



DRAFT REPORT

---

Intersectionality Framework to Track Budgets for  
Transgender Communities in Tamil Nadu

---

Submitted by Praxis  
May 2013

## **Acknowledgements**

Functionaries of transgender women CBOs and Networks, transgender women activists, non official members of the Transgender Welfare Board and transgender women representatives who participated in the focus group discussions and round table; transgender women respondents who participated in the case studies, focus group discussions and surveys; transgender women who volunteered to facilitate focus groups discussions, case studies and administered the survey tool; Praxis colleagues in conducting the literature review, facilitating and documenting focus group discussions, case studies and translation of Tamil material; and editing of the report.

**Consultant:** Joseph M J, Praxis Institute for Participatory Practices, INDIA

**Contract No:** UNWOMEN: UNW/SSA/IND/2012/73

**Project ID:** 82359. DR531, 71300, IND, 92101, W3000, 00304

**Date:** 3<sup>rd</sup> June 3013

## Table of Contents

<b>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES, FIGURES AND DIAGRAMS.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1. BACKGROUND.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>2. STUDY PROCESS.....</b>	<b>15</b>
2.1 OBJECTIVES.....	15
2.2 METHODOLOGY.....	15
2.2.1 Literature review.....	15
2.2.2 Focus group discussions.....	15
2.2.3 Case stories.....	16
2.2.4 Questionnaire Survey.....	16
2.2.5 Key informant interviews with the Transgender Welfare Board non-official members.....	18
2.2.6 Round Table.....	18
<b>3. CONCEPT OF INTERSECTIONALITY.....</b>	<b>19</b>
3.1 THE TRANSGENDER IDENTITY.....	20
3.2 TRANSGENDERS: A GENDER? A CLASS? A MINORITY? A MARGINALISED GROUP? A HISTORICALLY EXCLUDED COMMUNITY?.....	22
<b>4. TRANSGENDERS' LIVES AND ISSUES.....</b>	<b>24</b>
4.1 REPORTS PRODUCED FROM THE HIV/ MEDICINE LENS.....	24
4.2 REPORTS OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS.....	27
4.3 ETHNOGRAPHICAL ACCOUNTS OF HIJRAS.....	28
4.4 AUTOBIOGRAPHIES.....	29
4.5 STUDIES ON LEGAL AND POLICY ISSUES.....	29
4.6 REPORTS OF SEMINARS, WORKSHOPS AND CONSULTATIONS.....	30
<b>5. INITIATIVES TAKEN BY THE CENTRAL AND STATE GOVERNMENTS IN INDIA... 32</b>	<b>32</b>
5.1 STEPS TAKEN TO GIVE THE COMMUNITY BASIC RECOGNITION AND IDENTITY.....	32
5.2 STEPS TAKEN TO ENSURE REPRESENTATION AND PARTICIPATION.....	33
5.3 STEPS TAKEN TO LOOK INTO THEIR HEALTH CONCERNS.....	34
5.4 DEVELOPMENTS IN TAMIL NADU.....	34
5.5 MILESTONES IN THE MOVEMENT FOR MAINSTREAMING THE TG COMMUNITY.....	37
5.6 INFERENCES FROM ANALYSIS OF LITERATURE REVIEW AND STEPS TAKEN BY UNION AND STATE GOVERNMENTS.....	40
<b>6. LIFE SITUATION OF TRANSGENDER WOMEN IN TAMIL NADU.....</b>	<b>42</b>
6.1 STAGE 1: ADOLESCENCE (10 – 19 AGE GROUP).....	42
6.1.1 Identity crisis.....	43
6.1.2 Sexual abuse by relatives and family members.....	44
6.1.3 Discrimination and sexual harassment in schools and colleges.....	45
6.1.4 Running away from the families.....	48
6.2 STAGE 2: ADULTHOOD (BETWEEN 20 - 40 AGE GROUP).....	50
6.2.1 Non-acceptance and violence from family.....	50
6.2.2 Discrimination and violence from Society – house owner, torture by rowdies, rape.....	52
6.2.3 Life in 'Jamaat'.....	56
6.2.4 HIV stigma and discrimination.....	58
6.2.5 Livelihoods related issues and social welfare.....	60
6.2.6 Transgender Welfare Board.....	64

6.2.7 <i>Love failure and cheating</i> .....	65
6.2.8 <i>Sex reassignment surgery and beautification</i> .....	66
6.2.9 <i>Problems from Police</i> .....	68
6.3 MIDDLE AGE (BEYOND 40 YEARS) .....	69
<b>7. ANALYSIS: MULTIPLE DISCRIMINATION .....</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>8. RECOMMENDATIONS.....</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>9. CONCLUSION - WAY FORWARD.....</b>	<b>83</b>
<b>REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>ANNEX 1: ABSTRACT FROM FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS AND KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW.....</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>ANNEX 2: CASE STUDIES .....</b>	<b>120</b>

## List of Abbreviations

AIDS:	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
APCOM:	Asia Pacific Coalition for Men's Sexual Health
ART:	Antiretroviral Therapy
BC:	Backward Class
CBO:	Community Based Organisation
DFID:	Department for International Development
DLSA:	Delhi Legal Services Authority
EC:	Election Commission
FGD:	Focus Group Discussion
GO:	Government Order
HIV:	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICESCR:	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
IGNOU:	Indira Gandhi National Open University
IPC:	Indian Penal Code
MBC:	Most Backward Classes
MDG:	Millennium Development Goals
MSM:	Men who have Sex with Men
NACO:	National AIDS Control Organization
NACP:	National AIDS Control Programme
NALSA:	National Legal Services Authority
NGO:	Non-Governmental Organisation
OBC:	Other Backward Classes
PLHA:	People living with HIV AIDS
PUCL-K:	Peoples Union for Civil Liberty – Karnataka
SAATHII:	Solidarity and Action Against HIV Infection in India
SC:	Scheduled Castes
SEWA:	Self-Employed Women's Association
SIAAP:	South India AIDS Action Programme
SMR:	Sexuality Minorities' Rights
SRS:	Sex Reassignment Surgery
STI:	Sexually Transmitted Infections
TAI:	Tamil Nadu AIDS Initiative
TANSACS:	Tamil Nadu State AIDS Control Society
TASA:	Tamil Nadu AIDS Solidarity Action group
TG:	Transgender
TGWB:	Transgender Welfare Board
UDHR:	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UNAIDS:	United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNDP:	United Nations Development Programme
UNWOMEN:	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

## List of Tables, Figures and Diagrams

<b>LIST OF TABLES</b>	6
TABLE 1: DISTRICT WISE DETAILS OF UNIVERSE AND SAMPLE	16
TABLE 2: BUDGET ALLOCATION AND EXPENDITURE BY TGWB DURING 2011-13	38
TABLE 3: ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF JOINING A JAMAAT	56
TABLE 4: REASONS FOR DISCRIMINATION	73
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b>	
FIGURE 1: AGE DISTRIBUTION OF SAMPLE	18
FIGURE 2: EDUCATION PROFILE OF SAMPLE	18
FIGURE 3 EDUCATION OF SIBLINGS OF TRANSGENDER WOMEN	46
FIGURE 4: EXPERIENCE OF STIGMA AND VIOLENCE	52
FIGURE 5: REASONS FOR STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION	53
FIGURE 6: CASTE COMPOSITION OF SAMPLE	54
FIGURE 7: DISCRIMINATION BY HEALTH SERVICE PROVIDERS	59
FIGURE 8: FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION	60
FIGURE 9: OCCUPATION OF TRANSGENDER WOMEN	62
FIGURE 10: AVERAGE MONTHLY INCOME AS PEAR OCCUPATION	62
FIGURE 11: AVERAGE MONTHLY INCOME	63
FIGURE 12: AVERAGE MONTHLY EXPENDITURE PATTERN	63
FIGURE 13: ACCESS TO RIGHTS AND ENTITLEMENTS	64
FIGURE 14: ACCESS OF ENTITLEMENTS FROM TRANSGENDER WELFARE BOARD	64
FIGURE 15: EXPERIENCE OF MULTIPLE DISCRIMINATIONS	73
FIGURE 16: EXPERIENCE OF MULTIPLE DISCRIMINATION BASED ON ANY FACTORS	73
FIGURE 17: MULTIPLE DISCRIMINATION BASED ON SELECTED FACTORS	73
<b>LIST OF DIAGRAMS</b>	
DIAGRAM 1: MARGINALISATION PROCESS	72
DIAGRAM 2: MULTIPLE DISCRIMINATION AND MULTIPLE FACTORS	74
DIAGRAM 3: FOUNDATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS	78

## Executive Summary

Set against the backdrop of expanding the scope of the intersectionality framework in gender responsive budgeting to include transgender communities, UN women commissioned a study on the Intersectionality Framework to Track Budgets for Transgender Communities. The research study was rolled out with the two fold aim of analysing state and union budgetary commitments for the transgender communities as well as their uptake in India on one hand and to document various forms of discrimination, exclusions and violations of rights faced by transgender communities in the state of Tamil Nadu on the other.

After a detailed secondary literature review that informed the study, several interactions with associated stakeholders were conducted. Ten focus group discussions and thirty-four in-depth case stories were collected from members of transgender communities across age, occupational and typological categories across different parts of Tamil Nadu. A group of TG researchers were trained in canvassing a questionnaire, which was used to generate information from 522 TGs across the state. This was supplemented by key informant interviews with non-official members of the Transgender Welfare Board of Tamil Nadu. The information generated from all these processes was shared with several transgender community participants and their feedback was sought and incorporated in the current report. This report in essence, analyses multiple dimensions of life situations of transgender women impacting on discriminations, exclusions, unequal power relations, and violations of rights and denial of justice and has been whetted by several participants and contributors to the study.

The lens of intersectionality needs urgent application in the context of transgender communities because existing categories and concepts of discrimination are not sufficient to understand the breadth of the marginalisation and discrimination the community has suffered and continues to suffer. The lived experiences of discrimination, stigma, violence and exclusion faced by the transgender community cannot unfortunately be compartmentalised into categories such as class, caste, gender, religion, status or others, which apply to men and women. The experience of discrimination itself may seem like it is fuelled by just the fact that they are transgender, but beneath the experience are likely to be multiple layers of stigma and ostracism faced by the transgender person at various stages of their life.

The transgender identity in itself is not a homogeneous one. The transsexual and transgender diversities in India include, *hijra, kothi, jogappa, khusra, kojja, aravani, khwaaja sira, pavaiyaa, napunsakudu, maada, thiru nangai, ali* (term is now considered derogatory) and *durani*. Most transgender individuals belong to various caste communities and constitute highly complex socio-cultural diversities within each category.

The last two decades have seen conspicuous voices of transgender communities to negotiate and claim their identity, dignity, rights and justice, all over the world, including India. But while there is recognition and assertion of elements of the guarantees in the Constitution, Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other International Covenants, the discrimination is still rampant. This could also stem from the mixed interpretations of the transgender identities in India (as backward classes and marginalised groups in India) and as part of the broader LGBT label internationally.

