

WESTERN REGION SOCIAL SERVICE FORUM

WRSSF

ANNUAL REPORT

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Annual Report of WRSSF 2003 – 2004

Your Eminence, Your Grace, Bishops and Priests,

On the occasion of the third Annual General Body Meeting of the Western Region Social Service Forum, I extend my warm greetings to each one of you – Chairman of the Forum, Archbishop Abraham Viruthakulangara, Vice – Chairman, Archbishop Filipe Neri Ferrao and all the members present.

The last Annual meeting was held on 14th July 2003 at Atma Darshan, Mumbai. The following members were not present at the meeting:

Bishop Thomas Dabre
Bishop Gregory Karotemprel
Bishop Percival Fernandez
Bishop Godfrey Rozario
Fr. Patrick Lemos
Fr. C.C. Jose

CONGRATULATIONS TO:

Archbishop Filipe Neri Ferrao

We congratulate Archbishop Filipe Neri Ferrao as the new Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Goa and Daman, who is also the Vice Chairman of WRSSF.

The Western Region Social Service Forum was established with the goal of facilitating integrated human development in social, educational and environmental aspects.

The forum functions essentially to promote all activities aimed at the development of the marginalized sections of society. The Western Region comprises three states namely Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa, the Union territories of Daman and Diu and four districts of Madhya Pradesh.

OBJECTIVES:

- To promote noble values and facilitate integrated human development.
- Train personnel for promoting development and education.
- Promote activities connected with ecological and environmental concerns.
- Organize a documentation centre.

- Promote people's participation leading to their organization for developmental work.
- To represent the region to the various authorities for justice and peace.

Following are the activities held in the year 2003 – 2004:

Meetings:

1. **DDSWs and Gender Coordinators** – The first Western Region meeting was held for DDSWs and Gender Coordinators on the 4th July 2003 at Atmadarshan, Andheri (E), Mumbai and was chaired by the Archbishop Filipe Neri Ferrao. At this meeting it was decided to implement the suggestions given by the resource person, Fr. S.M. Michael at the Workshop on Communal Harmony and Peace Building, that every diocese in the region would form a cell for Communal Harmony and Peace Building. Further training would be given to these cells at the zonal level in the vernaculars.
2. **DDSWs and Gender Coordinators** – The second meeting for DDSWs and Gender coordinators was held on Feb 12th 04 at the Pastoral Centre - Old Goa. This was chaired by the Vice Chairman of the forum – Archbishop Filipe Neri Ferrao. At this meeting it was decided that the cells trained to work for Communal Harmony and Peace Building would also network with the other NGOs and like minded groups.

The WRSSF has conducted the following programmes in the year 2003 - 04

**WORKSHOP ON COMMUNAL HARMONY & PEACE BUILDING
AT THE WESTERN REGIONAL LEVEL**

An intensive one-and-half-day workshop was organized for the DDSW'S and Gender Co-ordinators in July 2003 at Atma Darshan, conducted by Dr. Fr S. M. Micheal. The focus of this workshop was Communal Harmony and Peace Building. At this seminar it was decided that in every diocese of the region, there should be a cell for promoting peace and harmony among the people of all faiths.

**COMMUNAL HARMONY AND PEACE BUILDING
WORKSHOP HELD IN GOA**

To implement the above-mentioned programme at the diocesan level, a team of four persons from each of the 14 Dioceses was further trained by us at the Diocesan Pastoral Centre, Old Goa from 9th to 13th Feb. 2004. The resource

persons for the programme were Ms. Swatija Manorama, Ms. Anju Jani and Dr. Ram Punyani. These teams would facilitate and conduct further training programmes in the regional languages at the zonal level and diocesan levels.

