

## **Round Table Conference with the Bavarian State Parliament Committee**

Organized by  
Center for Social Research in collaboration with Hanns Seidel Foundation

On  
20 March 2015

At  
Centre for Social Research, New Delhi

A delegation from the Committee on Municipal Affairs, Internal Security and Sports of the Bavarian State Parliament led by the Chairman Dr. Florian Hermann visited India from 16<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> March 2015. The objective of the delegation visit was to have an exchange of ideas with various governmental bodies, NGOs and civil society groups on issues related to local governance, internal security and sports.

The delegation first visited Bangaluru in the Indian state of Karnataka from 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> March 2015. They met, among others, the Home Minister of Karnataka and Police Commissioner of Bangaluru. The delegation visited Delhi from 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> March 2015. They interacted with experts on Internal Security and met other government officials to discuss the issues of governance, security and safety. The delegation met, among others, the Honorable Lieutenant Governor of Delhi, Chief Minister of Delhi and Police Commissioner of Delhi. The delegation also visited the NGO Butterflies, which works towards educating and impart life skills to children to make them self-reliant. They also took a cultural trip to, among others, the India Gate and the Memorial of Mahatma Gandhi in Delhi.

### **Round Table Conference at Center for Social Research (CSR) Delhi:**

The Center for Social Research (CSR) in collaboration with Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSF) India organized one round table on the theme of Local Self Governance and Women Safety in the evening on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2015 at the Seminar Room of Center for Social Research with the objectives of sharing the Indian experiences in the field of local governance and women safety. HSF India invited its partner organizations which work in the field of local governance and women safety to share their experiences with the delegation. The representatives, Mrs. Aleyamma Vijayan and Dr. Pramila Sanjaya, from the partner organizations, Sakhi Women's Resource Center, Kerala and Society for Integrated Developmental Activities, Research and Training (SIDART), Rajasthan, made their presentations on the experiences of local governance and women safety in Kerala and Rajasthan respectively. The Center for Social Research made the presentation on water conservation and climate change with a focus on the role of women. In addition, the CSR made presentation on 'Protection of victims of violence with special focus on women and children' program, jointly run by CSR and HSF in Delhi. Another small presentation was made by the representative of HSF's partner organization, Centre for Research in Rural and Industrial Development (CRRID), Chandigarh, on the status of rural local self-governance in the various states of India.

These presentations were followed by a Question and Answer session, in which the delegation interacted with the presenters on vast range of issues including local governance, women safety, and violence against women, gender equality and women empowerment.

### Highlights of the Session:

- In India, the local self-governance institutions are now more empowered after the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> amendments to the Constitution of India.
- In Rajasthan, the local self-governance institutions are gradually being further strengthened by the measures taken by the state government and efforts of the civil society/NGOs.
- SIDART as an NGO works in Rajasthan for empowering and enabling women to take up the political and administrative tasks of the village/block/district Panchayats.
- After the sustained trainings of women elected representatives by SIDART under various training programmes (Village Volunteer Seminars, Resource Development and Utilization Seminars, Social Audit Seminar, Training of Panchayat/Ward Members Seminars and Panchayat Strengthening Seminars).
- With the help of Center for Social Research (CSR), the women in Rajasthan are intensively participating in water conservation and management and spreading awareness among their community about the climate change and its harmful effects.
- In Kerala, which rests on the top among the Indian states in terms of many of the social indicators, the status of Panchayats are not just as a service provider but also a critical player as decision maker and vanguard of the voices of the local people.
- Kerala has witnessed a long history of institution building such as the set-up of *Kudumbasree* (a women oriented and community based poverty alleviation programme in each of the Panchayats) and *Jagratha Samithi* (literally vigilance committee which is kind of women commission at the ward level to check the violence against women).
- Unlike other states of India, in Kerala the Panchayat elections are fought on the tickets of political parties, which in the process connect the local level leaders to the top level leaders of the political parties.
- Although the local governance issues largely falls under the ambit of state governments, the central government also assists the Panchayats in their endeavor to meet the aspirations of the local people. The Government of India runs a lot of centrally sponsored schemes by which it transfer a lot of funds to the Panchayats.
- On the safety front of women, the Government of India launched the *Himmat* App, a mobile-phone based application on 1<sup>st</sup> Jan 2015 in New Delhi. Women can use the features of this app to alert Delhi Police in case of any threat.

The program concluded on a successful note and followed by dinner.