Literature suggests that the state and civil society response towards the transgender community has been primarily fuelled by the concern with the spread of HIV/AIDS, where alarm bells have rung due to the high rates of HIV/AIDS infection within this

community. There is a marked change in the tenor of policy discourse between the third and fourth phase of the National AIDS Control Policy (NACP). NACP III (in 2007) recognised for the first time that the category of Men who have Sex with Men (MSM) is not homogeneous and comprises groups like the TGs who have unique needs with regard to HIV/AIDS. In NACP IV a specific strategy was devised to look into the needs of the community, but is unfortunately completely circumscribed by the HIV/AIDS concern and the needs of the community do not reflect in any discourse beyond the HIV/AIDS-health sector. Missing Pieces, HIV Related Needs of Sexual Minorities in India; Lost in Transition: Transgender People, Rights and HIV Vulnerability in the Asia-Pacific Region and other studies and reports, shed light on discrimination faced by the community in the Indian health care system.

Reports and research studies done in the context of human rights violations focus on the struggle for the rights of sexual minorities, which are integrally linked to structures and ideologies of oppression such as patriarchy, capitalism, the caste system and religious fundamentalism. Critically examining the state and the society as two key sources of violence against sexual minorities, narratives describe the traumatising of an entire community in every conceivable forum and context. Ethnographical accounts from three authors, present perspectives of the hijras themselves speaking about their identities, hijras playing the role of the institutionalised third gender and their practices, rituals and beliefs. Autobiographies, studies on legal and policy issues as well as reports of conferences and seminars, emphasise these issues.

Some states have recognised and acknowledged on paper, the vulnerabilities of the transgender community by mentioning them in policy documents. Tamil Nadu has been more forthcoming through a series of government orders which have been passed to ensure welfare of the transgender community. This includes creation of a database for transgenders; a government order for admission of transgenders into government run schools and colleges; free sex reassignment surgery in selected government hospitals; ration cards for transgenders. Seats have been reserved in colleges and universities of the state for members of the transgender community. While most of these remain to be operationalised, they are very progressive on paper. Specific schemes implemented by Social Welfare Department of Tamil Nadu for transgender community include providing transgender identity cards, house sites with title deeds, house construction support, ration cards (public distribution service), income generating activities, formation of Self Help Groups, assistance for self-employment – individual and group, free supply of sewing machines, training in beauty therapy and arts scholarship for education.

Three key stages of the lives of transgender women are adolescence (between 10 and 19 years of age), adulthood (between 20 and 40 years) and middle age (beyond 40 years). Detailed case stories from each of these stages are shared. In the first stage, all the individuals interviewed mentioned that it was between the age of 10 and 13 that they all realised their feminine side, qualities and mannerisms. They undergo a severe identity crisis with negligent coping mechanisms at best, if at all. Rejection by family, sexual abuse by relatives and friends, sexual harassment at schools and colleges and running away from home, largely characterise the first phase.

In their adulthood, they start living like women do, many undergo SRS and some abandon their families permanently, as they are pressurised to marry. There is large discrimination from the neighbourhood and communities they live in, taunting and torturing and physical abuse by these same groups as well as in the work space and living environments. Several community members live in jamaats and while some of them are able to adapt to the strict lifestyles expected here, many rebel and escape. An added reason for stigma and discrimination at this stage is because they are perceived



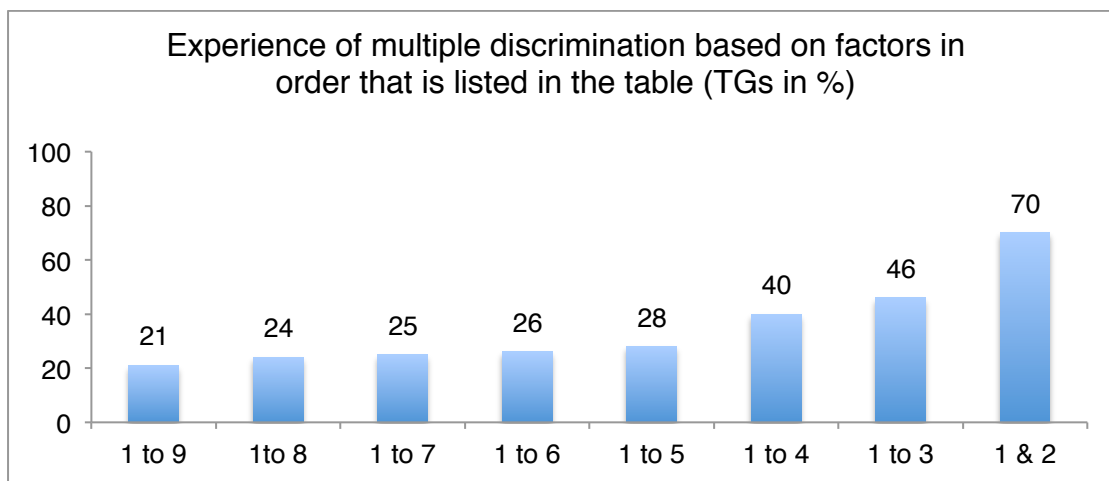
as sex workers and as HIV positive. This discrimination is also faced at hospitals, from counsellors and other health practitioners. Social safety nets being absent, form a major cause of concern at this stage. Love, failure, rejection, cheating and other such characteristics that tend to mar men and women between the ages of 20-40 have far more complex manifestations in the lives of transgenders. There are several cases of SRS that go terribly wrong because of the lackadaisical attitude of the medical professionals or because the transgender community members go to doctors who are unsure of how to handle the complexities that arise which such surgeries.

The middle aged TGs are physically debilitated due to SRS, hormone and silicon implantation and others. Diseases such as diabetes, tuberculosis, sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS and hepatitis, affect most transgender women in their middle age. Health problems result in large numbers dropping out from sex work. By this period of their lives several have been cheated by their lovers and husbands. Since their marriages are not legally registered there is no legal recourse for these abandonments and cheating. Added to this is the political inconsistency. Schemes keep getting discontinued and changing with change of government and this creates problems for the community members. Support systems are weak and migration and exclusion from known locations manifests itself in total abandonment. Through the ups and downs of the life trajectory of transgender women, what remains constant is the stigma and non-acceptance owing to their non-conformity to the gender binary system.

The main findings of the study were:

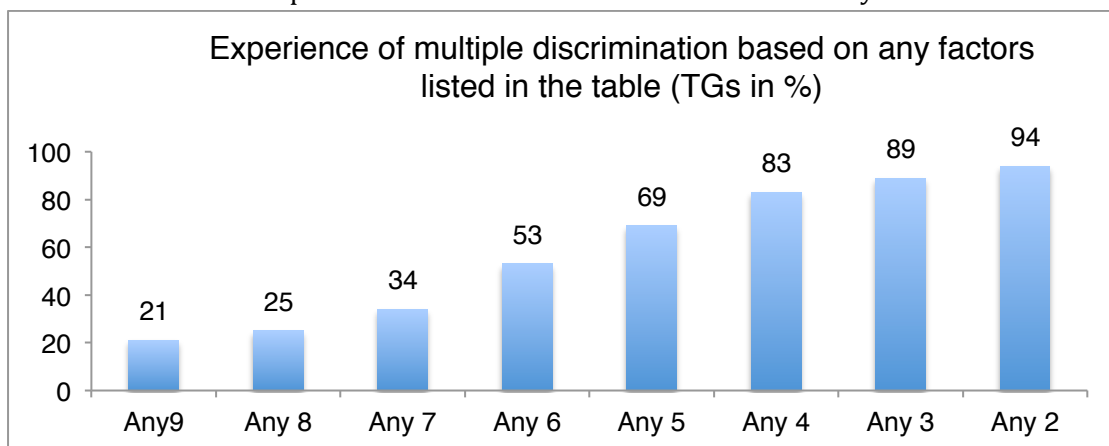
**1. Multiple Discrimination Becomes a Way of Life:** The data collected in course of the study shows both the extent as well as the nature of discrimination suffered by transgender women in Tamil Nadu.

- 1.1 Transgender women **face multiple forms of discrimination** (verbal, physical, sexual violence; harassment; refusal to provide services; false arrests; denial of share in ancestral property; denial of admission in educational institutions; victimisation by teachers and fellow students and several others) **in multiple settings** (family, school, workplace, health care settings, public spaces including also the jamaat) **by multiple perpetrators** (family members including parents and siblings, friends, school and college authorities, employers, neighbours, house owners, health service providers, police, clients and what is worse from their own community members, gurus etc) **due to multiple reasons** (effeminate behaviour, trans status, real or perceived association with sex work; real or perceived HIV status, dress code, physical appearance and others).
- 1.2 Out of 9 commonly encountered reasons for discrimination (begging, sex work, dress style, effeminate behaviour, low caste, low income, SRS, HIV/AIDS, skin and hair), 70 percent of the respondents reported having faced stigma and discrimination on account of begging and sex work, 21 percent of respondents reported having faced stigma and discrimination on account of all nine factors and 24 percent of the respondents had faced stigma and discrimination on account of the first eight factors.



Numbers in Order	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Reasons for stigma	Beggining	Sex Work	Dress Style	Effeminate Behaviour	Lower Caste*	Low Income earning*	SRS*	HIV/AIDS*	Skin hair*

1.3 94 percent of the respondents had faced discrimination based on any two factors. 69 percent of the respondents faced discrimination on account of any five factors and more than 50 percent faced discrimination on account of any six factors



1.4 Despite recurrent issues such as stigma and discrimination in all walks of life owing to their gender identity or lack of it, the **finer details of what transgender women suffer and what is required varies in every stage of their life**. For instance, their experience of abandonment by their families in adolescence is fundamentally different from their experience of abandonment by their communities in middle age. During youth, while many of the problems encountered during adolescence continue, some fade away and a completely new set of issues come to the fore. For aged transgender women, some of the problems faced in youth cease being important, several others continue and another set of issues become major concerns. Through the ups and downs of the life trajectory of transgender women, what remains constant is the stigma and non-acceptance owing to their non-conformity to the gender binary system.

1.5 The discrimination that transgender women face is **not sporadic in nature**. It is routine, 'everyday' and **embedded in every step they take**. Unlike several other marginalised groups, which face discrimination in a few areas, say education,

employment, political representation etc, or in a few episodes of their lives, in the case of transgender women, no spaces, institutions, activities, movements and processes are outside the realm of discrimination. The family emerges as one of the first space where transgenders feel the first brunt of harassment and non-acceptance. 70 percent of the respondents had faced physical violence within their families. The experience is replicated and perhaps intensified in school, within friend circles, in colleges and institutions of higher learning, among colleagues, while seeking employment, in the course of accessing services, in the realm of housing, transport, in the process of undergoing Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS), in the process of recovery and recuperation, in personal relationships, in professional relationships, in community relationships etc.

