

Quadrennial Report submitted by ISST in June 2008

Institute of Social Studies Trust – ISST

(Special Consultative Status granted in 1996)

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This report covers the period 2004-7

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Part I: Introduction

i. The Institute of Social Studies Trust is a non profit non governmental organization dedicated to conducting research and action programmes seeking to promote social justice and equity for the underprivileged with a focus on women. The main research area is on women's work in the informal economy and well being concerns. Research is carried out in collaboration with grass root NGOs and researchers in India as well as outside. The Institute receives funding for its work from multilateral agencies, bilateral donors, Indian Foundations as well as the government. In addition to research studies the Institute has a community outreach programme in Delhi which reaches out to women and youth from low income slum households and seeks to empower them through a variety of innovative and interactive activities as well as assistance in accessing entitlements to health, education and subsidised food grains.

Part II: Contribution of the organisation to the work of the United Nations

i. i) Participation in conferences and United Nations meetings

2004: Representatives attended meetings on human development in India including seminar on Lessons of Promising Practices and Implications for scaling up girls education organised by the United Nations Childrens Fund (UNICEF) and Commonwealth Secretariat, 20-22 September, Chandigarh;
Consultation on Gender Budget Studies, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 25

Quadrennial Report submitted by ISST in June 2008

November, New Delhi

2005: Representatives attended the Forty Ninth Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, 28 February – 11 March, New York

In New Delhi participated in a meeting on Evaluating Development Outcomes: The Potential for Expanding Partnerships, organised by the office of the Resident Coordinator, United Nations, 15 April

2006: Representatives attended speech by Mukhtar Mai at the United Nations, New York, May 2; 59th Annual DPI/NGO Conference, titled Unfinished Business: Effective Partnerships for Human Security and Sustainable Development, September 6-8, New York; European Premiere of Human Rights Short Films, 19 September, Geneva; Fourth Assembly for Human Rights organised by the Canton of Geneva, Geneva, 9 October; Panel discussion on Empowerment of Women: access to assets, inheritance law, housing and land rights and basic services, at International Forum on the Eradication of Poverty held in New York City to mark the culmination of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty, organised jointly United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT), 15-16 November; International Conference for the Reform of International Institutions: Dialogues between different levels of governance and civil society actors, organised by World Forum of Civil Society Networks and ITUC-CSI-IGB, 20-21 November.

Attended World Conference on Social Protection and Inclusion: Converging Efforts from a Global Perspective, organised by International Labour Organisation, European Commission and Government of Portugal, 2-3 October, Lisbon.

2007: Representative participated in United Nations Expert Group Meeting on enhancing social services policies to strengthen family well being in Asia and the Pacific organised by the Emerging Social Issues Division, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

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(UNESCAP), 17-19 October, Bangkok.

ii). Co-operation with United Nations bodies and specialised agencies in the field

The Institute of Social Studies Trust carried out two studies, one on Women in Leadership Positions and another on strategic needs of Women in Hill States for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), New Delhi in 2004, to contribute to engendering policy making in India. The Institute has prepared two policy briefs on inclusive development and gender, and on engendering the National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme, for the use of UNDP officers, in 2007. In 2005, and again in 2007, the Institute prepared for the United Nations Development Fund (UNIFEM) a report on the Progress of Women in South Asia, a comprehensive analytical report mapping the situation and status of women on the twelve critical areas of concern identified in the Beijing Platform for Action. These reports were background documents for the Fifth and Sixth South Asia Ministerial Meeting Commemorating Beijing held in Islamabad (2005) and New Delhi (2007). Representatives have been contributing to UNIFEM's efforts to facilitate the setting up of a SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) Gender Data Base, an online resource, to be housed in the SAARC Secretariat. The Institute has carried out studies of home based women workers in three states in India to support the work of UNIFEM in strengthening the research base and policy advocacy for this group of women workers.

The Institute has carried out studies on the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act in partnership with the International Labour Organisation over the period 2005-7. These studies seek to provide the Government of India with authentic and timely reports on implementation of this flagship programme.

Other studies carried out at ISST have contributed to better understanding of issues of women's work in the informal economy, migration, urbanisation and social protection. Through these studies and research findings the Institute has been able to participate in policy dialogue with the government, other NGOs and activists as well as the agencies of the United Nations. Among the important studies carried out over this period is a set of studies investigating the impact of economic reforms from a gender perspective, the Gender Network, a research programme supported by the International Development Research Centre, Canada. Studies were conducted in India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Vietnam. A study on public accountability and community action in Delhi also supported by the International Development Research Centre, Canada has given significant insights into prevalent practices and reasons for the limited access of poor and slum households to basic water and sanitation facilities in this urban context. The study helped the organisation to appreciate that its own best role would be to continue organising and informing adolescents and women to enable them to address difficulties as they arise and determine the best solutions themselves.

From studies of social protection for informal workers with particular focus on home based women workers in peri urban contexts has emerged the key finding that developing sustainable social protection programmes and solutions is possible only within an appropriate development trajectory.

iii). Initiatives undertaken in support of the Millenium Development Goals

The community outreach programme of the Institute of Social Studies Trust in East Delhi contributes to Millenium Development Goals including Goal 1: to Eradicate extreme poverty and Hunger through nutrition training, enhancing access to subsidised rations by slum households, and providing nutritional snacks to children; Goal 2: Achieve Universal Primary Education by assisting children to get admission into schools, and encouraging drop outs to return to school by providing educational support and counseling; Goal 3: Achieving Gender Equality by encouraging girls to enter school and by giving them

access to free computer training.

ii. Activities in support of global principles

Representatives participate in events to mark International Women's Day in Delhi and Bangalore.

Limited resources and small staff have made it difficult for the Institute to convene United Nations events outside India.