

ANNUAL REPORT 2004 – 2005

Annual Report - April 2004 – March 2005

STEPS is a society registered under Tamil Nadu Societies Registration Act of 1975 and established in the year 1991. The vision of STEPS is to build up gender-just society. The main objective of STEPS is to develop women's self-confidence and help them to live with Self-respect and dignity. STEPs take up all issues related to women as individual and as social citizens. Our Slogan is 'Self Respect is the first step of Women's liberation'.

STEPS addresses petitions that are directly coming to STEPS and petitions coming to Helpline at All women police station in Pudukottai and Trichy district. The activities of STEPS has been expanded to Trichy district also. Currently STEPS is working in two districts directly and 10 districts of Tamil Nadu indirectly. Petitions from victimized women from other districts of Tamil Nadu are also addressed by STEPS.

Apart from addressing issues of women in general, STEPS working for the empowerment of Muslim women in particular for the past 7 years. The intervention of STEPS for Muslim women has laid milestones in the lifeline of STEPS during the last years.

Objectives of the Organisation

- To Take up issues related to violence against women such as marital dispute, desertion, dowry harassment, sexual abuse, cheating, physical and psychological torture and help the victimised women to find alternatives or solutions.**
- To provide a space for the women in need, and support them in their crisis period through the short stay home.**
- To provide free legal aid and counseling to the people in need.**
- To conduct women's awareness programmes through campaigns, public**

meetings, seminars, workshops, poster exhibitions etc.

- To take up local issues of the people like road facilities, Balwadis, distribution of ration cards, panchayat television, land pattas, drainage, light, transport etc and make the village women organised to get such things done.
- To sensitize the school children and the college students on the need for gender justice.
- To be a part of district, state and national level networks and be a part of lobbying and advocacy for gender justice.
- To empowering the status of Muslim women in social and economic spheres

Major Focus Issues of STEPS

- a. Our special focus is on raising voice consistently against atrocities on women especially Muslim Women.
- b. Issues related to violence against women. (Marital, Dowry, Sexual, Harassment, Destitute women, child rape & Domestic violence).
- c. Free legal aid to victimised, socially neglected and economically poor women.
- d. Provide homage for destitute women.
- e. Women's awareness campaigns on women's status, women development and other women's related issues.
- f. Establish functional co-ordination among the NGOs who are working for Muslim women.
- g. Educating the Muslim girl children who lack the opportunity to continue their education.

Highlights of STEPS Activities

STEPS activities for the year April 2004 to March 2005 can be broadly categorised as follows :

- A. Addressing the issues of Women against violence**
- B. Seminar on Health and Hygiene of Women**
- C. Poster Exhibition on Human Rights Day**
- D. Empowerment of Muslim women**
- E. Advocacy and Lobbying with other agencies**
- F. Activities at the International Level**
- G. New Initiative**

A. Addressing the issues of Women against violence

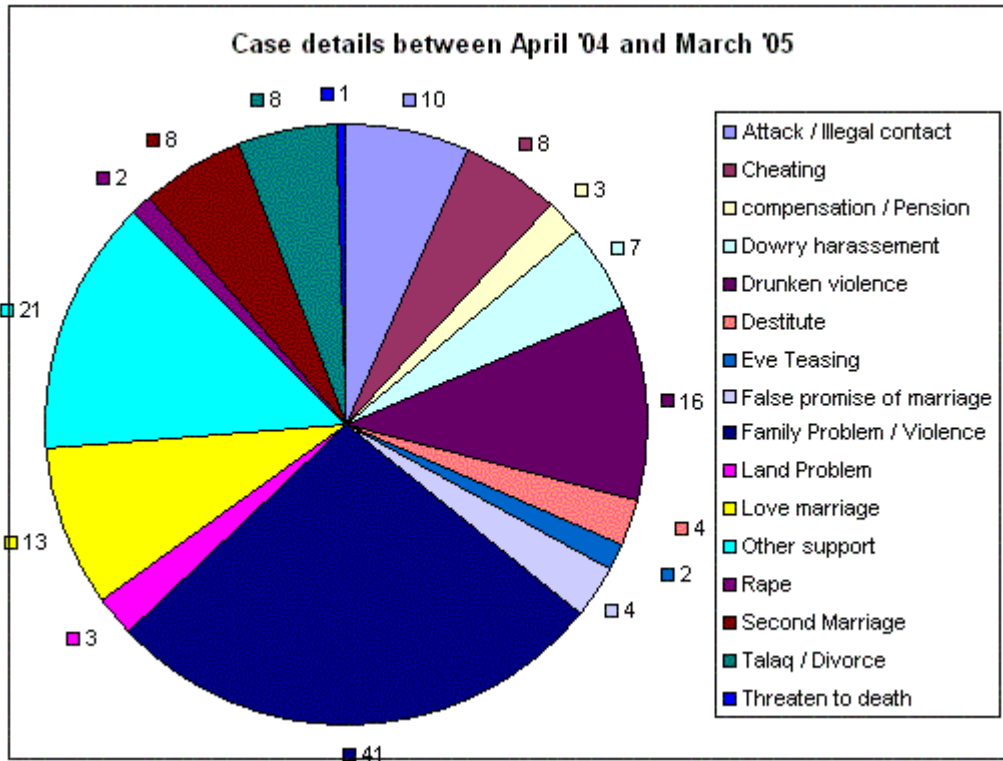
During the year April 2004 to March 2005, STEPS had taken up 151 petitions related to women issues like violence against women, human rights violation and injustice of Jammatt. Most of the cases needed legal advice and law expertise. STPES has an advocate for legal counseling, which helps STEPS to deal with such problems at the same time a file cases in court, according to the facts of the situation.

