralized planning process was initiated in 1996 by the state government. It was a bold initiative to devolve funds and deploy government officials. Out of the 40% funds earmarked to be spend by the Panchayat, it was mandatory to spend 10% for projects, which will benefit women.

Sakhi was keen to be actively involved in this new space opened up to engender the governance process. The Planning Board also advocated a gender approach to be integrated in local level planning. The training given by the People’s Plan campaign cell included gender analysis, study on status of women etc.

Sakhi’s involvement in this area is through two projects:

6.1 Networking of Elected Women Representatives.

This process started in March 2000. The idea was to unite women representatives above party considerations and enhance their leadership skills, analytical and gender sensitive planning skills.

This programme is part of an initiative by the Singamma Srinivas Foundation (SSF), Bangalore in the four southern states of India. In the other states, election to local bodies is not on the basis of party politics and hence the attempt was to form associations or Federations of EWR's. In the highly politicised atmosphere of Kerala, networking seems to be the appropriate strategy. The elected women representatives (EWR) need support and training to act as effective agents of change as well as to bring gender perspective into the agenda of governance. Most of the political parties are not making any attempt to systematically engage in capacity building. The planning board and the state training institutions like KILA and SIRD do conduct some programmes. But networking the elected women representatives at the district level and regular interaction among them seems to be a better approach to focus on the day-to-day issues confronting them as well as to ensure a process of continuous and sustained training.

In the first phase we had a series of meetings in the three regions of Thiruvananthapuram- Neyyattinkara, Nedumangad and Attingal. Since the elections were to be held in Oct.2000 this was their last year of their term as Panchayat members. Around 80 members who belonged to different political parties participated in the district level meeting held subsequently. The idea of networking was largely welcomed.

The meetings were useful for the Elected Women Representative's (EWR's) and a great learning experience for Sakhi also. We were under the impression that the planning board trained all of them but soon realized that all women did not get an opportunity to participate in training programmes. For majority of them this was their debut political experience; therefore they were eager to learn more about planning and development. But since those training were time consuming and demanding hard work, they became overburdened with their triple role as house wives, professionals (many were teachers) and members of the local body. Actually if there was no reservation, many of them would not have dared to enter the public realm. Once they gained confidence, they were not hesitant to express their apprehension of not getting a seat next time because of a change of the reserved wards to general wards.

The political parties by and large did not make any special efforts to build the capacity of these women, so that they become future leaders in their own right.

As the new Panchayat committees came to power, the process of networking intensified. We organised 8 block level meetings for the members. The topics of discussions were centered on local level planning, critique of development, gender based approach to planning. By this time all local bodies knew Sakhi's programme and objectives. Elected Women enthusiastically participated in the seminars. But discussions could not be effective since the participation was around 70 in each place.

Learning from the difficulty in interaction caused by a large meeting and inspired by the effectiveness of the coastal meetings held on June 20th, in which 20-25 EWR's were participated, we decided to convene meetings at sub-block level. Three such meetings were conducted in this year. In these three consecutive meetings, classes on 'Issues of adolescent girls and the role of Panchayats for a positive change' were held.

We made three different surveys among the women members of Panchayats- one among the Dalit members of the Panchayats in Kollam district, former women members and the new members of panchayats in Thiruvananthapuram - for assessing the relevance of the network. After the survey we dropped the idea of networking elected women in Kollam district because of geographical reasons and lack of volunteers to work in that region.

A leadership training programme for elected women was conducted on June 30th and July 1st 2002. This was a two-day programme towards capacity building of district leaders in the network of EWR's. 65 women leaders participated in the programme.

The first phase of the programme came to an end by mid 2002. The next phase is expected to start in early 2003.

Daya.J, assisted by Mercy Alexander coordinates this programme.

6.2 Action research on Gender, Citizenship and Governance (GCG Programme)

The Gender and Governance Programme, initiated by the Gender division of Royal Tropical Institute, Amsterdam (KIT), started in June 2000. They conducted the programme in partnership with organisations in South Asia and Southern Africa. Sakhi was one of the partners in India. This was a unique experience to Sakhi. The partners met several times during the two-year project period, assessed and contributed to each other's research study. It was also a process of capacity building of all the partners.

