

Regional Convention on Role of Civil Society in Addressing Human Rights Issues

Date- 5th and 6th February 2013

Organized by- Lokmukti Sangathan, Samagra Vikas, DAHAR, and CSFHR

Venue- Utkal Jyoti, Jharsunguda.

The objectives of the Regional Convention-

- Instil in the Participants a sense of the Value of Human Rights and the values that come from a respect for human rights
- Establish Cooperation and Unity among each other to promote and protect Human Rights and prevent any Human Rights Violation.
- Defending Human Rights in Non –Professional Context.
- Collecting and Disseminating information on violations
- Supporting the Victims of Human Rights Violations by investigation, Fact-finding, Documentation and lodging complaints with the respective authorities.
- Taking collective action to secure accountability and to end impunity at local, regional and national level.
- To develop the necessary knowledge and skills among the participants to promote and protect Human Rights, that a will be crucial to building momentum in the society.
- Deliver information of the Different Human Rights Commissions and their Role in Protection of Human rights

The Regional convention started with warm welcome and brief self introduction of the participants and guests. Sister Manju, Secretary of Samagravikash, requested Fr Nicholas to preside over the meeting. Mr. Dhirendra Panda Convener of CSFHR shared the purpose of the Convention in brief. He explained the meeting agenda and the general issues of human rights violation such as displacement, violence against women, communal violence, caste discrimination, police atrocities etc. Any violation of –Right to Life, Right to Dignity, Right to Equality, Right to Liberty guaranteed by the Indian Constitution is termed as

Human Right Violation. Speaking about CSFHR he said that CSFHR is an Odisha state level platform of Organizations and Activists committed to the rights inherent to all human beings. He emphasized that each individual is responsible for promoting Human Rights .If human rights defender “HRDs” work collectively and resist the forces strategically issues of “HRVs” can be addressed. In order to learn from each other’s experiences of struggle he requested the participants to share their stories on Human rights- (their problem, how they responded to the problems ,the obstacles they faced during their struggle) The major issues of the region that emerged with sharing experiences were witch -hunting, MGNREGS, Migration and women trafficking. The participants were found to be active in agitating and fighting against such violations locally.

Mr.Dhirendra Panda spoke in brief on the use of democratic procedures and systems in human rights advocacy. He shared the struggle led by Baghamabar Pattnaik for the cause against bonded labor through democratic means. He emphasized on the use of available democratic legal mechanisms while organizing protest, agitation. Soon after that Adv. Chandranath Dani, senior human rights defender facilitated the training.

Highlights of Training:

1. Who is a defender?

“Human rights defender” is a term used to describe people who, individually or with others, act to promote or protect human rights. Human rights defenders are identified above all by what they do and it is through a description of their actions (section A below) and of some of the contexts in which they work (section B below) that the term can best be explained. The examples given of the activities of human rights defenders are not an exhaustive list.

2. What do human rights defenders do?

3. All human rights for all

To be a human rights defender, a person can act to address any human right (or rights) on behalf of individuals or groups. Human rights defenders seek the

promotion and protection of civil and political rights as well as the promotion, protection and realization of economic, social and cultural rights.

Human rights defenders address any human rights concerns, which can be as varied as, for example, summary executions, torture, arbitrary arrest and detention, female genital mutilation, discrimination, employment issues, forced evictions, access to health care, and toxic waste and its impact on the environment. Defenders are active in support of human rights as diverse as the rights to life, to food and water, to the highest attainable standard of health, to adequate housing, to a name and a nationality, to education, to freedom of movement and to non-discrimination. They sometimes address the rights of categories of persons, for example women's rights, children's rights, the rights of indigenous persons, the rights of refugees and internally displaced persons, and the rights of national, linguistic or sexual minorities.

2. Human rights everywhere

3. Local, national, regional and international action

4. Collecting and disseminating information on violations

5. Supporting victims of human rights violations

6. Action to secure accountability and to end impunity

7. Supporting better governance and government policy

8. Contributing to the implementation of human rights treaties

9. Human rights education and training

B. Who can be a human rights defender?

1. Defending human rights through professional activities

2. Defending human rights in a non-professional context

C. Is a minimum standard required of human rights defenders?

Second day

First session of the second day was started by Mr. Chandranath Dani over the meeting. He requested Mr. Bibal Toppo to give the brief recap of first day's meeting. Then Mr. Chandranath Dani took over the session. He narrated about fact finding and Documentation.

The major points of the session were-

- Fact finding-> the goal of fact-finding efforts is to incorporate as much reliable information as possible into the dispute resolution process and publish a report.
- Sources-> generally the human rights violation news comes from two different sources primary and secondary. Primary source is the information which comes from the Community, Co-Villagers, Family member, Neighbor etc. Secondary source is the news that we receive from Media (Print or Electronic).
- Authenticity-> to look out for the authenticity of the news he/she had received either from the primary or secondary source. This is only possible by examining details in to the matter neutrally. Help from the co-villagers, local media person, local or concerned lawyers, family members and witness can be taken.
- Planning to examine the authenticity
- Gathering of reliable evidence will depend on identifying and collecting information from various sources. . Information collected for purpose of clarifying HOW, WHY, WHEN, WHERE & WHO is called evidence.
- Recording the statement of the victim, witnesses and chronologically arranging them in the report.
 - Compiling the entire report in a systematic way mentioning the
 1. Date of incident
 2. Date of Fact-finding
 3. Team members
 4. Prior Event
 5. Present Case

6. Present status of the case

7. Signatures of the Team

- Use of visual maps and tables to make it more clear and potent.
- Attachments of Evidences such as pictures, Doctors report, FIR copy etc
- Fact-finding report can be annexed with the Complaint lodged with NHRC or any other commission as required.
- Fact finding report will be helpful to affect media release; can be circulated through electronic media to persons who feel and work for human rights.
- D.K Basu Guidelines should be known to all the Defenders.

Many participants expressed their view about the worth and effectiveness of the program. Then all the participants were asked to fill up complaint format as a learning exercise.

After the lunch the participants were asked to discuss about the future action Plan (what they will do at local level to address human rights violations). The participants were divided district wise and they came with future action Plan for their locality.

At the End of the meeting Fr Nicholas gave vote of thanks to CSFHR team for their initiative to gather human right activist and give a scope to reflect their advocacy process on Human rights. He appreciated the efforts of CSFHR to train Human right Defenders to make use of different national and state level human rights institutions to attain justice.