- 1.6 The lived experiences of discrimination, stigma, violence and exclusion faced by the transgender community cannot be compartmentalised into neat categories of either class, caste, gender, religion, status or others. Often the experience of discrimination may be fuelled by just the fact that they are transgenders, but beneath the experience are likely to be **multiple layers of stigma and ostracism** faced by the transgender person at various stages of their life. These are more likely to play out, not in isolation of one another, but in tandem. The full range of discrimination suffered by a transgender woman is best understood in terms of them being at the crossroads of the existing categories of class, gender, caste, status etc.,
- 1.7 Apart from societal discrimination, transgender women are also subjected to discrimination from within the community to which they belong. This relatively less obvious and less talked about **in-community discrimination** is based on caste, earning potential of the community member, HIV status, physical appearance (including skin colour and hair) and SRS. So, the safe space provided by the jamaat, also becomes an arena where some members of the community are stigmatised, branded and discriminated against. 51 percent of the respondents in course of this study pointed out that they had faced discrimination within the jamaat due to their poor earning potential.
- 1.8 The case stories show that often in the lives of transgender women, **advantage points like birth in an affluent and respectable family and/or birth in a dominant caste family, become reasons for further discrimination and violence.** A respondent (case story 5) reported that respectable families show greater reluctance to accept effeminate sons out of concern for their family status. What should have worked to their advantage (in this case affluence and status) in terms of the resources available to the family to create a conducive environment for their child, or perhaps just the shield afforded by money from social disapproval, therefore becomes reason for further harassment and abandonment. Similarly, it was reported in another case story (case story 23) that belonging to a dominant caste which was mobilized around a strong masculine and warrior identity, was one of the main reasons for the cruelty and ruthlessness with which the effeminate son was asked to kill himself. Non acceptance in this case was fuelled by concern for caste honour.

## 2. Basic Identity is a Dilemma

- 1.1 The review of literature revealed that there is considerable ambiguity with regard to the basic identity of transgenders in the country. The community has on the one hand been included as a third gender category in the 2011 census<sup>1</sup>, while at the

---

<sup>1</sup> The Technical Advisory Committee recommended to the Registrar General of India that Transgenders be given a separate code and included in the 2011 census. *Transgenders: A separate category in*

same time it has been included in the Backward Class category.<sup>2</sup> NALSA (National Legal Services Authority) has given to TGs the status of a marginalised group.<sup>3</sup> In the global context, transgenders are considered a sexual minority, which typically includes the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community. Questions that remain unanswered include whether to consider them the third gender, a separate class, a caste, a minority, an excluded and disadvantaged community etc.

- 1.2 Respondents as well as participants of the roundtable reiterated the need on the part of the state to clarify its position vis a vis the 'Others' category under which transgenders have been included in the 2011 census and in the electoral rolls. Participants stressed on the need for provision of change of name and gender on all certificates and identity proofs after the process of gender transformation. A "gender challenged" certificate that would be an all encompassing identity given by the Central Government applicable and used everywhere was proposed as a possible solution.

### 3. Schemes and Measures Are Insufficient

- 3.1 Steps taken so far by the union and state governments can be divided into a few broad categories: (1) Steps taken to give the community basic recognition and identity- inclusion in electoral rolls, inclusion in census, inclusion of category 'E' in passports, column for transgenders in registration for aadhar cards etc (2) Steps taken to ensure representation and participation- inclusion of transgender representatives in the Transgender Welfare Board, inclusion in expert committee in Maharashtra which is meant to review the state's women's policy, representation of the community in the civil society engagement with formulation of the 12<sup>th</sup> Five year Plan, mention of the need to empower the community in the 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan etc (3) Steps taken to look into their health concerns- specific recommendations for the community under NACP IV. (4) Schemes and steps taken in the state of Tamil Nadu- constitution of the Transgender Welfare Board and steps taken to ensure welfare of the community under or independent of the Board.

- 3.2 Constitution of the Transgender Welfare Board in Tamil Nadu in 2008 has been widely acclaimed. According to transgender representatives of the Board however, most schemes started by the Board, exist only on papers and have not been properly implemented. Diagram 14 presents data collected from the sample on access of schemes floated by the Board. 75 percent of the respondents had obtained the TG Identity Card. Except for the TG Identity card however, very small numbers of respondents had accessed other schemes. A mere 1 percent had successfully obtained educational support from the Board and an equally small number of respondents had availed of the short stay home facility. Only 2 percent of the respondents had availed of the self-employment schemes initiated by the Board and 12 percent had received destitute support. The insignificant numbers of

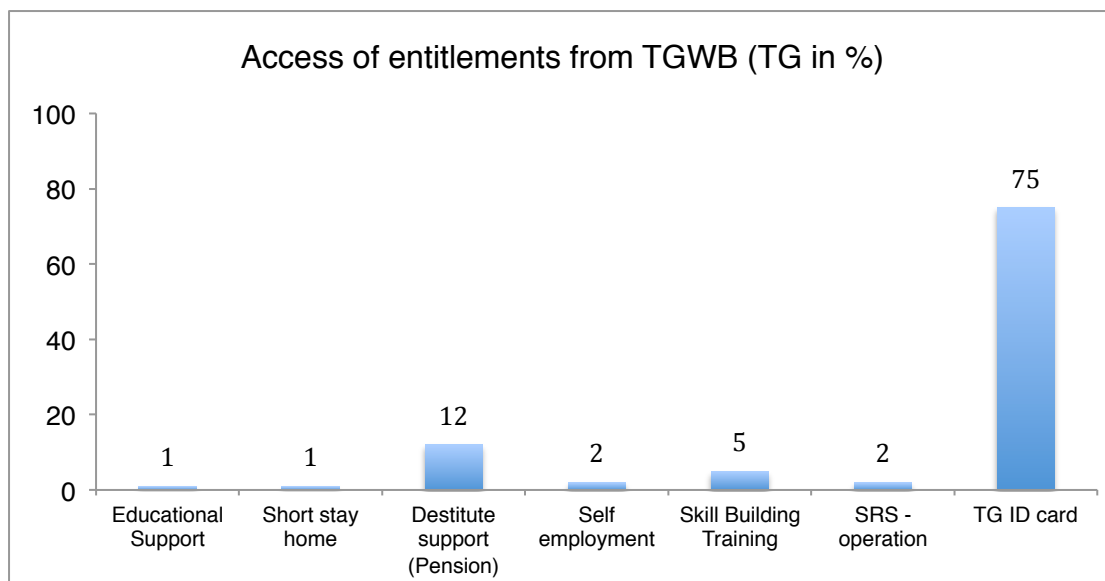
---

Census 2011, December 12, 2010, [http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2010-12-12/news/27614381\\_1\\_transgenders-rti-reply-separate-category](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2010-12-12/news/27614381_1_transgenders-rti-reply-separate-category); Census 2011: Transgenders prepare to be counted for first time, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/article1075028.ece>

<sup>2</sup> The State Backward Classes Commission of Karnataka recommended the inclusion of TGs as a Backward Class category in 2010, after petitions were filed by organisations working with TGs such as Karnataka State Sexual Minorities Forum (KSMF) and those funded by Karnataka Health Promotion Trust and Karnataka State AIDS Prevention Society. See *Transgenders knock at the door of Backward Classes commission*, The Hindu, March 04, 2010, available at <http://www.hindu.com/2010/03/04/stories/2010030455740600.htm>; *Sexual minorities may be boxed into Backward Class category*, Deccan Herald, 07/09/2010, <http://www.deccanherald.com/content/80244/sexual-minorities-may-boxed-backward.html>

<sup>3</sup> *Time to walk the talk*, Hindustan Times; February 12, 2011; <http://www.hindustantimes.com/India-news/Chennai/Time-to-walk-the-talk/Article1-661669.aspx>

respondents who had benefited from schemes of the Board raises serious questions about the functionality and reach of the welfare schemes for transgenders.



3.3 Creation of a database was started but there have been differences of opinion regarding the process of enumeration, which has created doubts about validity of the data so far collected. As a result, the data collected so far has not been published.

3.4 Following doubts raised over the effectiveness of the Board, a Federation of Indian Transgenders (FIT) was constituted to monitor its progress and efficacy.<sup>4</sup> Transgender representatives of the Welfare Board reported that the idea of having a Federation to monitor the progress of the Board has not so far been implemented. Transgender representatives of the Welfare Board further said that board meetings are currently happening but no one is sure what the agenda is, or who is part of these meetings.

3.5 The demand for Transgender Welfare Boards, modelled on lines of the one in Tamil Nadu has been made in several other states. No such Board has however been constituted till now in any state.

In light of these, the report presents nine categories of recommendations in view of formulating transgender responsive budgets at the union and state levels. The fundamentals to any recommendation are the three pillars that will facilitate meaningful translation of the same into actions; i.e., (1) Legal and constitutional safeguards to prevent human rights violations of transgender women; (2) Proactive participation of transgender women in all democratic spaces and systems, including participation in policies purported for their welfare; and (3) An enabling environment characterised by acceptance and respect for people with alternate sexual identities. The remaining categories of recommendations are (4) Promoting health care, (5) Bettering employment and livelihoods opportunities, (6) Fostering education, (7) Assuring welfare, (8) Making service providers and duty bearers accountable and (9) Addressing stigma and discrimination. All the recommendations made in each of these above categories, were critically reviewed by transgender women who participated in a round table organised to discuss this report in Chennai. A state level dissemination workshop has been proposed to chalk out a concrete and detailed roadmap.

<sup>4</sup> Tamil's Transgender Community, June 29th, 2010, <http://indiaunheard.videovolunteers.org/transgenders-in-tamilneed-jobs/>

## 1. Background

The TG community is one of the most marginalised communities in the country that has lived with “pervasive” and “all encompassing”<sup>5</sup> violence and stigma perpetrated by the state, society as well as their very families. It was against this backdrop that UN Women commissioned this current project titled ‘Using an Intersectionality Framework to Track Budgets for Transgender Communities’. A critical gap that has emerged in the discourse on GRB is that it has not been used to its full potential to address the specific exclusions faced by women from socio-economically and historically disadvantaged groups. The value add of an intersectionality framework in such a context is that it highlights the classical conceptualisations of oppression within society, such as class, ethnicity, race, disability and other axes of identity that interact on multiple, (often simultaneous) levels and do not act independently of one another and adds a perspective, which helps to track budgets for the most marginalised communities. UN Women is an ardent supporter of efforts towards ensuring that national planning, budgeting and monitoring and evaluation processes incorporate a gender perspective. Their Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) programmes that attempt to address specific exclusions faced by disadvantaged groups of women, at cross regional, regional and country level have made a significant contribution by building political support, developing technical resources and capacity, generating good practices for improving women's access to services and increasing accountability to gender equality. In an attempt to broaden and deepen the scope of Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) in India, UN Women felt the need to include the transgender (TG) community within its ambit.

For a community which is still fighting for an identity of its own, a community whose exact strength in terms of numbers is not known, a community for which no centrally sponsored welfare scheme has been floated till date, it might be premature to undertake a budgetary tracking process. But, given the increasing visibility of the community and the on-going struggle for their basic entitlements and rights and the state's patchy concern with the welfare of the community, the time seems ripe for a concerted effort to document, articulate and advocate the cause of the TGs and mainstream their concerns in the planning and budgetary process of the country, within the broad framework of Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB).

This study focussed on systematically analysing the present conditions of the TG community; whether government spending (general spending on social welfare schemes) has adequately addressed the needs and whether the services have been accessed by the community; whether specific programmes for the community have been designed and implemented; whether a fair amount has been allocated for the community and whether the spending has reached the community.