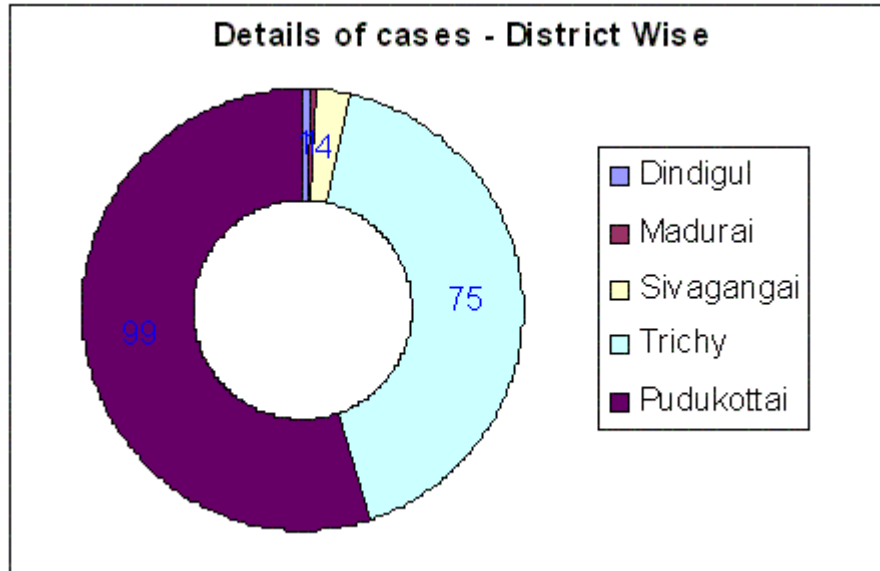
Family Counseling at the following stations were made during the reporting period

S.No.	Name of the Station	Place	District
1	All Women's Police station	Town Area	Pudukottai
2	All Women's Police station	Contonment	Trichy
3	All Women's Police station	Ponmalaipatti	Trichy
4	All Women's Police station	Town Area	Trichy

Details of issues addressed by STEPS in Trichy and Pudukottai district.

S.No	Name of the Branch	Through STEPS	Through Helpline	Court
1.	Pudukottai	52	43	10
2.	Trichy	7	68	0
Total		59	111	10





B. Seminar on Health and Hygiene of Women

The one day training programme was organised in Narimedu village of Pudukottai district among 35 women of the locality on 22.5.2004 . Ms. D. Sharifa, gave the presidential address and invited the gathering. She expressed the need for this training given to women. Women identify themselves as a wife, mother, daughter-in-law etc loosing their identify. They hardly give attention to their health, as the priority given by her is around the family members and not to herself. Hence at the earlier age itself they fell sick and the family members for whom she was striving for all these years ignore her and label her as a sick person. Ms. D. Sharifa requested the Dr. Rani to provide information about meaning of health, need for taking medicine, balanced diet, problems of women during menstruation, pre-natal and post natal care of women, child care etc.

Dr. Rani brought a detailed material which explained in detail about the health of hygiene of women. As the material was in English, STEPS is in the process of translating it and use it for circulation among the women in future.

Women expressed their doubts with the doctor and clarified their doubts. Dr.Rani provided very few information about all the topics and due to time constraint she could not explain each topic very clearly. Moreover some of the topics explained by her are out of the questions expressed by women. Hence we collected materials for the above topics discussed and planned to translate it for the women in general.

Ms. Rittamma, an activist in Madurai also addressed the women about the mentality of the sick person, the personal behaviour, attitude towards others. So concern should shown to the sick person and old age and explain this to other young persons in the family. Women got an awareness that elders in the family who are behaving strangely are not doing out of aversion towards others, it is a psychological sickness of elders.

T. Sarathambal of STEPS gave vote of thanks for the Chief quests and the women gathered for the meeting.

C. Poster Exhibition on Human Rights Day

STEPS has conducted Poster exhibition in Government Arts College for Women, Pudukottai on 10.12.2004 – on International Human Rights Day. Posters regarding the rights of Women, the violence against women, and poems were exhibited.