The project is an action-research programme in two panchayats of Trivandrum district. This idea is to engender the governance process, especially women's component plan in these panchayats. The programme was initiated in June 2000. The second phase started in January 2001 and this time two other panchayats had to be selected as the initial ones became part of the Trivandrum Corporation. The researcher regularly attended the committee meetings, gramasabhas and other planning process in the panchayats and documents them. In one panchayat, we assisted in the 'status of women' study with regard to health and violence. An exchange visit of EWR's to Socio-Economic Unit Foundation, Alappuzha to learn about rainwater harvesting, vermi composting and masonry work by women was arranged. Skill training and leadership training for leaders of

self help group was also undertaken. A gender sensitization training was conducted for the male members of both the panchayats.

From the experience of working among the EWR's of these panchayats so far we could summaries the critical reflections thus:

- (1) Macro forces (of globalisation, consumerism etc.) are so strong that micro level planning seems to be unable to make any significant impact on many issues like economic issues, unemployment, suicides, price of crops, alcoholism etc.
- (2) Due to deep-rooted patriarchal values embedded in all social institutions, it is extremely difficult to engender planning at local level.
- (3) Unless the macro situation change in favour of women, the life of EWR's become a constant struggle and they need all types of support to survive.

Sakhi had the good fortune of co-hosting the final conference of partners in Kochi, Kerala with KIT from October 15th to 17th. In this unforgettable experience, we had 95 participants from around the world. There were delegates not only from the 15 partner organisations in seven countries but also from international organisations and institutions like UNIFEM, UNICEF, World Bank.

The final report of the action research in Kerala will be ready by mid 2003. The report of the conference is available in the web site <http://www.kit.nl/gcg>.

Ms.J.Sandhya is the researcher of this programme. The gender division of Royal Tropical Institute of Amsterdam(KIT) supported this project.

7. Violence intervention programmes.

It is a fact that in Kerala, violence against women and children are on the rise. So many victims of violence have been approaching us for help. As a Women's organization Sakhi intervenes in these cases and try to get them justice, with the help of Kerala Streevedi, the network of women's organizations.

7.1 Below are **some instances** during the reporting period, where we have closely collaborated with the network-Kerala streevedi to bring justice to women survivors of violence.

- (a) Assisted in the signature campaign on Nalini Netto case, which was on a workplace harassment issue.
- (b) supported P.E.Usha on her hunger strike and gather support from various people in the state.
- (c) visited the girl who is abused in the Pandalam case and gave support to her and her family.

- (d) facilitated the campaign regarding Suryanelli case and extended support to the survivor
- (e) We helped a women whose divorce case is in the court. We helped her to approach the Police cell and the Women's Commission to get back the dowry, did a fund raising campaign and helped her child to get admission in the school.
- (f) We helped a woman who was trafficked to Mali and was forced to do prostitution, for legal settlement of the case and raised fund for her treatment and rehabilitation.
- (g) We supported a woman from an extremely poor family who contracted AIDS from her husband who abandoned her when she was pregnant. During delivery, she and the baby was diagnosed as having HIV/AIDS. The doctor wrote on the prescription slip that she is having AIDS and the neighbours who volunteered to help her buy medicines and the whole village community not only came to know about the disease but also ostracized her and her widowed old mother. She was provided support to file a case against the doctor, and is assisted to find a shelter for her and the baby. The baby died subsequently.
- (h) We participated in a demonstration on April 12 to Rajbhavan demanding cancellation of the ordinance of disbanding Kerala Women's Commission.
- (i) We participated in various campaigns and programmes conducted in relation to communal violence happened in Gujarat.

Apart from these public campaigns we helped a number of women, who were suffering from domestic violence or violence/harassment from the society including child victims. In some cases, legal recourse was the only way and in some others, finding shelter, collecting funds, mobilizing community support were the approach adopted.

7.2 Violence Campaign-2002

We observed the *'International Fortnight Protesting Violence Against Women and Children'* in 2002, with a wide variety of programmes.

Kerala Streevedi (in which Sakhi also a member) organized programmes such as rallies, poster exhibitions, seminars, documentary film shows, discussions, street play, study programmes and discussion forums in various colleges and neighbour hood groups and demonstration by men all over the state. We have designed and produced three posters in association with this programme.