---

<sup>5</sup> Human Rights Violations against the Transgender Community: A Study of Kothi and Hijra Sex Workers in Bangalore, PUCL-K, September, 2003.

## **2. Study Process**

### **2.1 Objectives**

The overall aims and objectives of the Intersectionality Framework to Track Budgets for Transgender Communities study are:

- a. To conduct research on Union/ state government policy and budgetary commitments for the Transgender community to identify gaps and limitations in policy formulation and implementation
- b. To track and monitor budgets for the Transgender community (depending on the scope of the research)

### **2.2 Methodology**

The methodology comprised a mix of secondary research and primary data collection to:

- a. Document the various forms of discrimination, exclusions and violations of rights faced by transgender communities in India
- b. Analyse policies, budgetary processes and commitments towards the community.

The intersectionality framework has been used to document the multidimensional nature of discrimination, exclusions and violations of rights faced by the community and to demonstrate the extent of marginalisation of the community. The sample for the study was drawn entirely from the state of Tamil Nadu. The study has focused on transgender women (male to female) and hence the issues discussed, analysed and presented in the report are principally relevant for transgender women in Tamil Nadu. The following methods and tools were applied in the study.

#### **2.2.1 Literature review**

The process began with a comprehensive desk review of literature and focused on:

- a. Studies and research papers on multiple identities of transgender communities including their caste, race and other socio-cultural and economic stratifications of identities from a historical perspective to understand intersectional dimensions of discrimination and exclusions faced by the transgender communities and
- b. Documents of legislations, policies, programme designs and budgetary allocations and responsiveness by centre/ state governments and different departments for the development of transgender communities from various sources such as the Internet, published books and periodicals, the TG Welfare Board and the Madras Institute of Development Studies library in Chennai.

#### **2.2.2 Focus group discussions**

Ten focus groups discussions (FGD) were conducted overall including four in Chennai, and one FGD each in Tuticorin, Villupuram, Coimbatore, Erode, Madurai and Kancheepuram, with selected leaders of TG communities. These discussions explored life situations of TG communities in their families, educational institutions; spaces used for livelihoods, larger society interactions and accessing rights, entitlements and services from various service providers. Further these discussions analysed issues related to availability and access of various welfare schemes and entitlements provided by the state. Critical analysis of the societal environment where TG communities face stigma and discrimination was also conducted. The discussions generated several

suggestions and concerns of the community in terms of budgetary allocations and policy framework.

### **2.2.3 Case stories**

Case stories were one of the key sources of information and analysis for this study. Issues related to multiple discriminations clearly unfolded through 34 case stories collected from across selected individual from nine districts (Chennai, Kancheepuram, Thiruvallur, Tuticorin, Madurai, Villupuram, Pondicherry, Coimbatore and Erode) of Tamil Nadu, of which 31 are included in the annexure of this report. (Three respondents did not want their case stories attached to the report but were willing to share their experiences). Respondents of 31 case stories that are presented in the report have shared their written consent (and can be shared upon request).

### **2.2.4 Questionnaire Survey**

A survey format was developed in consultation with selected TG community leaders and pretested before being finalised. An orientation was conducted for eight TG community members who were selected for conducting the surveys. A total of 522 TG persons were personally administered the survey format. The survey was conducted in Chennai, Kancheepuram, Thiruvallur, Tuticorin, Madurai, Villupuram, Nagapattinam, Coimbatore and Erode districts of Tamil Nadu. The survey format was translated in Tamil to facilitate data collection and the overall objective of the survey was to understand the full range and magnitude of experiences of discrimination and marginalization of transgender women.

#### **2.2.4.1 Sampling Frame**

There is a marked paucity of statistics on transgender population in the country as well as in Tamil Nadu. The State and community leadership throughout the course of this study reiterated the need for a comprehensive mapping and enumeration of the community. Data compiled by the Transgender Welfare Board 2011 was used as the basis for ascertaining the sample size across the districts. This district wise universe registered under the Transgender Welfare Board varies from 14 in Tiruvarur and 712 in Chennai.

A sampling frame was evolved considering the dispersed and mobile nature of the study population in the state.

In step 1, all thirty-two districts of the state were classified into seven segments based on geographical proximity. Two segments constituted around 50 percent of the universe while the other five segments constituted the rest.

In step 2, ten percent of the two segments with 900 population and above were covered while 20 percent of the segment with 227 to 455 population were covered.

In step 3, respondents were recruited using a snowballing technique given the hidden nature of the community.

Table 1 below has information about the district-wise population details as shared by the Transgender Welfare Board.

TABLE 1: DISTRICT WISE DETAILS OF UNIVERSE AND SAMPLE



Sr.No	Districts	Universe <sup>6</sup>	Sample
1	Chennai	716	
2	Kanchipuram	119	
3	Thiruvallur	222	
	Segment 1 Total	1057	112
4	Erode	128	
5	Dindugul	134	
6	Salem	157	
7	Namakkal	110	
8	Thiruchirappalli	155	
9	Dharmapuri	65	
10	Kirishnahiri	32	
11	Vellore	181	
	Segment 2 Total	962	100
12	Pudukkottai	18	
13	Thoothukkudi	68	
14	Kanyakumari	40	
15	Thanjavur	76	
16	Tirunelveli	49	
17	Ramanathapuram	104	
18	Sivagangai	77	
	Segment 3 Total	432	77
19	Nagappattinam	49	
20	Cuddalore	178	
21	Perambalur	19	
22	Ariyalur	24	
	Segment 4 Total	270	50
23	Virudhunagar	116	
24	Madurai	212	
25	Theni	127	
	Segment 5 Total	455	44
26	Coimbatore	332	
27	Nilgiri	16	
28	Tiruppur	25	
29	Karur	49	
	Segment 6 Total	422	89
30	Viluppuram	160	
31	Tiruvarur	14	
32	Thiruvannamalai	115	
	Segment 7 Total	289	50
	<b>Total</b>	<b>3877</b>	<b>522</b>

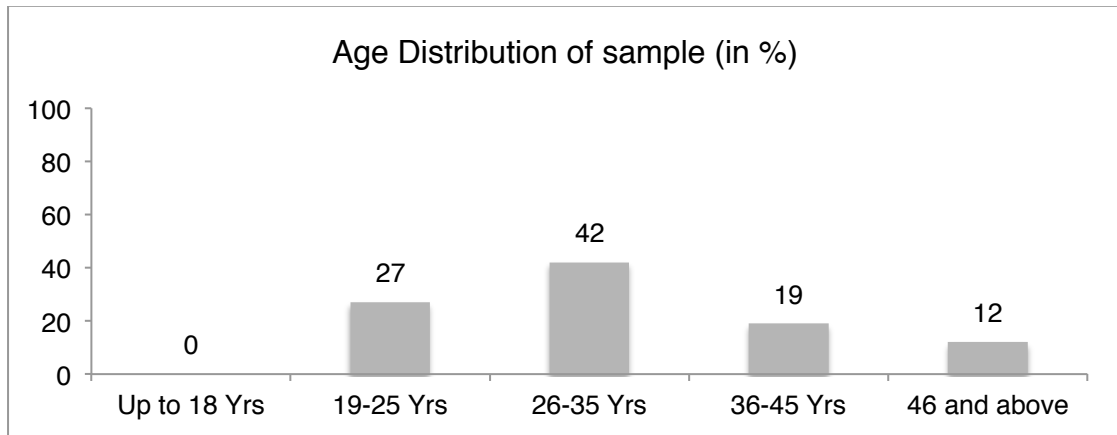
#### 2.2.4.2 Demographic and Socio-Economic Profile of Respondents

The study covered adolescents, adults, the aged, self-employed, employed in private firms, employed with NGOs, sex workers, engaging in begging, artists – drama actors and dancers, various religious denominations, activists, writers, TGs who have undergone sex reassignment surgery (SRS), who have not undergone SRS, cross dressers, those transitioning from MSM to TG, migrants, different castes, CBO members, CBO leaders, those who live with family, those who live with Jamaat, those living with

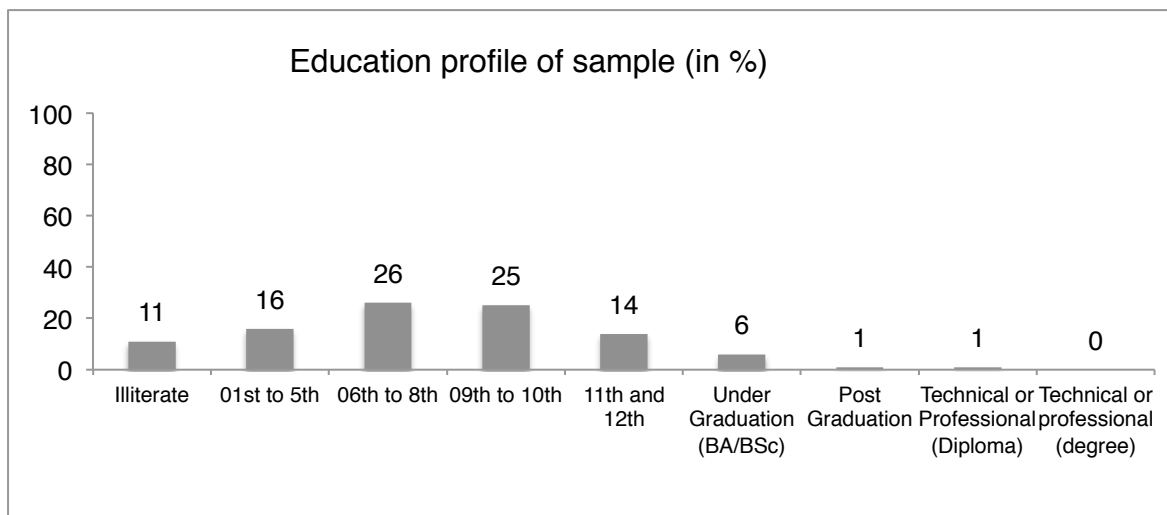
<sup>6</sup> As registered under the TG Welfare Board 2011

friends, those living alone etc. The age (Figure 1) and education (Figure 2) wise profile of the sample is given below:

**Figure 1: Age distribution of sample**



**Figure 2: Education profile of sample**



### 2.2.5 Key informant interviews with the Transgender Welfare Board non-official members

Key informant interviews were conducted with non-official members (Transgender representatives) of the Transgender Welfare Board and the officer in charge of Transgender Welfare Board, Social Welfare Department, Government of Tamil Nadu.

### 2.2.6 Round Table

A round table was organised in Chennai and participants included transgender women, CBO and network leaders, writers, activists and transgender representatives of the welfare board. Key findings and recommendations of the study were presented and reviewed by the participants. The recommendations made by them have been incorporated in this report.