Observations of the students were also received and three prizes were distributed for the best three observations.

STEPS Team members along with volunteers conducted the poster exhibition. The college lectures were also viewed the exhibition and provided their comments.

SHAPE * MERGEFORMAT SHAPE * MERGEFORMAT

D. Empowerment of Muslim Women

STEPS is working for the empowerment of Muslim women for the past 7 years. Since August 2003, it has intensified its activities in Trichy and Pudukottai district directly. Indirectly STEPS is working in 12 districts of Tamil Nadu by organising

Muslim women and providing periodic training to them. Owing to the intervention of STEPS for empowerment of Muslim women, a State Level Muslim Women Federation has been formed and strengthening of the federation is made during this year. The activities for the empowerment of Muslim women are as follows;

1. Leadership Training : Two Leadership Trainings were organised in May 2005 and October 2005, for 50 Muslim Women in each training. The Muslim women from Tiruchirapalli and Pudukottai districts of Tamil Nadu participated in the training.

Leadership Training held in May 2005 :

Objectives of the training programme

- To provoke the thoughts of Muslim Women about the present status of Muslim Women.
- To emphasise the need for an intervention to Muslim Women for their empowerment and a dignified life.
- To provoke their thoughts about the understanding and different aspects of empowerment.
- Educate them about the real meaning of empowerment of women in different angles.

The training programme was conducted by Ms. D. Sharifa, and her team members. The first day's session was mainly focusing on the understanding of the Muslim women about their empowerment. The views were consolidated and their misconceptions regarding empowerment was made clear to them. The second days session was fully focusing on the true meaning of different forms of empowerment which is very much required for the Muslim women. The need for establishment of ones identity and self image, creating space for women to express themselves, mobilisation and collective identity – in organising muslim women into sangams and social leadership.

Leadership Training held in October '05

Objectives of the training programme

- **Women are living a life of a secondary citizen with no right over their own lives.**
- **Eventhough Quoran specified a high value to women, the present value have been handed down over the centuries, over generations in very subtle ways.**
- **To recognize the need for women's empowerment for development**

On the first day of the training programme, Ms. Subathra, the Advisory Committee member and Executive Committee member of STEPS, discussed about the need for empowerment of Muslim Women. She explained in detail about the need for building the self esteem of Muslim Women and the economic security. On the second day of the training programme, three situations were presented in front of participants and the participants were asked to analyse the situation and find the true meaning of economic independence or economic empowerment of Muslim Women. The Muslim Women were asked to express their feelings over their understanding of the stated situation and the explanation. Ms. D. Sharifa, explained about the process in which the empowerment can be made possible.

2. A Survey of Muslim Women:

The consolidation of the Survey conducted in Tiruchirapalli and Pudukottai district was made in April and May 2004.

For the reporting period the Survey was conducted in Sivagangai and Dindigul districts of Tamil Nadu. It was yet to be consolidated. The survey focused on the following areas;

- **Education of Muslim women – Academic education and Urudu education.**
- **Details of family members, age, education, employment**
- **Employment – Housewife, self employed or domestic work (servent maid)**

and decision about the usage of the earnings.

- **Right to vote and decision to vote the political party.**
- **Method of Marriage – religious / statutory, details about dowry and mehar amount and role of the bride in taking decision about her marriage**
- **Details about divorce – how it is done, who initiated the process.**
- **Health of the muslim women – age during each delivery, hygiene behaviour of muslim women, nature of health problem of muslim women and nature of treatment taken by them.**
- **General status of muslim women about rights of women envisaged in Islam.**

3. Through literacy programme STEPS has organised six evening tuition centre for the Muslim girl children in Pudukottai and Tiruchirapalli districts. Essay competitions were conducted among students of Muslim colleges and schools. Training was given to members self help groups to put their signature first as a first step to make them literate. Nearly 30% of the Muslim women learned to sign their names. This is an ongoing process which continues to educate the Muslim women.

4. State Level Public Hearing, Workshop and Conference

All the three programmes were supposed to be conducted in February and March 2005. As the Director need to go to abroad and she was in the process of preparing herself towards the programme, it was postponed to April and May 2005. The intimation about the postponement of the programme was given to Hivos.

5. Formation of Self Help Group

STEPS is in the process of forming self help groups for Muslim Women in 10 districts of Tamil Nadu. 125 Self Help Groups has been formed in the above 10 districts. In some areas the old groups were dissolved because of the pressure from the religious forces after the Poster exhibition cum campaign programme held in Madurai. Hence

the total number groups did not increase as the rate of dissolution and formation equals each other.