7.3 Anti-Harassment committees at the workplace

All members of Sakhi staff are members of anti-sexual harassment committees of various Depts. of Government. Since the Supreme Court guidelines make it mandatory to have these committees, many departments have taken the initiative to form such committees and in some places cases have come up.

The lack of clear guidelines on the procedures and processes of enquiry is posing problems. So, on December 14th and 15th, 2001, we organized a two-day workshop for members of the anti-sexual harassment committees of the various departments, to explain the guidelines and procedures. Adv. Mihir Desai from Human Rights Law Network, Mumbai was the resource person.

We also collaborate with the Institute of Management in Government to conduct training on the Supreme Court guidelines. We have brought out a poster and other materials on the guidelines.

7.4 Streeneethi- violence intervention programme

Sakhi collaborated with HRNL (Human Right Law Network) from June 2002, to start Streeneethi as a legal cell to help women who face violence.

Adv. Geenakumari offered her time on Wednesdays to attend cases, along with J.Sandhya who completed her legal studies. Several women with problems have been helped through this programme.

8. Resource Directory on support services for women victims of violence.

In the beginning of 2001, UNIFEM organised a consultation on violence against women and mandated 6 organisations to work on a resource directory on support services for women who are victims of violence. Sakhi was entrusted with the task of creating this directory in Kerala. 10 researchers and 10 assistants collected data from the 14 districts of Kerala.

Our assumption that in spite of the soaring rate of violence against women, we have very few agencies, which provide a meaningful assistance to them, was proved to be true in the evaluation meetings. The data come under different headings- counseling legal aid, shelter, working women's hostel, skill training, women's organisations, hospital, police cell and individuals supporting women facing violence- in each district. In the time frame of 6 months, we had to collect data, compile and print the directory.

We had organised a formal function to release the directory. It was on 11th of April and Justice Sreedevi, the then chairperson of Kerala Women's Commission released the book. A seminar on violence against women and a discussion on key strategies used on the issue by some important organisations were also held in the same day.

C.S.Chandrika coordinated this project.

9. Research on Health Sector Reform

A major initiative in 2002 was the study on decentralisation and reproductive health, which was part of a health sector reform study initiated by CHANGE,USA. In Kerala the study was conducted under the auspices of Achutha Menon Centre for Health Sciences of Sri Chitra Medical Institute and Sakhi. We selected 3 panchayats each from the two districts of Thiruvananthapuram and Palakkad.

Sakhi primarily did the field level work for data collection. Aleyamma Vijayan coordinated the programme along with C.S.Chandrika. Several instruments like FGD, interviews, observations etc. were used in the field work. Data compilation is completed and the report is being prepared. The state and national level dissemination will take place in March 2003.

10. Research assistance/ internship

In 2001, we gave research assistance to number of individuals who are involved in gender studies.

Two studies were undertaken with the support from Kerala State Women's Commission

- P.E.Usha conducted a study on "Sexual Abuse of Girl Children" on behalf of Sakhi.
- C.S. Chandrika undertook a study on "Non-Party Political Process and Women's Participation"

With the support of the Kerala Research Programme for Local Level Development, (KRPLLD) of the Center for Development studies, the following studies were undertaken:

- Ms.P.E.Usha conducted a study on the "Determinants and Consequences of women's work in the unorganized sector: study of sales girls in the textile sector in Thiruvananthapuram."
 - A study on " Social Construction of Self Image Among Adolescent Girls in Kerala" was undertaken by C.S.Chandrika
- ❖ Assistance and support was provided to Ms. Monica Erwer from Gotenberg University, Sweden, in her study on " Women and Political Participation".

- ❖ Sara Andersson and Susan Bohman did an in depth study with the help of Sakhi on “Women’s Political participation in Kerala, South India: A case study based on obstacles met when entering the Political Sphere”

Sakhi staff also provides assistance to journalists from visual and print media, in production of women’s programmes and articles on development and gender issues.

Lena Varghese, a law student, was an intern of Sakhi during the year 2001.

In 2002, Sakhi library was the theme of a research paper. An MLiSc student of Kerala University, Rekha.R.Nair did her dissertation on Sakhi library under the title “An investigative study of the resources, organisation and services of Sakhi Women’s Resource Centre Library, Thiruvananthapuram”.