### 3. Concept of Intersectionality

The concept of intersectionality envisages a rethinking of the dominant notion of discrimination, where subordination and disadvantage are articulated along a single categorical axis, which is seen as limiting. Kimberle Williams Crenshaw, a legal theorist, coined the term in the context of Black women's studies recognising the problematic consequence of the tendency to treat race and gender as mutually exclusive categories. The single axis analysis, Kimberle argued, distorts the multidimensionality of Black women's experiences<sup>7</sup>. The term has since been widely used in social justice advocacy and has been recognised as an important perspective in international covenants. It has been used as a lens to broaden the understanding of what constitutes discrimination, how myriad factors operate together rather than in a mutually exclusive way and how pre-conceived and artificially imposed categories of analysis of discrimination and marginalisation may be limiting in nature.

In the context of transgender communities, existing categories and concepts of discrimination are not sufficient to understand the breadth of the marginalisation and discrimination the community has suffered and continues to suffer. It is only through an intersectional approach that the complete range and multidimensionality of the discrimination can be broached.

The lived experiences of discrimination, stigma, violence and exclusion faced by the transgender community cannot be compartmentalised into neat categories of either class, caste, gender, religion, status or others. Often the experience of discrimination may be fuelled by just the fact that they are transgender, but beneath the experience are likely to be multiple layers of stigma and ostracism faced by the transgender person at various stages of their life. These are more likely to play out, not in isolation of one another, but in tandem. Besides the fact that the full range of discrimination suffered by a transgender person is best understood in terms of them being at the crossroads of the existing categories of class, gender, caste, status and so on, it is also imperative to look at other related issues and sources of discrimination such as real or perceived association with sex work, begging, criminalized activities and real or perceived HIV status.

Two other things merit consideration. Firstly, in the case of transgender persons, the search for 'the perpetrator' (a single perpetrator) of discrimination and marginalisation is perhaps best dropped. One must look instead for 'the perpetrators' (multiple). For an ostracised transgender person, the culprit might equally be the family - the very institution expected to function as a primary unit to uphold human rights<sup>8</sup>, and/or the society. The question that arises is how can this be stopped through the planning and budgetary process. Where the perpetrators of discrimination include the family and society, apart from the state, the police and various government departments, and where the acts of discrimination and violation are a continuous and unending process, corrective measures may be relatively complex to formulate and implement.

The other point that needs to be reiterated is the fact that a seemingly single and isolated act of discrimination faced by a transgender must be firstly deconstructed to understand the series of acts of discrimination that have culminated in that one single act, and the series of impacts these are likely to have on the life of the TG; and secondly, the act of discrimination must not be viewed as a chance happening. The 2001 Peoples

---

<sup>7</sup> Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics", University of Chicago Legal Forum, 1989.

<sup>8</sup> PUCL: Human Rights Violations against the Transgender Community: A PUCL Report A Study of Kothi and Hijra Sex Workers in Bangalore, September, 2003.

Union for Civil Liberty – Karnataka (PUCL-K Report), which was the result of an investigation into human rights violations of the sexual minorities in Bangalore, noted how it was impossible to discuss and understand police harassment without understanding the deeper structural roots of this harassment in homophobia<sup>9</sup>. In another report by PUCL in 2004, it is argued that violence against the transgender community, which may appear to be ‘random and arbitrary’, is in fact part of a methodical policing for the preservation of mainstream society<sup>10</sup>. The discrimination suffered by the community is ‘constant’ and ‘everyday’ in nature<sup>11</sup>. Worse still is the fact that even within the group that constitutes sexual minorities and the movement for sexual minorities in India, there has been a disregard and a reluctance to address issues of the transgender community<sup>12</sup>.

### 3.1 The Transgender Identity

Transgender communities have existed in almost all parts of the world, with their own local identities, customs and rituals. They have been variously known as ‘*baklas*’ in Philippines, ‘*berdaches*’ among American Indian tribes, ‘*xaniths*’ in Oman and ‘*serrers*’ in Africa<sup>13</sup>. A rough estimation of gays, lesbians and transgender individuals in India is 70 million, of which the transgender population is 6 to 7 million<sup>14</sup> across the states. Another estimate pegs the transgender population in India between 0.5 to 1 million.<sup>15</sup>

Contrary to popular perception, the transgender community does not consist only of *hijras*. Transgender communities are quite diverse on several accounts. These include male to female transgender, female to male transgender, those who have undergone sex reassignment surgery (SRS), those who have not, some who identify themselves as heterosexual, some who identify themselves as homosexual and others who are multi-sexual. The transsexual and transgender diversities in India include, *hijra, kothi, jogappa, khusra, kojja, aravani, khwaaja sira, pavaiyaa, napunsakudu, maada, thiru nangai, ali* (term is now considered derogatory) and *durani*. The nomenclature *Kothi* is common across India, similar to the Kathoey of Thailand. *Kothis* are regarded as feminine men or boys who take a feminine role in sex with men, but do not live in communes as hijras do. *Hijras* and *Aravanis* undergo genital modifications - *nirwaan* (traditional mode of castration) or sex reassignment surgery (SRS) to be the “true” *hijras/ aravanis/ transgender*. *Kothis* do not undergo SRS/nirwan<sup>16</sup>. Most transgender individuals belong to various caste communities and constitute highly complex socio-cultural diversities within each category.

Male-to-female transgender Indians (mostly in south India) live in communes, known as

<sup>9</sup> PUCL: Human rights violations against sexuality minorities in India, A PUCL-K fact-finding report about Bangalore, February 2001

<sup>10</sup> PUCL: Human Rights Violations against the Transgender Community: A Study of Kothi and Hijra Sex Workers in Bangalore, PUCL-K, September, 2003.

<sup>11</sup> PUCL: Human rights violations against sexuality minorities in India, A PUCL-K fact-finding report about Bangalore, February 2001; Human Rights Violations against the Transgender Community: A PUCL Report, A Study of Kothi and Hijra Sex Workers in Bangalore, September, 2003.

<sup>12</sup> PUCL: Human Rights Violations against the Transgender Community: A Study of Kothi and Hijra Sex Workers in Bangalore, PUCL-K, September, 2003.

<sup>13</sup> PUCL: Human Rights violations against the transgender community - by Peoples’ Union for Civil Liberties, Karnataka (PUCL-K) September 2003

<sup>14</sup> Humsafar Trust, Estimated: Mumbai, 2009 ([www.neoncarrot.co.uk/h\\_aboutindia/india\\_statistics](http://www.neoncarrot.co.uk/h_aboutindia/india_statistics))

<sup>15</sup> NACO, NACP IV working groups Hijras TG 2011, Hijras Transgender specific HIV Interventions I 1 , Transgender – Hijra strategy, Draft version: 1.0, Date: 5th May 2011, Authors- Laxmi T, Gauri S, Payal K, Revati, Priya B, Jeeva R, Amitava S, Agniva L, Anindya H, Laxmi Bai, Pramod, Simran S, Abhina A, Rajan K, Sanjeev J, Mridu M, Govind B, J K Mishra, Ernest N

<sup>16</sup> PUCL: Human Rights violations against the transgender community - by Peoples’ Union for Civil Liberties, Karnataka (PUCL-K) September 2003

'Jamaats'. This matriarchal structure features an older hijra or aravani as a 'Guru' (or mother) and younger, newly initiated hijras/ aravanis as her 'chelas' (acolytes). There are elaborate rituals that mark one's entry into a Jamaat and acceptance as a chela. These rituals, with their mytho-religious underpinnings, bind them to a structure of kinship in which relationships roles and duties are both implicitly suggested and explicitly performed. Among these duties is the tribute of money by chelas to Gurus from begging, sex work, or other forms of employment, obedience to community norms with regards to behaviour and dress and affectionate devotion. Gurus are expected to provide guidance, emotional support for the young chelas, and advice about undergoing castration/ nirwan<sup>17</sup>. Historical evidence of transgender communities in India in temple carvings, the Kamasutra<sup>18</sup> and reference in various major religions and societies<sup>19</sup> reinforces this reality.

Voices of transgender communities to negotiate and claim their identity, dignity, rights and justice has been highly conspicuous for more than two decades across countries all over the world, including India. Over the period the debates on an inclusive approach and policy framework pertaining to sexual minorities have unfolded a better understanding of sexuality and gender equality by policy makers, judiciaries and governments. Efforts have been made in various countries and forums to bring forth new legislations (e.g. Government of the United Kingdom<sup>20</sup>, European Convention of Human Rights, UN Covenant of Economic Social and Cultural Rights)<sup>21</sup> and engage with violations of human rights on the grounds of sexuality, sexual orientation and gender identity. In the state of Tamil Nadu transgender women activists have engaged in rights based activism to procure some important rights.

The Constitution of India guarantees the right to equality to all its citizens. Article 14 guarantees that the laws of the country shall equally protect all citizens which implies that the State cannot discriminate against any citizen on the basis of their caste, creed, colour, sex, gender, religion or place of birth. Article 15 enumerates the principle laid down in Article 14 and prohibits discrimination - "The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them; No citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them, be subject to any disability, liability, restriction or condition with regard to access to shops, public restaurants, hotels and palaces of public entertainment; or the use of wells, tanks, bathing ghats, roads and places of public resort maintained wholly or partly out of State funds or dedicated to the use of the general public..." Article 16 provides for equal opportunity in public employment "There shall be equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State; No citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth, residence or any of them, be ineligible for, or discriminated against in respect or, any employment or office under the State; Nothing in this article shall prevent Parliament from making any law prescribing, in regard to a class or classes of employment or appointment to an office under the Government of, or any local or other authority within, a State or Union territory, any requirement as to residence within that State or Union territory prior to such employment or appointment..." These

---

<sup>17</sup> Padma Govindan, Shakti, Chennai, InfoChange News & Features, April 2009

<sup>18</sup> Suneeta Singh, Sangita Dasgupta, Pallav Patankar and Minat Sinha : A People Stronger – The collectivisation of MS and TG Groups in India: Sage publications India Pvt. Ltd, New Delhi, 2013

<sup>19</sup> A Sirajudee - Advocate High court Madras Transgenders – Social and Legal Dilemmas: Council of Indian Jurisprudence, Chennai, 2010

<sup>20</sup> Surya Monro and Diane Richardson: (eds) Taylor, Y., Hines, S., and Casey, M: Intersectionality and Sexuality: The case of sexuality and transgender equalities work in UK local government: Theorizing Intersectionality and Sexuality. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010

<sup>21</sup> A Sirajudee - Advocate High court Madras: Transgenders – Social and Legal Dilemmas: Council of Indian Jurisprudence, Chennai, 2010

Articles together form a part of the fundamental rights against discrimination in India.

Non-discrimination and equal treatment is indisputably pronounced in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). The right to health is enshrined in numerous international and regional human rights treaties and in several national constitutions. Article 12 of the ICESCR provides “the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.” The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights elaborated on Article 12 in General Comment 14, from which the international right to health framework is derived. It states that “By virtue of article 2.2 and article 3, the Covenant proscribes any discrimination in access to health care and underlying determinants of health, as well as to means and entitlements for their procurement, on the grounds of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, physical or mental disability, health status (including HIV/AIDS), sexual orientation and civil, political, social or other status, which has the intention or effect of nullifying or impairing the equal enjoyment or exercise of the right to health.” Each article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) disallows every form of discrimination as unlawful and dehumanizing.