6. **Poster Exhibition cum Advocacy and Lobbying was made with educational institutions and police personal.**

The problems of Muslim women are not realised by the society, state authorities and the religious institutions. Hence Poster Exhibition cum campaign programme was organised on 11.08.04 at Madurai as One Day Fasting of Muslim. It was first incident of this kind where 300 Muslim Women sat on the road side to raise their voice in front of the general public, State and religious authorities. A Brochure was distributed to the public about the need for the campaign programme. It has attracted a attention of the mass media and news about the historic event was released by almost all Tamil and English dailies in Madurai. This was one of the ways in which STEPS along with the Muslim Women lobby with the state and religious institution.

Ms. D. Sharifa has attended National dialogue on socio economic issues of Muslim women held at New Delhi and expressed her views over the rights of Muslim women. The views expressed by Ms. D. Sharifa was worth mentioning and was published in the periodicals.

7. **Communal Harmony :** STEPS is conducting Muslim women meeting in different districts of Tamil Nadu. Some of the male jamaat members in the local areas who are interested in the efforts of STEPS for the empowerment of Muslim women extend their support by referring critical Muslim women cases to STEPS.

8. **Documentation :** Documentation of all the activities are made as a regular activity. Writing about the rights of Muslim women are being translated from English to Tamil and read in the Muslim women meetings and Muslim Women's Forum meeting. Documentation was also made over the media clipping of STEPS's efforts for the empowerment of Muslim

Women.

Ms. C.S. Lakshmi (Ambai) has visited STEPS during the reporting period and documented the activities of STEPS / Sharifa. She has done as project of University of Michigan from Mexicon entitled Global Feminisms: Comparative Case Studies of Women's Activism and Scholarship by the Government. Out of the 10 Activists selected in India, the Ms. D.Sharifa is one among them.

E. Advocacy and Lobbying

With Government Department

- From 2001 onwards STEPS is one of the committee members of Government Hospital evaluation council. Being a committee member STEPS is able to discuss and clarify issues.**
- Staff of STEPS regularly visits the hospitals to ensure human rights of the patients. We are also able to question the harassment of women patients.**
- STEPS is one of the senate members of the District Rural Development Agency in Pudukkottai District. This has made it possible to monitor plans for rural areas and to fight for basic amenities.**
- The Chief Functionary of STEPS has been appointed as a resource person for Women Development Corporation to train NGOs on Gender Issues.**
- Signature campaign was conducted in Trichy district for cleaning the sewage in Big Bazaar and in Madurai Road near Natharsa Pallivasal of Trichy. Letter from STEPS along with the signatures were sent to Trichy Municipality. The Municipality has acted very positively and started cleaning and maintenance work.**
- Signature campaign was also made for the supply of drinking water during the day time. In Trichy town areas water was supplied in an irregular time that too in the mid night. Hence the women could not sleep in the night time. It created lot of health problem to them. A letter along with the signatures from the community was sent to Trichy Corporation to supply the**

water in day time properly. Now the time become regular and it is supplied in day time.

With Academic Institutions

The Chief Functionary of STEPS has been elected as one of the members of Vigilance Committee to take up the cases of Sexual harassment at work place in Wakf Board College, Madurai. STEPS has a good relationship with student community in Pudukkottai right from the beginning. Student volunteers also support STEPS in its campaign work. As a result of such rapport, STEPS has guided students to take up research with gender perspective. In the reporting period one M.Phil. student from Pudukkottai studied. Two Post graduate students of Holy Cross college, Trichy, in Human Rights study are doing their reference work with STEPS.

A permanent cell to contest against violence of sexual harassment against women was made in Government B.Ed. College of Pudukkottai. Ms. D. Sharifa has been nominated as one of the member of this cell.

The Director of STEPS Ms. D. Sharifa, has been invited as a resource person for the following colleges / educational institutions to provide guest lecture about empowerment of women.

- Ms. D. Sharifa provided guest lecture on Gender in Asian College of Journalism at Chennai.
- Ms. D. Sharifa was requested to present an essay on 'Islam and status of Muslim women at Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Thirunelveli.

With Media

Media – both press and satellite channels cover the activities of STEPS. STEPS is maintaining a very good rapport with reporters at the state level and national level. The issues of Muslim Women, construction of Mosque for Jamaat were highlighted in leading Tamil Magazines in a most positive way which has paved way for

international coverage of the issues. Activities of STEPS were highlighted in the following magazines and Newspaper ;

- **News Internationalist Magazine**
- **Outlook**
- **The Week**
- **Savvy**
- **Communalism Combat**
- **The Telegraph**
- **The Hindu**
- **Dhina malar – Varamalar**

Around 20,000 Websites around the world were found to be describing the activities and initiatives of STEPS.

With Other Non-Government Organisations :

STEPS has conducted a Signature Campaign among the women in Trichy town area to regarding ‘VISHAKHA GUIDELINES’ and ‘THE PROTECTION FROM DOMESTIC VIOLENCE BILL-2002’. STEPS has supported this campaign activity for Women’s Integrated National Development Trust (WIND) organisation, which was in the process of enforcing the government to pass the above bills with immediate effect. STEPS has collected nearly 500 signatures through this campaign programme.