In the first half of the year, from February to June, we had two interns in Sakhi, Martina Svensson and Elsa Sara Blind. They were students of international social work, Mid-Sweden University. In January Trine Hovset, Freeda Christy, Solgunn. Activists and researchers from other countries, states and districts also visit Sakhi to use our library and also draw on our experiences in the work.

11. Publications

In 2001, we translated and published the Supreme Court guidelines of sexual harassment and brought out a poster on the same. We have done basic work to bring out the following publications:

- ☐ Resource Directory on Support Services to Counter Violence Against Women
- ☐ Me, My body – a booklet for adolescents
- ☐ Training manuals on
Gender, Adolescents and Elected Women Representatives.
- ☐ Report on Gender, citizenship and Governance
- ☐ Posters for Elected Women

In the year 2002 we had published:

- ☐ Resource Directory on Support Services to Counter Violence Against Women
- ☐ Me and My body- a booklet for adolescent girls
- ☐ Booklet on Child Sexual Abuse
- ☐ Three brochures on Workplace Harassment, Child Sexual Abuse and Domestic Violence.

We are working on a series of handbooks for the use of Elected women members of the panchayats. One handbook on Violence against women will be published in the beginning of 2003.

12. Papers prepared

In 2001, Aleyamma Vijayan presented the following papers/articles.

- ☐ *Gender and Census*- Directorate of Census and Journalist's Association
- ☐ *Challenge of women's movements in Kerala*- article for *Assisi* magazine
- ☐ *Developments of Kerala , a gender perspective*-article for *Jeevadhara* magazine
- ☐ *Women and globalization- impact in Kerala*- Indian Association of Women's Studies,(IAWS)Southern Region, Madurai.
- ☐ *Violence and women in Kerala*- Consultation by UNIFEM, Delhi
- ☐ 'Decentralised planning for Women's Health-The Experience of Kerala' for the book 'Towards Comprehensive Women's Health Programmes and Policy' published by SAHAJ, Gujarat for Women & Health (WAH!)
- ☐ Kerala's Development with a Gender Perspective_ Session for Rock Feller Fellows held at IMG, Trivandrum.

J. Daya presented a paper in the meeting on '**Globalization**' at AICUF Centre, Trivandrum.

IN 2002,

- Aleyamma Vijayan wrote a paper on 'Sexuality' for the book "Vivechanathinte Bhinnamukhangal" published by KSSP
- Aleyamma Vijayan presented the paper, "*Women and Governance*" in the Kerala Sangamam, on December 26th.
- Daya.J presented a paper on *Communalism* in Streevedi district committee meeting in Ernakulam on May 25th
- Mercy Alexander presented the paper, "*Fisher women and Food security*" in the ICRW Programme, which was held in Rome from June 8th to 13th

13. Workshops/Seminars/ Programmes Attended by the staff in 2001

Programme	Venue	Date
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Mac Arthur Fellows Workshop	Munnar	Jan. 4 th –7 th
RUWSEC meeting	Chengalpett, Tamil Nadu	Jan.16 th -18 th
Validation Seminar on Women’s Component Plan	SIRD, Kottarakkara	Jan.23 rd
Two-day programme on ‘Gramasabha’ conducted by State Resource Centre.	Thrissur	Feb.9 th -10 th
GCG- Capacity building programme	Sri Lanka	Feb.24 th – March 2 nd
Mac Arthur Foundation grantees meeting for developing monitoring indicators	Ahamedabad	March 11 th – 14 th
Seminar on Globalisation and Resistance	AKG Centre, Trivandrum	March 16 th –18 th
IAWS regional meeting	Madurai	March 23 th –25 th
CIDA Southern region workshop	Hyderabad	March 26 th - 27 th
Consultation on violence against women, UNIFEM	Delhi	April 18 th – 20 st
Financing Development-SSF Seminar	Bangalore	May 18 th -20 th
SSF inter regional meeting	Madurai	August 6 th &7 th
Meeting of Kerala Child Rights Protection Network conducted by Infact, Pala	AICUF Centre, Thiruvananthapuram	Aug. 10 th
Gender Budgeting , UNIFEM	Thycaud	Sep. 26 th –27 th
‘Women and globalisation’– Public hearing organised by SEWA & Kerala Streevedi	Thrissur	Sept 26 th –27 th
Candle making training	Madurai	Oct. 17 th
Participated in the Inter agency meeting	Bangladesh	Dec.4 th to 11 th