Despite constitutional safeguards and international covenants which safeguard the rights of the transgender community and ensure non-discrimination, transgender women continue to not only live at the margins of society with very low acceptance and status within the wider community but and their identity itself is often used in a derogatory connotation. Few employment opportunities are available to them as a result of which their main source of income is from performing (through song and dance) at birth or marriage ceremonies, begging, and sex work. Violence against them, is often brutal, and occurs in public spaces, police stations, prisons, and their homes. They face extreme discrimination, exclusion, violations of rights and denial of justice in health, housing, education, employment, migration, law, accessing institutional services, inheritance of ancestral property and from any bureaucracy that is unable to place them into male or female gender categories<sup>22</sup>. Transgender women communities face discrimination and exclusion not only on account of their sexuality and gender identity but also on account of the inequality intertwined with caste, descent, health status and occupation.

### **3.2 Transgenders: A Gender? A Class? A Minority? A Marginalised Group? A Historically Excluded Community?**

Transgenders are a community, which on the one hand has been included as a third gender category in the 2011 census<sup>23</sup>, and on the other is simultaneously being included in the Backward Class category<sup>24</sup>. NALSA (National Legal Services Authority) has

---

<sup>22</sup> PUCL: Human Rights violations against the transgender community - by Peoples' Union for Civil Liberties, Karnataka (PUCL-K) September 2003

<sup>23</sup> The Technical Advisory Committee recommended to the Registrar General of India that Transgenders be given a separate code and included in the 2011 census. *Transgenders: A separate category in Census 2011*, December 12, 2010, [http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2010-12-12/news/27614381\\_1\\_transgenders-rti-reply-separate-category](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2010-12-12/news/27614381_1_transgenders-rti-reply-separate-category); *Census 2011: Transgenders prepare to be counted for first time*, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/article1075028.ece>

<sup>24</sup> The State Backward Classes Commission of Karnataka recommended the inclusion of TGs as a Backward Class category in 2010, after petitions were filed by organisations working with TGs such as Karnataka State Sexual Minorities Forum (KSMF) and those funded by Karnataka Health Promotion Trust and Karnataka State AIDS Prevention Society. See *Transgenders knock at the door of Backward Classes commission*, The Hindu, March 04, 2010, available at <http://www.hindu.com/2010/03/04/stories/2010030455740600.htm>; *Sexual minorities may be boxed into*

granted TGs the status of a marginalised group<sup>25</sup>. Moving out of the triple identity in the Indian context, in the global context, transgenders are considered a sexual minority, which includes the other categories of lesbian, gay and bisexual along with them (LGBT).

This shows the ambivalence in their identity; or perhaps the failure of existing language and discourse on discrimination, exclusion and subordination to capture the reality of the lived experiences of the community and leads to a series of what seem like rhetorical questions. Should a transgender person born in a family belonging to the dominant caste be included in the backward class? Should a transgender born in a family belonging to a backward caste avail of reservations in a situation where the person was abandoned by the family at a tender age and has since joined the commune and the only social network which provides the person succour is the 'Guru-chela' relationship, which unfortunately is not recognised by the present legal system? Should a male to female transgender person who has undergone sex reassignment surgery be allowed to avail of seats reserved for women in elections? Should a biologically male transgender person who wishes for a sex reassignment surgery but has not had an opportunity to undergo one, be allowed to avail of any scheme meant specifically for women? In the case of an accident or death of a transgender person, who is entitled to compensation - the family, which abandoned the person or the Guru who adopted the person? Should a disabled transgender person be counted amongst the 10% of the world's population, which lives with disability or among 5-10% who make up the trans-population, or both? Would a disabled transgender person be counted among the largest minority group of the world (i.e. the disabled) or among one of the smallest minority group (i.e. sexual minorities)? Should a transgender be considered under the Disabilities Act of 1995? Do transgenders fit into the category of MSMs? At what point of their life cycle do transgender women cease being MSMs? Is it the SRS, which is the turning point or the dress code?

---

*Backward Class category*, Deccan Herald, 07/09/2010,  
<http://www.deccanherald.com/content/80244/sexual-minorities-may-boxed-backward.html>

<sup>25</sup> *Time to walk the talk*, Hindustan Times; February 12, 2011; <http://www.hindustantimes.com/India-news/Chennai/Time-to-walk-the-talk/Article1-661669.aspx>

## 4. Transgenders' Lives and Issues

The current chapter seeks to shed light on the lives and issues of transgenders and the responses in secondary literature. The available literature can be broadly classified into six categories. These include:

- i. Reports produced from the HIV perspective
- ii. Human rights based reports
- iii. Ethnographical accounts
- iv. Autobiographies
- v. Reports of seminars, consultations and workshops; and
- vi. Studies of legal and policy issues.

These are broad categories and a lot of the available literature fits into more than one categories and there are many overlaps.

### 4.1 Reports Produced from the HIV/ Medicine Lens

There has been a significant progress in addressing myriad health related issues faced by the transgender population in various parts of the world. The concern with HIV/AIDS continues to constitute the backdrop of much of this interest. Issues of HIV/AIDS related stigma and discrimination faced by the community have been dealt with in the literature on the subject. There are studies, which look at issues of discrimination faced by the community in the Indian health care system.

The **high rate of HIV/AIDS infection** among homosexual and transgender population of India has been an issue of concern<sup>26</sup>. The need to include MSM and transgender populations in prevention and treatment services has been stressed in various national and international forums. UNAIDS Executive Director, in 2011, spoke of the need to include men who have sex with men and transgender people in India's AIDS response, especially in light of the country's rich tradition of inclusivity and social justice<sup>27</sup>.

**NACP Phase III (2007-2012)** mentioned made a first time mention of transgenders - "MSM including transgender sub-population", along with sex workers and IDUs as the group at the highest risk<sup>28</sup> of contracting HIV. Recognition of the fact that MSM is not a homogeneous category and the unique needs of hijras and transgenders with regard to HIV prevention, treatment and care need careful and specific attention constitutes an important landmark. Until recently transgender women were considered under the MSM category in HIV programmes in the country<sup>29</sup>. Under NACP III, interventions among TGs were clubbed together with interventions for MSM, except for a few sites like Mumbai and Madurai<sup>30</sup>.

A national consultation of MSMs and TGs was organised by UNDP on the HIV related needs and concerns of Sexual Minorities in India in October 2008 at New Delhi. The

---

<sup>26</sup> AIDS stalks gay and transgender Indians, August 23, 2011, Ammu Kannampilly (AFP)

<sup>27</sup> UN lauds India's efforts to provide homosexuals, transgender people with HIV services, UN News Centre, 5 July, 2011, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=38939&Cr=hiv>

<sup>28</sup> Strategy and Implementation Plan, National AIDS Control Programme, Phase III (2006-2011), November 30, 2006, NACO, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India

<sup>29</sup> Hijras/Transgender Women in India: HIV, Human Rights and Social Exclusion, UNDP, India, Issue Brief, December 2010

<sup>30</sup> NACO, NACP IV working groups Hijras TG 2011, Hijras Transgender specific HIV Interventions I 1 , Transgender – Hijra strategy, Draft version: 1.0, Date: 5th May 2011, Authors- Laxmi T, Gauri S, Payal K, Revati, Priya B, Jeeva R, Amitava S, Agniva L, Anindya H, Laxmi Bai, Pramod, Simran S, Abhina A, Rajan K, Sanjeev J, Mridu M, Govind B, J K Mishra, Ernest N



report of this consultation, *Missing Pieces, HIV Related Needs of Sexual Minorities in India* comments on the need to rethink the term MSM (men having sex with men) and replace 'men' with 'male' in order to include within the category eunuchs, who do not consider themselves men. The report further notes that the National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO) has not estimated the total number of TGs, who are a vital part of the picture and makes recommendations for formulation of a strategy to address the HIV related needs of MSMs and TGs<sup>31</sup>. The consultation stressed the need for urgent and special attention to the hijra/ transgender community. This was followed by six regional consultations between May and June 2009<sup>32</sup>. In recognition of the need for and prioritisation of interventions for the transgender and hijra community, UNDP and DFID TAST developed **operational guidelines for transgender-specific interventions**<sup>33</sup>.

**NACO and NACP IV working group on Hijras/ TG** evolved a strategy in May 2011, which is called *Transgender-Hijra Strategy*. It stressed the fact that transgender/ hijras are not a homogeneous group; majority of the community is a "hidden population" and therefore out of reach and the entire group is highly vulnerable to HIV and STI infection. The working group stressed on the need to scale up interventions for the community. It categorically stated that, "Hijras and TG issues are separate from MSM and cannot be addressed under common intervention model". Hence there was a need to develop "a customised prevention model for TGs in India which is community driven and aligned with NACP III principles"<sup>34</sup>. Another important point made by the working group is that the social marginalisation of the community, the violation of its human rights and the discrimination and deprivation they face must be holistically addressed by intervention packages and projects. It notes that members of the community expect intervention packages to address their overall welfare rather than focus only on HIV/AIDS prevention.

*Lost in Transition: Transgender People, Rights and HIV Vulnerability in the Asia-Pacific Region*<sup>35</sup> is a comprehensive review of the stigma, prejudice, discrimination, and the extreme vulnerability of the community to HIV. The concept of a 'stigma-sickness slope' is propounded in the report. The report emphasises the need for research on the community to enable governments to suitably modify their public health policies to prevent the spread of HIV.

Among surveys, which have generated data on the TG community, are the **baseline conducted by Pehchan** as part of the India HIV/AIDS Alliance. Along with Alliance India, the Pehchan consortium includes the Humsafar Trust, SAATHI, Sangama and SIAAP. The programme is operational in seventeen Indian states. The baseline was conducted to generate an understanding of the demographics, behaviour and specific needs of the community. The sample comprised 2,762 MSM, transgenders and hijras in 55 districts across 10 states. Important data was generated on the sexual behaviour of the transgender community.

---

<sup>31</sup> *Missing Pieces, HIV Related Needs of Sexual Minorities in India*, National Stakeholder Consultation Report, October 24,25, 2008, UNDP, New Delhi

<sup>32</sup> National Consultation on Issues of Transgender/Hijra Community, UNDP

<sup>33</sup> Details available on:

[http://www.undp.org/content/india/en/home/operations/projects/hiv\\_aids/sashakt\\_project\\_strengtheningcommunitysystemsforsexualminorities/](http://www.undp.org/content/india/en/home/operations/projects/hiv_aids/sashakt_project_strengtheningcommunitysystemsforsexualminorities/)

<sup>34</sup> NACO, NACP IV working groups Hijras TG 2011, Hijras Transgender specific HIV Interventions I 1 , Transgender – Hijra strategy, Draft version: 1.0, Date: 5th May 2011, Authors- Laxmi T, Gauri S, Payal K, Revati, Priya B, Jeeva R, Amitava S, Agniva L, Anindya H, Laxmi Bai, Pramod, Simran S, Abhina A, Rajan K, Sanjeev J, Mridu M, Govind B, J K Mishra, Ernest N

<sup>35</sup> UNDP, 2012

**Madras Christian Council of Social Service (MCCSS) conducted a survey** of about 200 members of the transgender community in 2007, which revealed that a huge majority within the community was highly aware of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS and their prevention. Apart from HIV/AIDS, the survey also generated data on the educational status of the community, their abandonment by their families, the community's sense of exclusion and rejection and others<sup>36</sup>.