F. Activities – International Level

Three students namely Ms. Kristina Eriksson, Ms. Anna Nilson, and Henrik Andersson from ‘Nordens Folkhogskola Biskops-Arno, a Swedish Folk High School, visited STEPS for an exposure into the activities STEPS. STEPS accommodated them for one month.

The schedule of their programme during their visit is as follows;

Date	Programme	Place
23.01.05	Reached STEPS, sent to Hotel for Stay	Pudukottai
24.01.05	Introduction of STEPS with Ms. D. Sharifa and shifting to New House	Pudukottai
25.01.05	Observation of records and reports of STEPS activities	Pudukottai
26.01.05	Clarification of the doubts with the Administrator	Pudukottai
27.01.05	Observation of Reports	Pudukottai
28.01.05	Discussion with Ms. D.Sharifa about the observations and planning of the rest of the days	Pudukottai
29.01.05	Visit to Children's Home	Annavasal
30.01.05	Sunday Holiday	
31.01.05	Observation of Records	Pudukottai
01.02.05	Visit to 'TSUNAMI' affected areas	Velankanni
02.02.05	Visit to 'TSUNAMI' affected areas	Nagapattinam
03.02.05	Interview with Saradha, STEPS Staff	Pudukottai
04.02.05	Interaction with victims women and Crea School	Tiruchi
05.02.05	Visit to All women's Police Stations	Tiruchy
06.02.05	Sunday Holiday	
07.02.05	Visit to Self Help Groups – Mixed groups and Muslim women's Groups	Vallathirakottai, Pudukottai
08.02.05	Visit to All women's Police Station	Pudukottai
09.02.05	Meeting with quarry workers and Visit to Self Help Groups	Annavasal, Aharapatti and Keelapatti, Pudukottai

10.02.05	Meeting with Community women	Sirunangupatti, Pudukottai
11.02.05	Discussion with Victims – Sajitha and Fakinsa’s mother	Pudukottai
12.02.05	Observation of Jamaat Committee meeting	Annavasal
13.02.05	Sunday Holiday	
14.02.05	Discussion with Madam and Dinner to STEPS TEAM.	Pudukottai
15.02.05	Interview with Mr. Nazeer, STEPS Board Member	Pudukottai
16.02.05	Interview with Padmavathi, STEPS Staff, and clarified some doubts	Pudukottai
17.02.05	Fulfilled the official formalities of providing formal letter copy of Passport, VISA to STEPS, Settlement of accounts due to STEPS	Pudukottai
18.02.05	Departure from STEPS	

G. New Initiatives

STEPS Children’s Home

STEPS’ Children’s Home was initiated at Annavasal, Pudukottai district during June 2004. STEPS has started this mission on a war footing way, during the last academic year. 14 girls from different age groups – mostly drop out children are accommodated in the children’s home. Their education is being continued through the government school at Annavasal. STEPS is taking care of the education, food and shelter for these girls. Each girl in the home has their own pathetic story for not given education by their parents. Apart from the regular school education, special care is provided to boost up their education by appointing two tuition teachers

exclusively for these girls. Religious education – Quoran – is also taught by an experienced Urudhu Teacher once in a week.

Attended and Organized programs

At the state level STEPS is attending and participating in the programmes as an organizing person, resource person and participant. Some of the high lights of the programs are as follows,

Attended and Organized programs for April 2004 to March 2005

Date	Name of the programme	Participants
19.04.04	RACM of CWS at Trichy	Ms. D. Sharifa, Ms. Saratha, and Ms.Punithavathi
08.05.04	Sexual Rights of Women at Vallathirakottai, Pudukottai.	Ms. Hasina & Ms. Sabha, Awaz-E- Nishwan, Mumbai, and STEPS Team.
19.05.04	District Level Family Counselors Meetings	Ms. Punithavathi
22.05.04	Seminar on Health & Hygiene women at Narimedu, Pudukottai	Dr.Rani, Pattukottai, Ms. Rittamma, Madurai STEPS Team
22.06.04 & 23.06.04	Consultation Meeting of Beijing +10 at New Delhi	Ms. D. Sharifa
29.06.04	Training on Micro Insurance at Trichy	Ms. Punithavathi & Ms.A.Parveen Banu.
28.06.04 to	AP NGO Forum – Beijing +10 Conference at	Ms. D. Sharifa

04.07.04	Bangkok	
05.07.04	CWS Partners Meeting – Finalisation of RACM report & Planning Meeting at Madurai	Ms. M.Padmavathi & Ms.A.Parveen Banu
10.09.04	Attended Family Counselors Meeting at Trichy	Ms.D.Sharifa & Ms.Punithavathi
24.09.04 & 25.09.04	Attended NACM of CWS at Bhuvanewar	Ms. D. Sharifa
10.12.04	Conducted Poster Exhibition at Government Arts College for Women, Pudukottai	STEPS Team
30.12.04	Attended TRRC (Tsunami) Meetings, Femina Hotel, Trichy	Ms.D.Sharifa & Ms.Sarthaj
10.01.05	Attended TRRC Meetings, AICUF, Trichy	Ms.D.Sharifa & Ms.Sarthaj
17.01.05 & 18.01.05	Attended Evaluation of CWS – Meeting with Partners / Network Members, at Pallotti, Madurai	Ms. D.Sharifa & Ms. Jacqueline Mary.
07.02.05	Attended TRRC Meeting, Hotel Supreme, Madurai	Ms. D.Sharifa
25.02.05 & 26.02.05	State Level Consultation to review the structure and function of Family	Ms. T. Sarathambal & Ms. Sarthaj.