The plan of action emerging from the workshop was as follows:

1. Formation of local inter-community groups.
2. Awareness programmes for *mahila mandals*, Self Help Groups (SHGs) and youth groups.
3. Celebration of inter-religious festivals and national days.
4. Organising workshops and street-plays to create awareness.
5. Designing and distribution of leaflets to the general public on the importance of responsibly exercising the right to vote.
6. Inculcation of a nationalistic feeling at meetings with groups of the youth, children and women.
7. Networking with secular NGOs at the local level.
8. Building of a rapport with secular citizens of all cultures and religions and creating a common platform to address some common social and communal issues.
9. Encouraging Small Christian Community (S.C.C.) groups towards the building of a healthy community.

In order to continue the work of Communal Harmony in the region, the zonal programmes have been organized in the Marathwada, Vidharba, Konkan and Gujarat zones in the local languages. At this zonal level, we have trained 10 persons from each diocese to carry on the work of peace building in the region.

GENDER PROGRAMS

We have successfully launched in all the areas of the Western Region, Self Help Groups and income generation activities through our credit unions and *mahila mandals*. Under the direction and motivation of the Gender Coordinators we have succeeded in taking this programme ahead.

The focus of gender training programs for the year 2003- 2004 has been **legal awareness**. It began with a four-day-long workshop at the end of September 03 in Mumbai with the theme, '**Women and Law**', which was attended by the Gender Coordinators of the Western Region.

A follow-up of the training program was then held at the diocesan level. The program that was chalked out catered to the local needs, in the local language. While the diocese took care of the travel allowance of the participants, the WRSSF

sponsored the participants' board and lodge. Our Regional Gender coordinator Sr. Philomena D'Souza gave the diocesan Gender coordinators support and encouragement by attending the gender training programs held in their respective diocese. The gender programmes were held in the following diocese:

Nashik, Vasai (Talasari), Amravati, Chanda, Nagpur, Ahmedabad, Gandhinagar, Rajkot, Goa, Aurangabad, Pune and Mumbai

The break up of the program held in each diocese was as follows:

1 day on animation and Self-help groups

1 day for Women and Law

½ day for Water Harvesting

The Gender Coordinators took responsibility for organizing and conducting the programs. There was sharing of resource personnel and material between the different dioceses for the programs. The inputs of the program have been percolated down to the grassroots.

OTHER PROGRAMMES HELD IN THE REGION

AURANGABAD DIOCESE

A two-day programme for all the activists involved in the SHGs and Gender Development was organized in response to the special request that was made by 'Manos Unidas' Spain. All the project holders of Manos Unidas based in the diocese of Aurangabad together with the other activists were invited by WRSSF on 21st and 23rd Feb 2004 for the training programme so that these project holders may attain sufficient knowledge and skills to implement the project in the right way. As a follow-up of the same, the diocese of Aurangabad has been divided further into seven zones, so that more activists may benefit from the programme conducted by us. This will be implemented in the year 2004 – 2005.

AHMEDABAD DIOCESE

A day-long programme, for the women in the diocese of Ahmedabad was held on the 14th of March 2004 on the theme '**Women for Peace and Harmony**' and was supported by the WRSSF with the intention that women can be the main messengers of peace and harmony in their locality.

GANDHINAGAR ARCHDIOCESE

We conducted a three-day programme in the newly created Archdiocese of Gandhinagar to work out the Archdiocesan Perspective plan in the last week of October 2003. The programme was attended by all the key social work activists

including the Archbishop, His Grace Stanislaus Fernandes. A very well worked out perspective plan is now giving a new thrust to the Archdiocese of Gandhinagar.

WATER MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME - VASAI DIOCESE

As the year 2003 was declared as the 'year of water' by the UN, the WRSSF organized a three days programme in the Vasai Diocese from 27th to 30th Sept. 2003 for all the Dioceses of the region. Bishop Thomas Dabre inaugurated the workshop and the resource persons were both from Caritas India and local activists. This was accompanied by field visits to study some of the projects in the Vasai Diocese. As a follow up of that workshop several dioceses have embarked water-harvesting programmes.