Looking at the issue of HIV/AIDS related stigmatisation, denial and discrimination, a **UNAIDS report in 2001** observed that in the case of hijras, discrimination and stigmatisation stemmed mainly from the attitudes towards their sexuality and AIDS only added to their sense of isolation and marginalisation<sup>37</sup>. The report cites hijra respondents saying that before they tested positive for HIV they did not face many problems in accessing health care services. The double discrimination faced by the hijra community along with female sex workers and gay men is commented upon. Another important observation made in the report is that AIDS related discrimination and stigma faced by hijras not only marginalises them from the mainstream but is also a source of marginalisation within the community.

Basing their discussion on FGDs and in-depth interviews conducted in Tamil Nadu, the authors of *Hijras in sex work face discrimination in the Indian health-care system*<sup>38</sup> have detailed the different kinds of discrimination faced by Aravanis in the public health care system of Tamil Nadu. The double stigmatisation of the community is discussed in terms of first, their transgender status and second, in terms of their presumed association with sex work. HIV positive status confers on the community, a triple stigma, it is observed. The discrimination begins at the hospital registration desk and includes offensive language used by the medical staff, derogatory remarks by the nursing and medical team, abuse and hostility of co-patients, sexual harassment in the wards, problems and complications arising out of the sex change surgery, and refusal to offer treatment to HIV positive Aravanis.

A **UNDP policy brief** of 2010<sup>39</sup> uses a social exclusion framework to summarise the various issues faced by the hijras and transgender women in India. Though the concern remains HIV and health risks among the group resulting from social exclusion, the study, which informed the policy brief embodies a shift in the literature in as much as a strictly medical lens is replaced with a broader social exclusion lens. The social exclusion framework adopted in this study is said to be “multi-dimensional” and “dynamic” and looks at exclusion at various levels instead of focusing just on health. The multiple forms of oppression at the level of society, culture, economy, politics and decision making faced by the community is summarised.

Data on sexual risk behaviours among the hijras and transgender women is cited and the sexual and mental health related issues faced by the community is outlined. Exclusion from social and cultural participation is documented in terms of parental disapproval and disownment; limited public knowledge about people whose gender is incongruent with their sex, atrocities by the police and different types of discrimination suffered in healthcare settings. Exclusion from economic participation and lack of social

---

<sup>36</sup> Transgenders show high awareness about HIV/AIDS: Survey, 2 May 2007, Indo-Asian News Service, <http://twocircles.net/2007may01/transgenders-show-high-awareness-about-hiv-aids-survey.html>

<sup>37</sup> India: HIV and AIDS Related Discrimination, Stigmatization and Denial, UNAIDS, Geneva, Switzerland, 2001

<sup>38</sup> Venkatesan Chakrapani, Priya Babu, Timothy Ebenezer, *Hijras in sex work face discrimination in the Indian health-care system*

<sup>39</sup> *Hijras/Transgender Women in India: HIV, Human Rights and Social Exclusion*, UNDP, India, Issue Brief, December 2010

security is outlined in terms of lack of livelihood opportunities, lack of social welfare schemes and barriers to accessing existing schemes, and lack of access to life and health insurance schemes. Exclusion from political participation is discussed in light of existing legal environment.

## 4.2 Reports of Human Rights Violations

A **2001 report on human rights violations against sexual minorities in India** presents the findings of an investigation undertaken by PUCL-K at the behest of Coalition for Sexuality Minorities' Rights (CSMR) in light of the increasing reports of violence and attacks on sexual minorities in Bangalore<sup>40</sup>. Building upon the testimonies of around 25 gays, bisexuals and hijras, it is argued that the struggle for the rights of sexual minorities, are "integrally linked" to structures and ideologies of oppression such as patriarchy, capitalism, the caste system and religious fundamentalism. The state and the society are the two sites from which violence is perpetrated against sexual minorities. The report explores how both together impinge on an individual's dignity. Violations by the state are subdivided into violations by the police and the law; and the sites of societal violence examined in the report include the family, the medical establishment, workspaces, household spaces, public spaces and popular culture. Findings of the investigation also reveal that within the groups that constitute sexual minorities, a further degree of marginalisation resulting from "low income/ non-English-speaking backgrounds and hijras" is noticeable.

Legal discrimination against sexual minorities is discussed in context of Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, Section 46 of the Army Act, Section 292 and 294 IPC relating to obscenity, non-recognition of same sex unions and others. The various forms of oppression of sexual minorities by the police are detailed. These include extortion, illegal detention, abuse, outing (revelation of the sexual orientation of a person to his/her family resulting in ridicule and shame) and others.

It is argued that intimidation by the state and its organs is underpinned on an "insidious and pervasive culture of silence and intolerance practiced by different sections and institutions of society" towards sexual minorities. Oppression by the dominant culture of heterosexuality and the present environment, which looks at homosexuality as a perversion makes isolation and discrimination against sexual minorities inevitable.

Among sexual minorities, hijras are generally visible 'out' it is observed in the report. Despite the fact that they have a sanctioned position and role in Hindu society, unlike several others, hijras are "despised, punished and pushed" and the hijra existence is "circumscribed by experiences of shame, dishonour and violence". Abuses suffered by the hijras in workspaces and households, in public spaces, in the family, discrimination in employment and education and in the medical establishment are detailed in the report.

Another **PUCL-K report** of 2003<sup>41</sup>, which is a sequel to the report on sexual minorities previously discussed, is a collection of personal narratives of transgenders in Bangalore (hijras and kothis). It shows the harassment, abuse and sexual violence faced by the community in its everyday life. The violence faced by the community is termed "unthinkable", "pervasive", "all-encompassing" and "everyday" in nature. Both the

---

<sup>40</sup> Human rights violations against sexuality minorities in India, A PUCL-K fact-finding report about Bangalore, February 2001.

<sup>41</sup> Human Rights Violations against the Transgender Community: A Study of Kothi and Hijra Sex Workers in Bangalore, PUCL-K, September, 2003.

physical and psychological aspects of the violence are discussed. The violence is “incessant, widespread and an ever-present reality of the daily life of hijra and kothi sex workers” in Bangalore, observes the report. State and societal violence against the community is classified under various headings. These include harassment by the police in public places; harassment at home; police entrapment; abuse/harassment in police stations; and rape in jails. The societal and institutional roots of this violence are examined. The sexual nature of the violence is stressed. The stories documented in the report are narratives of “traumatisation of an entire community.”

The report seeks to explore how hijras and kothis are confined to the bottom of the social hierarchy through overlapping factors of class, caste, and sexuality. The transgender community has faced marginalisation even within the sexual minority rights movement in the country, with other sexual minorities like gays, lesbians and bisexual groups having shown reluctance to take aboard the concerns of the transgenders. This marginalisation of the community even within the sexual minority groups is largely due to the “non-conformist gender identity and class marginalisation” of the transgender community.

Situating the marginalisation of the TG community at the intersection of class, sexuality and gender, the PUCL report explores the historical context in which the community has tried to appropriate rituals in a process of self-validation. The class dimension of the hijra and kothi community, it is argued in the report, impacts their access to education, employment and the kind of violence they suffer. The choices available to the hijra community are structurally constrained both by class and sexuality.

### 4.3 Ethnographical Accounts of Hijras

*With Respect to Sex: Negotiating Hijra Identity in South India*<sup>42</sup> is an ethnographical account of hijras in Hyderabad. The hijra identity and the hijra notions of self are explored through notions and constructs of *izzat* (respect) and *sharm* (shame). The various axes of identity are explored. The author argues that religion and kinship play out as primary axes of selfhood. She tries to show how individuals within the community find their experiences being continuously shaped by notions of modernity versus tradition and locality versus trans-locality. The book is also a methodological criticism of previous studies on the hijra community. While previous academic studies on hijras were accounts by researchers who chose to speak on behalf of hijras, Reddy’s account is based on hijras themselves speaking about their identities. Reddy also analyses the intricate negotiations of identity by the hijra community.

*Neither Man Nor Woman: the Hijras of India*<sup>43</sup> is an exploration of hijras as a cultural category. Nanda observes that in India, unlike in Western cultures, the hijra as a category includes a variety of sexual and gender conditions ranging from ambiguous sexual anatomy, homosexuality to infertility and impotence. They occupy an ambivalent position in Hindu society, evoking both reverence as well as fear. Through portraits of four hijras, where culture, religion as well as biological aspects are discussed, and through intercultural comparisons, Nanda comments upon the male-female binary fixation of the West and observes that in India the hijras play the role of the institutionalised third gender.

Transgender activist Priya Babu has authored *Aravanigal Samuga Varaviviyal*, which is an ethnographic study of the community. The ritual practices and belief systems of the community are explored.

---

<sup>42</sup> Gayatri Reddy, *With Respect to Sex: Negotiating Hijra Identity in South India*, 2006

<sup>43</sup> Serena Nanda, *Neither Man Nor Woman: the Hijras of India*, 1990

#### 4.4 Autobiographies

***The Truth About Me*** by A. Revathi<sup>44</sup> is the first autobiography of a transgender person to be published in English. It is a detailed, indepth autobiography of Revathi and her journey from a Tamil family to which she was born to Delhi, Mumbai and later Bangalore. Revathi talks about her abandonment, finding a *Guru*, her *nirvaanum*, how she takes to sex work, police brutality and so on. Her autobiography is rich in details about the structure and functioning of hijra communities in India.

***I am Sravanan (Vidya)***<sup>45</sup> is another first person account of the transformation of Sravanan (a male) into Vidya (a female). Sravanan's female inclinations and how the lower middle class family to which he was born reacts, his failing academic performance, his computer science degree, his relocation to Chennai and eventually Pune where he joins the hijra community are detailed in the book.

#### 4.5 Studies on Legal and Policy Issues

***South Asia Legal Environments for Men who have Sex with Men and Transgender People***<sup>46</sup> is a policy brief adapted from the UNDP and APCOM report, covering 48 countries in the Asia and Pacific region, titled 'Legal environments, human rights and HIV responses among men who have sex with men and transgender people in Asia and the Pacific: An agenda for action'. The legal environment in India with regard to MSM and transgenders is "improving" it is observed. The 2009 Delhi High Court judgment in the *Naz Foundation Case*, the 2010 Allahabad High Court's decision in the case of an employee of Aligarh Muslim University<sup>47</sup> and several other positive developments in India (inclusion of E category in passports for TGs, inclusion in electoral rolls, issue of ration cards in Tamil Nadu and other initiatives of the Transgender Welfare Board of Tamil Nadu) are mentioned in the policy brief. The overall trend is towards more supportive and protective legal and policy environments, despite continuous hostilities towards sexual minorities in several pockets. The adverse impacts of restrictive and repressive legal environments on HIV prevention, care, support and treatment services are discussed. Recommendations include repeal of laws that criminalise sex between consenting adults; enactment of anti-discrimination laws in relation to sexual orientation and transgender status; legal recognition of gender reassignment and 'third sex' status.