	Court at ICSA, Chennai.	
28.02.05	Consultation Meeting on Tamil Nadu Women's Commission, at ICSA, Chennai	Ms. Punithavathy.
13.03.05	Attended a Meeting of Manu Needi Pasarai – at Tiruchy	Ms. Punithavathi & Ms.Sarthaj
03.03.05 to 11.03.05	Participated in the 49th UN Session of Commission on the Status of Women 2005 at New York, USA	Ms. D.Sharifa

Case Study of Vennila, Kattakudi village, Iluppur Taluk, Pudukottai district

Vennila, age 12 is a daughter of Balakrishnan and Nallammal. She has 4 sisters and 3 brothers. She is the second child in her family. As her parents thought that Vennila is not interested in education, she was not given education while her sisters and brothers are going to school. Family responsibility was enforced on her, to earn money for the survival of the family. She was forced to go for domestic works.

Eventhough Balakrishnan has some agricultural land for cultivation and a house of his own; he wanted Vennila also to earn money for the family. Six months back, Vennila was sent to Syed Ibrahim's house at South 3rd Street, Pudukottai. She worked in there for 3 days and he sent Vennila to her daughter Yamin's house at Chennai. Yasmin's husband 'Joice' used to have sex with young girls. Hence he started harassing Vennila while his wife is away for shopping. As he life threatened Vennila by showing knife and all, Vennila scared to express his tortures to his wife. Because of his sexual harassment, Vennila's menstruation started. We are afraid whether bleeding started due to intercourse or it is due to menstruation. Even after this, Joice continued to have sex with Vennila.

Being a village, Vennila could not understand the different modes of communication, and express her pathetic situation to others.

Moreover, Balakrishnan was not informed about Vennila being sent to Chennai. Till date Balakrishnan is not aware of the place where Vennila was sent.

As Yasmin's sister's marriage was scheduled on 26th of September 2004, she came to Pudukottai during the first week of September. Vennila came along with Yasmin and did domestic works at Syed Ibrahim's house for 10 days. Only in the middle of September (14th of September), Balakrishnan was informed about Vennila's arrival to Pudukottai. He came to Pudukottai and brought her daughter to Kattakudi village. Vennila explained about the sexual harassment of Joice.

Balakrishnan's family was alarmed by this message and he took her to hospital for treatment. Vennila's health position was very worse and she was admitted in hospital for 4 days by her parents without informing the Doctor about the tragedy in Vennila's life. Treatment for anaemic patient was given to her.

Then Balakrishnan took Vennila to STEPS for taking action against Joice. STEPS directed the case to All Women Police Station at Keeranur on 25th of September'04. Formal Medical test was taken by the police personnel and it was proved that Vennila was sexually harassed but not menstruated. Vennila's father take advantage of Vennila's present situation and ready to get compensation in the form of money. The process of coming for a compromise took place in DSP office at Keeranur. Joice was not called for enquiry. The police did not take any efforts to take him to the police station. They convince us by saying that 'Joice's family is well educated and wealthy family and they will come to police station by themselves. But in the name of enquiry transferring money for a crime was made. Efforts were made to equalise the sufferings and pains of Vennila, by money. Vennila is very firm in getting punishment for Joice. The DSP and police department are only in favour of 'Joice' family and forcing us to get the money otherwise the case will be forwarded to Chennai police, because 'Joice' is a resident of Chennai and the harassment took

place in Chennai.

STEPS has forwarded the case to Ms. Vasanthidevi, the Chairperson of State Women's Commission for speedy action. Even after her interference in the case through Superintendent of Police of Pudukottai. The All Women's Police Station at Keeranur has not taken any action in filling FIR against the person. Vennila was staying in STEPS office since 26th of September.

In the meanwhile, Vennila started vomiting and she expressed the symptoms of pregnancy. STEPS Team could not do anything in this stage. We took her to Government Hospital. But they refuse to take up the case as Vennila is a minor. They need court order to test her. Hence no medical treatment is taken for Vennila's pain. As we suspected her for pregnancy, we have done the urine test. It was confirmed that Vennila is pregnant. In this crucial stage STEPS could not proceed further as the police department kept mum even after one week of receipt of the petition.

