



BULLETIN : 18

from **DURBAR**

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Durbar raising voice against police led atrocities against Soni Sori

Soni Sori is an Adivasi schoolteacher and human rights activist in Chhattisgarh, India. She was arrested on 4 October 2011, on the charges of being involved with Maoist. After her arrest she was tortured physically and sexually assaulted by Chhattisgarh state police. Her physical condition deteriorated over the period. For the release of Soni Sori a press conference was organized by several labor and social organizations which includes Paschim Banga Khet Majur Samity, Sara Bangla Truck Parichalak Smanawaya Committee, Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee, Sangrami Sramik Front etc along with several intellectuals and social activists including Dr. Ashish Kundu, Saswati Ghosh, Dr. Smarajit Jana and others. Academician and social activist Saswati Ghosh described family and educational background of Soni Sori. She described Soni Sori as an enlightened woman, a teacher who has been working for the poorest section of their communities. She clearly points out that the unholy nexus between the police and the local contractors made Soni Sori a victim as they find Soni and her followers wanted to stop exploitation of jungle woods minerals from the soil. A sting operation done by Tehelka, exposes all these underlying factors behind the arrest of Soni Sori. Rabindranath Chakraborty from Sangrami Sramik Front shared the necessity to expand this campaign across the states. Ms. Bharati Dey, of Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee promised that she along with her organization will continue their effort to get her released from the jail. Moumita- a domestic worker, Secretary of Durbar Disha Mahila Griha Sramik Samanwaya Committee commented that this type of barbarian sexual violence against Soni is a true depiction of the condition of women in our country. Ratan Roy Chowdhury, a social activist declared that a convention on Soni Sori will be organized on 24th August 2012 at Student's Hall. About 30 media persons were present at the press conference.

Dr. Jana in his concluding statement said that the campaign which was initiated in West Bengal with a handful of individual and organization is now gradually getting momentum. Some future course of action should be planned to take forward the movement. Three suggestions made and was unanimously accepted by the audience. The convention demanded

- a) Unconditional release of Soni Sori
- b) Take punitive disciplinary action against S.P. Ankit Garg who was the main offender against Soni Sori
- c) Provide medical treatment and nutritional support to Soni Sori.

Dr. Jana also commented the campaign would take some actions like demonstration and protest rally. Dr. Ashish Kundu suggested constituting a body to organize the campaign which was supported by all participants presented in the convention. It was decided that henceforth the name of the campaign will be

called as “Soni Sori Mukti Morcha” Member who volunteered for the committee as Dr. Ashish Kundu, Dr. Punyabrata Gun, Rabindranath Chakraborty, Amiava Mitra, Mujibur Rahaman, and Bharati Dey.

The convention ended with valediction with a proposal to conduct next meeting in Mid September 2012.

Whether pre exposure prophylaxis could be tried

The main objective of the discussion was to assess interest, feasibility and capacity of implementing a PrEP demonstration project and related research activities with sex workers in Kolkata. A team of technical expert namely Varjal Lipovsek (WHO) and Caitlin Kennedy (John Hopkins University) made a visit to Kolkata where they met with representatives of Durbar, and made field visit to the red light of Sonagachi and Kalighat districts. In addition, they also met with the Director of the National Institute of Cholera and Enteric Diseases (NICED), and the Director of the Calcutta School of Tropical Medicine. The team spends a week starting from 27th August to 31st August 2012 and raises substantial interest from among various stakeholders, including Sex Worker. At the same time, several concerns were expressed by sex workers and others related to the role of PrEP and its possible impact in the existing prevention program what has made a significant success, as well as the logistics and capacity to implement a PrEP programme and its related research component.

How to improve hygiene and sanitation practices

A capacity building promotion and Sanitation organised on DMSC with India on 21st August 2012 attended by sex workers Kolkata.

The trainer explained the hand wash and hand washing and its intervening the spread of also explained the drinking water. The the contamination of water and how to use



program on hygiene practices were the support of Goal in Kolkata which was of red light districts of

importance of proper demonstrated steps of significance in diseases. The trainer importance of safe participants also learnt arsenic in our drinking arsenic free water.

Participants raised lot of issues related to menstrual hygiene, during menstruation why a person should follow hygiene practices and why it is important not to have sex during menstruation.

Developing and strategizing child protection policy

DMSC has taken a discussion to develop its child protection policy. In this regard a participatory training consultation process was at Durbar's office on 23rd August. Based on this consultation it was decided that development and implementation of child protection policy should encompass all activities undertaken by the organization namely,

- ✓ Personnel Recruitment
- ✓ Training and capacity building activities
- ✓ Behaviour protocols/organizational culture
- ✓ Information Management system
- ✓ Issues of Confidentiality

To prepare a child protection policy the Durbar would focus on the issues like definition of abuse, types of abuse, recognition and registration of cases of abuse, maintaining privacy confidentiality of victims, development of behaviour protocol of the staff, interns, volunteers, visitors and donors, etc.



Durbar as an organization will primarily strive to protect the following rights of the children under its service and custody:

- Right to life/ survival
- Right to education
- Right to protection
- Right to adequate standard of living
- Right to communication