FUNDING PARTNERS MEETING

For the first time the WRSSF took the initiative of calling for one-day meeting cum reflection of all the funding partners based in the Western Region. This meeting was held on 13th Dec. 2003. It was inaugurated by Bishop Agnelo Gracias at the College of Social Work, Nirmala Niketan. The following agencies were invited:

- Caritas India
- Catholic Relief Services (CRS)
- Intermon Oxfam
- Churches Auxiliary for Social Action (CASA)
- Action For Food Production (AFPRO)
- Indo German Social Service Society (IGSSS)
- Nirmala Niketan College of Social Work
- Western Region Social Service Forum (WRSSF)

The meeting was organized with the intention of networking with these agencies so that collectively we could address the social issues in the region. This meeting was highly appreciated. As a follow up, another meeting was held on March 27th 2004 at the CRS office, Mumbai.

ALL INDIA FORA DIRECTORS MEETING

This was called by Caritas India and was held at Delhi on Feb 5th, 2004. All the 12 Regional Fora Directors together with their chairmen attended the meeting. The WRSSF was given a chance to share its work. The WRSSF Chairman, Archbishop Abraham was present at the meeting. Our report was very highly appreciated by all. It highlighted our efforts in the field of Capacity Building Programmes, for the creation of Endowment Fund for the region and for taking first initiative to get the

funding partners together to address the social issues. We thank Archbishop Abraham for attending this meeting and offering us his support.

DOCUMENTATION

As all the funding agencies have been asking for systematic documentation, the WRSSF considers it as one of its important activities. Last year, besides bringing out the Quarterly bulletin "*WRSSF Diary*", our Co-ordinator, Documentation, brought out useful manuals on herbal remedies and nature cure, which was appreciated by many. This year too we have brought out some useful manuals.

They are - *SOW.... SHALL YOU REAP* – for the animators of SHGs. This was released by Archbishop Raul Gonsalves at Pastoral Centre, Goa on 10th Feb 2004 in the presence of 70 participants including Archbishop Filipe Neri Ferrao, DDSWs and Gender coordinators and social activists in the region.

The WRSSF has also published a booklet in Marathi, on the various Central and State Government schemes for the welfare of the weaker sections of society. We thank Fr. James Mascarenhas SJ, working in the Archdiocese of Bombay, for helping us compile the same.

Another manual brought out by WRSSF in Marathi was on Self-help groups called '*Swayam Sahaya Gat*' this book was compiled with the help of Janhit Vikas Trust, Tara, Raigad.

ADIEU

Archbishop Raul Gonsalves- we express our gratitude to Archbishop Raul Gonsalves for his contribution towards building the forum. May God bless him and keep him in good health. We also express our gratitude and appreciation to Fr. Francis Fernandes of Daman Missions for his contribution in building the forum and wish him all the very best in his new ventures.

CORDIAL WELCOME

We welcome Mr. Arvind Dabre on our staff as coordinator for Communal Harmony and Peace Building. All the members and staff cordially welcome him and wish him success during his tenure with us.

CONCLUSION:

WRSSF thanks our energetic, active and dynamic Chairman of the Forum Archbishop Abraham and Vice Chairman Archbishop Filipe Neri Ferrao for their timely guidance and encouragement.

We are also grateful to all the member archbishops and bishops, the Diocesan Directors of social works, and the Gender Coordinators for the support and cooperation.

We acknowledge our office staff for their dedicated commitment in the progress of our forum.

We also thank our donor agencies, particularly Caritas India and CRS for supporting our various projects.

Inspite of the linguistic, cultural and geographical diversities, we, as a team of bishops, DDSWs, gender coordinators are always looking forward to come together to move forward with the hope of fulfilling the vision and the mission of the Forum.

Finally I thank all of you present here for the meeting for sparing your valuable time.

FR. ROCKY BANZ
Hon. Secretary