The STEPS team has given full attention to Vennila and keep her engaged in some petty activities so that she will not feel the pitch of the pains.

On 4th of October, we gave a petition to Superintendent of Police, Pudukottai, narrating the efforts of steps taken by STEPS and the inactive attitude of the police personnel. Mr. Arumugam, I.P.S. ordered the respective police officials to file FIR against Joice and arrest him. Because of his pressure, the reluctant police officials have no other go except to file the FIR on 4th itself. Even after filing FIR, the police officials did not take any effort to arrest the accused and give treatment to Vennila. Vennila was suffering from severe stomach pain and she needed immediate medical attention. Hence on 5th of evening we called the Superintendent of police for immediate medical check-up and medical treatment to Vennila. SP was alarmed why this follow-up work of a FIR is not taken and fired the respective police inspectors to do it immediately. As the formal police procedure was not started even after his order, we took Vennila to district collector to insist for emergency treatment to

Vennila in a hospital. Because, when Vennila is in STEPS custody, we need to protect her and safeguard her life. As the Collector was out of station, we approached the District Revenue Office, who is the sub-collector, for giving emergency order to give treatment to Vennila. But she did not come out and talked with us and she asked us to come on the next day to the office.

Hence on 5th also we could not give treatment for Vennila's stomach pain. We were asked to contact Ilupur Sub Inspector through Vennila's father Balakrishnan. While we called them they said that the treatment for Vennila should be made only after the enquiry of the Viralimalai station's inspector. Hence we called the Viralimalai station twice – in the late night of 5th and early morning of 6th. But we did not receive any responsible answer for our queries. As this delay process and inactive behaviour continued day by day, we could not tolerate the pains of Vennila.

STEPS decided that there is no need for calling any higher officials to speed up the activities of the police department. The inactive behaviour of the Police department at the regional level (at Illupur station, All women police station and DSP office at Keeranur), in favour of the accused, should be exposed to the general public. Hence we resorted to 'ROAD ROKO' Dharna in front of the SP Office. Nearly 50 Women lead by Ms.Sharifa and her colleague along with the representatives of Tamil Nadu Muslim Women's Jamaat and sat on the high way road opposite to SP office on 6th morning 11.45 a.m. The Dharna continued for one hour and police officials and Mr. Arumugam shocked by the Dharna because he has done his duty which is not carried out by fellow police officials. He promised that immediate medical treatment will be given to her. Hence on his order Vennila was sent to Government Hospital. From the GH Vennila was sent to Rani Hospital in Pudukottai. But the doctors in the hospital required an order from the police department to take up the case. The Viralimalai inspector who was in charge of giving order to the hospital. He came with the complaint but said that it should be routed through court and based on the court order only, treatment will be done in the hospital. Vennila along with the staff members of STEPS and police personnel went to Keeranur court for getting the

order. By the time we reached the court, the magistrate was not there. We waited there till the evening session (till 3 o'clock) for the magistrate to come. Vennila got severe pains in the court premises also. He enquired Vennila by 4.30 p.m. The magistrate also sarcastically said 'by showing your body language for pain I can not do anything. I can only pass orders. You show your emotions pain in front of the Doctor. This court is not the place for that.' He also ordered the police to take her for treatment and after treatment, he asked the police to bring Vennila to court so that he will hand over Vennila to her parents. He said that for a girl having parents there is not need for sending her to any women organisation (STEPS).

The police handover the court order to the Rani Hospital by 6.00 clock in the evening on 6th October. The doctors in the hospital said that Vennila is not pregnant. There is no symptoms of pregnancy. Now Vennila is being treated in the hospital for Blood Test and all other tests related to her health condition and pregnancy. She was taken to district magistrate on 12th of October and magistrate handover her to Vennila's father. On the same day itself, Balakrishnan took Vennila to STEPS office and he left Vennila in STEPS. As he belong to a very small village, he is afraid of the society and the future of Vennila. Hence STEPS has received a written letter from him stating that STEPS would be responsible for the future life of Vennila and Balakrishnan and family will whole heartedly support the efforts of STEPS for Vennila's future life.

Moreover, as a result of the 'Road Roko Dharna', three police officials namely Sub-inspector of All Women Police Station, Keeranur, Sub-inspector of Iluppur police station and Inspector of Viralimalai Police station.

Sharmila Banu, Mukkanamalaipatti, Pudukottai

Sharmila Banu is a daughter of Hasina Banu and Babu khan. She is 15 years old. Hasina belongs to Mukkanamalaipatti village of Pudukottai and Babukhan belongs to Thirukattupalli, Tanjavore district. Sharmila has a sister Fathima, 10 years old. Hasina banu lived with her husband in Thirukattupatti for some years after her

marriage. Even after two months of marriage Hasina realised that her husband is a drug addict – alcohol, liquor, injection etc. He consumes any of this drug and be in the kick for 24 hours. He used to sexually harass Hasina. Knowing all these bad habits of Babukhan, Hasina started her married life confidently – hoping that she can change the attitudes of Babu khan in due course. But Babu khan did not change himself and he continued his behaviour and thrash Hasina and her daughters every day. Hence Hasina used to come to Mukkanamalaipatti and stay there. Babu khan will come to Mukkanamalaipatti and search for Hasina and his daughters and scold everyone who speak in favour Hasina.