In 2002

<u>Programme</u>	<u>Venue</u>	<u>Date</u>
Mapping Human Rights	Poovar, Thiruvananthapuram	Jan 1 th
Exchange programme for the partners of GCG project	COVA, Hyderabad	Jan.26 th –30 th
Colloquium on women and theatre	Madras	Feb.8 th -12 th
Web designing course	British Library, Thiruvananthapuram	Feb 10 th – 11 th ,
Meeting of HIV+ve women	Chennai	March 9 th to 11 th
Aging and Gender	Centre for Gerontological Studies, Thiruvananthapuram	March 23 rd
SSF partner's meeting	Hyderabad	April 3rd, 4 th & 5 th
Seminar on Decentralisation, Social security and Sustainable development	Pathiripally, Alappuzha	May 12 th
Prep Come for World Conference on Sustainable Development	Bali, Indonesia	June 1 st to 9 th
FAO–Conference on Food security	Rome	June 8 th to 13 th
Meeting about launching of the Streenet course	Mumbai	July 1 st to 3 rd
ODS & S.Asia exchange programme-Planning	Delhi	July 4 th to 7 th
IWHM preparation meeting	Delhi	July 21 st & 22 nd
RUWSEC meeting	Madras	July 29 th
NAWO South Indian Regional Conference	Bangalore	July 29 th to 31 st
International Women's Health Meeting(IWHM)	Canada	August 9 th to 28 th
S.Asia Exchange programme	Dhaka	August 17 th -22 nd 2002
IWHM follow up	Delhi	Sept 18 th & 19 th
Training on Reproductive Health and Rights	Bangalore	September 23 rd to 26 th
Gender training of trainers	IWID, Chennai	Sept 28 th , 29 th & 30 th ,
Mac Arthur meeting	Goa	December 6 th to 12 th

Kerala Social Forum,	Cotton Hill School, Thiruvananthapuram	December 26 th to 29 th
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Conclusion

When we look back, we feel happy and proud to be able to undertake and organize varied activities to assist women's mobilization in Kerala. We are happy also about our process of working together as a team. In this endeavour, we have been supported by so many friends and volunteers. As part of the Streevedi network, we have been able to take up issues of women in Kerala. Our efforts have helped to mainstream gender in the political discourse in the state. Sakhi has offered a space for feminists in the state, to rally together and find strength in collectivity.

We have also networked with national and International organizations and able to bring events and theoretical debates to grassroots groups in the state.

Times are difficult. The forces of globalization are looming large; increasing poverty and militarization, increasing violence and intolerance etc are making life all the more difficult today. Only people's resistance and struggle can bring some sanity and save the earth for future generations. Let us be united and not be defeated by these forces. Let us strive together for a better future.

We express our deep gratitude to the John D & Catherine T Mac Arthur Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the gender division of the Royal Tropical Institute, Amsterdam, the Singamma Srinivas Foundation, Bangalore and also to many of our friends and benefactors who supported us with individual donations and contributions. Our association has always been one of mutual understanding and amity with our funding partners.

We are also thankful to our auditor Mr. Thomas Mathew and our bankers, the Central Bank of India, Rishimangalam Branch.

We are grateful to each of you who have associated with us and supported us in many ways. We look forward to another year of meaningful work and we seek your support and solidarity.

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SAKHI Team 2001 - 2002

Aleyamma Vijayan - Coordinator

Mercy Alexander - Secretary

J. Daya - Programme Associate (Networking Elected Women's Representative)

S. Jayasree - Programme Associate (Life skill training programmes for adolescent)

Sandhaya.J - Programme Associate (Gender, Citizen & Governance)

**Aarathi Khelkar Khambete - Programme Coordinator (Short Course on
Gender, Health and Development)**

Suja.P.H - Librarian (Till Nov, 2002)

L. Rema Devi - Librarian (From Nov, 2002)

G.Rejitha – Documentation & Publication

Mini Rajkumar - Office Manager

Joseph Xavier - Financial Officer