In this situation, Hasina decided that she can not live with him and hence she hired a house at Mukkanamalaipatti and lived with her daughters. Hasina engage herself in domestic work in Mukkanamalaipatti village. As she had an opportunity to go to Chennai for household work she took Fathima (second daughter) with her and left Sharmila in the custody of her sister in law in Thirukattupalli.

Three months back, Sharmila got matured. Her father Babu Khan tried to have sex with her in Thirukattupalli. Babukhan's father has seen this. Hence he opposed Babukhan not to do that. Babukhan got angry and beated his father which is filled as a case in Thirukattupalli Station. Hence he escaped from Thirukattupalli and come to Mukkanamalaipatti village.

At this juncture Hasina was informed to come to Pudukottai as her daughter got matured. While she returned from Chennai, Sharmila informed her mother that Babu khan used to have sex with her for several years (approx. 10 years) as suspected by her mother. Hasina was shocked by this news and she complained this to the Mukkanamalaipatti Jamaat. But they said that this is a very sensitive family issue which should not be expressed to others, because it will spoil the image / future life of Sharmila. But Hasina could not tolerate this and she approached STEPS to take action against Babukhan.

STEPS registered this case and directed the case to All Women's Police Station at

Keeranur on 28th of September. The police officials in Keeranur station did not even give receipt for the petition and asked us to contact the station after two days i.e. on 1st of October. We called the station on 1st October Morning. But the police official asked us to counsel Babukhan and if the counselling failed then we can bring the case to the police station. We were surprised by this response from a women police station. Counselling can be done for the family problem. Sharmila's case is a criminal case. How can we counsel a criminal. With all these questions in mind we gave a petition to Superintendent of Police, Pudukottai on 4th October and requested him to take immediate action to arrest Babukhan. Based on the pressure from Superintendent of Police, FIR was filled against Babukhan on 5th of October and he was arrested by the Annavasal Police station. As the accused was arrested, Sharmila was also called by the police and she was kept under the custody of Annavasal police from 5th onwards. She has been shifted to All Women Police Station, Keeranur, Annavasal police station and Thirukattupalli without giving any information to STEPS and Hasina. She stayed in women police station on 5th October. Her statement given to police station is slightly different from that of hers in STEPS.

Now, Hasina was not allowed to enter into Mukkanamalaipatti village, as Hasina did not obey Jamaat. Sharmila was admitted in the Government Hospital for one week for medical check up. She was taken to Keeranur Court on 12th of October, and the Magistrate handover Sharmila to her mother. Hasina took Sharmila to STEPS and gave in writing that STEPS can rehabilitate Sharmila and she agrees to the efforts of STEPS for the future of Sharmila. Sharmila was staying in STEPS Short stay home for 5 months and now She is staying with her mother.

CASE STUDY OF A MUSLIM WOMAN AFFECTED BY TSUNAMI – VIOLENCE AT THE FAMILY LEVEL

A Muslim family of Alangudi Taluk, Pudukottai district went to Nagoor for worship. The father, mother, with two sons and two daughters along with their 2 grand daughters went to Nagoor. During their visit in Nagoor, the Tsunami tidal waves came and taken away the entire family leaving the father, elder daughter and elder

son. The daughter Jesima sat on a big wall along with her children. But she could not hold the children against the forces of the waves. Hence the waves taken away her two children in front of her. The wall where she was sitting was also fallen on her legs. Hence Jesima's both legs got affected and she can walk anymore. Her brother Mohamed Ali Jinna and her father are alive in this family. The other two members were also had some minor injuries. Now Jesima is under medical treatment in her parents place.

At this juncture, her husband and husband's family are showing lot of love and affection on her for the purpose of grabbing the relief amount given by the government. They are very much interested in knowing the facts about the money she will get for the loss of two children and not for the loss of lives of the children. Her husband is torturing her to know whether any relatives gave money for her treatment. Knowing the facts about Jesima's husband, the bank manager hides the draft for two lakhs which was given by the government for losing her two children. For this, Jesima's husband has given a petition against the Bank manager for not giving the draft. Hence a joint account was opened in the bank to deposit the two lakhs in the name of husband and wife. He is also pleading every one by saying the status of wife and begs money for her treatment. Now the family has approached STEPS for solution. STEPS team has met her and got the information about her husband. If anything need to be done against him legally, for protecting Jesima's money and life, STEPS will definitely do it. Some men are spoiling the image and money in Alcohol, Jesima's husband is another type of husband who is begging everyone for more money.