***Crystallising Queer Politics – The Naz Foundation Case and its Implications For India's Transgender Communities***,<sup>48</sup> looks at the implications of the Naz Foundation judgement on hijras, kothis, FTMs, MTFs, transsexuals and inter-sexed persons. Extending the scope of the judgement beyond the mere reading down of section 377, Narrain argues that the judgement in fact provides "the plinth for elimination of all forms of discrimination against persons, not merely on the basis of their sexual orientation but also their gender identity." The judgement challenges the very roots of discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation and the rigidity of 'natural' and 'normal' gender roles. It has destabilised legal conceptions of what it means

<sup>44</sup> A.Revathi, *The Truth About Me: A Hijra Life Story*, India

<sup>45</sup> Vidhya, *Living Smile* (2007), *I am Vidhya*, Kizhakk Pathippagam, Chennai.

<sup>46</sup> South Asia Legal Environments for Men who have Sex with Men and Transgender People, Policy Brief, APCOM

<sup>47</sup> "the right of privacy is a fundamental right, needs to be protected and that unless the conduct of a person, even if he is a teacher, is going to affect and has substantial nexus with his employment, it may not be treated as misconduct" observed the court.

<sup>48</sup> Siddharth Narrain, *Crystallising Queer Politics – The Naz Foundation Case And Its Implications For India's Transgender Communities*, *Nujs Law Review*, 455, 2009

to be a man and a woman, a homosexual and a heterosexual and applied notions of equality, autonomy and privacy to embrace both sexual orientation and gender identity.

***Transgender People's Access to Sexual Health and Rights: A Study of Law and Policy in 12 Asian Countries***<sup>49</sup> is based on a study conducted by ARROW in twelve Asian countries<sup>50</sup> to monitor progress in matters of population, development, sexual and reproductive health rights, and gender equality, as outlined in the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development. Among groups that have been marginalised for their sexuality, issues of the transgender community have had limited documentation. Within the literature on the subject, there has particularly been very limited documentation of the sexual and reproductive health rights of the community, observes Sood. Developments in the region, which have affirmed the rights of the transgender community (including steps taken by the Tamil Nadu government) are analysed in the report for the purpose of adaptation and replication in other parts. The legal and policy environment in twelve Asian countries is examined from the perspective of the identity, health and rights of the transgender population - whether policies violate or affirm the rights of the transgender population. The important observations made in the context of the Indian policy and legal environment include the 2009 Delhi High Court Judgement, the non-recognition of same sex marriage, the provision of SRS in Tamil Nadu within the state's public health care system and non-recognition of trans women in rape laws of the country. The affirmative actions taken in the state of Tamil Nadu are discussed in detail. The author recommends that the policy formulation process in Tamil Nadu should be consultative and participatory; housing, skills training, microcredit, and health services are areas that need immediate attention; and sustained efforts at sensitisation are required.

#### **4.6 Reports of Seminars, workshops and Consultations**

In May 2009, a regional consultation was organised at Kolkata by Solidarity and Action Against The HIV Infection in India (SAATHI), with support of UNDP. The very design of the consultation was meant to facilitate discussions beyond a narrow HIV and sexual health focus. Issues discussed at the consultation included general health, violence, stigma and discrimination, social security, access to information and services. The paucity of information about the transgender community in Eastern India was discussed and the need to replicate the on-going effort in Tamil Nadu was stressed. The need for data was highlighted. Several participants, some of whom belonged to the community, explained the rigid hierarchical structure of the community and the control of community leaders (nayaks and Gurus) over their disciples (chelas), which necessitated taking Gurus in confidence for any development or awareness raising initiative<sup>51</sup>.

A regional consultation was organised in Chennai in August 2010 by National Legal Services Authority (NALSA). Rights of the transgender community and issues of their mainstreaming were discussed. The need to create awareness among people about rights of the community was stressed<sup>52</sup>.

In January 2011, an international seminar on transgenders was organised by Udavaum Ullangal at Palayamkoattai. Representatives from the transgender community played a

---

<sup>49</sup> Neha Sood, *Transgender People's Access to Sexual Health and Rights: A Study of Law and Policy in 12 Asian Countries*, Arrow, 2010

<sup>50</sup> The countries include Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, China, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia, Philippines and Malaysia.

<sup>51</sup> Report of the Regional Transgender / Hijra Consultation in Eastern India, July 2009, SAATHI and UNDP

<sup>52</sup> NALSA Newsletter 2011

leading role in organising the seminar, titled *Transgenders: A Need for Policy Intervention*. Participants, along with the need for policy intervention and changes, discussed issues of discrimination, suppression, exclusion and exploitation faced by the transgender community. Welfare measures taken in Tamil Nadu and a few other states were hailed. The need for advocacy on legal rights of the community was stressed. Union Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India participated and assured the community representatives of the willingness of his department to bring in policy changes and take up the issues of the transgender community in the forthcoming budgetary session<sup>53</sup>.

In February 2011, the National Legal Services Authority (NLSA) and the Delhi Legal Services Authority (DLSA) in association with the UNDP organised a national seminar on *Transgenders and the Law*. The emphasis was on the integration of the transgender community into mainstream society. Constitutional rights of the community and their continued ostracism were discussed at the seminar and integration of the community with the mainstream was stressed.<sup>54</sup> The fact that the community is discriminated both on account of its gender as well as class was also emphasised.<sup>55</sup>

In June 2012, the first national '*hijra habba*' was organised under the aegis of Pehchaan in association with India HIV/AIDS Alliance. The national meet was a culmination of six regional meets that happened across the country in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. The national conference brought together *hijras* and transgenders from across the country and issues affecting the community were discussed. The need for a comprehensive mapping of the community was stressed at the conference<sup>56</sup>.

---

<sup>53</sup> The International Seminar on Trans Genders, An Initiative of Udaya Ullangal

<sup>54</sup> First-ever National Seminar on Transgenders and the Law, <http://www.jagranjosh.com/current-affairs/first-ever-national-seminar-on-transgenders-and-the-law-1297081479->

<sup>55</sup> Address by the Hon'able Chief Justice, High Court, Madras, at the one day national seminar on "Transgender" at New Delhi, 5<sup>th</sup> February 2011.

<sup>56</sup> A society in denial: 'Ghosts' who live among us, demand basic rights, Manjusha Madhu, 8th Jul 2012, <http://www.sunday-guardian.com/artbeat/a-society-in-denial-ghosts-who-live-among-us-demand-basic-rights>; Shobha Shukla, *Landmark meet on sexual minorities: National Hijra Habba Consultation*, CNS

## 5. Initiatives Taken by the Central and State Governments in India

### 5.1 Steps taken to give the community basic recognition and identity

In July 2004, the High Court of Tamil Nadu announced that transgender individuals could choose either “male” or “female” as their gender when applying for official identity documents<sup>57</sup>. Petitioners were left dissatisfied, as their demand for a third gender category had not been conceded.

In 2005, the central government introduced category ‘E’ in passport applications, meant for transgender persons<sup>58</sup>. In 2009, the Election Commission decided to recognise transsexuals as a separate category of ‘others’ in the electoral rolls<sup>59</sup>, which was hailed as a step towards mainstreaming an ostracised people<sup>60</sup>. A 2012 order of the Election Commission of India relaxed conditions for transgenders, with the addition of ‘chela’ (assistant) or Guru (teacher) in the voter registration form<sup>61</sup>. Meanwhile transgenders have been included for the first time under the category ‘other’ in the 2011 census<sup>62</sup>. This is a major step towards recognition of the community.

A historic judgment delivered on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2009, Delhi High Court overturned the 150-year-old section, noting that if not amended, section 377 of the IPC would violate Article 14 of the Indian constitution, which states that every citizen has equal opportunity of life and is equal before law. The court stated that the judgment would hold until Parliament chose to amend the law. On 27 March 2012, the Attorney General decided not to file any appeal against the Delhi High Court's verdict, stating, that Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code was imposed upon Indian society due to the moral views of the British rulers<sup>63</sup>.

Registration for the Aadhar card, the unique identity card being issued across the country, specifically has a column for transgenders along with male or female<sup>64</sup>. It is proposed that with the option of transgender, transsexual people don't need to categories themselves in male or female category<sup>65</sup>. In 2012, a writ petition has been filed by National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) to recognise and grant transgenders a legal status as a third gender and to recognise their rights under Articles 14, 15, 16 and 21 of the Constitution of India. The petitioner also sought direction to the Union of India

---

<sup>57</sup> Padma Govindan and Aniruddhan Vasudevan, *The Razor's Edge of Oppositionality: Exploring the Politics of Rights-Based Activism by Transgender Women in Tamil Nadu*

<sup>58</sup> Siddharth Narrain: Crystallising Queer Politics – The Naz Foundation Case and its Implications for India's Transgender Communities; Alternative Law Forum, Bangalore - July – September 2009

<sup>59</sup> The Times of India: Transgenders to get 'other' category in electoral rolls, The Times of India, December 22, 2009, [http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2009-12-22/india/28096637\\_1\\_electoral-rolls-electoral-system-navin-chawla](http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2009-12-22/india/28096637_1_electoral-rolls-electoral-system-navin-chawla)

<sup>60</sup> S. Dorairaj: Activists have however been struggling to get recognition as ‘transgender’ or ‘third gender’ rather than as other. See S. Dorairaj, Seeking Identity, Interview with Priya Babu, transgender activist, Frontline, Volume 26 - Issue 26 :: Dec. 19, 2009-Jan. 01, 2010

<sup>61</sup> EC makes it easy for first-time transgenders to vote, The Times of India, August 21, 2012, [http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-08-21/india/33301768\\_1\\_rose-venkatesan-young-transgender-voter-registration-form](http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-08-21/india/33301768_1_rose-venkatesan-young-transgender-voter-registration-form)

<sup>62</sup> Census 2011: Transgenders prepare to be counted for first time, The Hindu, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/article1075028.ece>; Transgenders: A separate category in Census 2011, Economic Times, December 12, 2010, [http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2010-12-12/news/27614381\\_1\\_transgenders-rti-reply-separate-category](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2010-12-12/news/27614381_1_transgenders-rti-reply-separate-category)

<sup>63</sup> <http://www.hindu.com/2009/07/03/stories/2009070358010100.htm>

<sup>64</sup> <http://www.iaadhaar.com/enrollment-form/>

<sup>65</sup> <http://www.merineews.com/article/uiaadhaar-project-a-government-initiative/15855258.shtml>



and State Governments to grant equal protection and rights to transgenders as available to males and females of this country<sup>66</sup>.

## 5.2 Steps taken to ensure representation and participation

Tamil Nadu incorporated nine transgender representatives in the Transgender Welfare Board as non-official members in 2008.

### ***Composition of the Transgender Welfare Board: Representative Enough?***

- The President is the Social Welfare Minister
- Other members include the secretaries of law and finance, senior officials heading various agencies like the women’s commission, police, and state human rights and social justice commissions
- Eight transgender community representatives have been included as non-official members of the board and one non-transgender person from an NGO. They have purely advisory roles to perform

The Maharashtra government has reiterated its commitment of the state women’s policy towards the welfare of communities like the transgenders and sex workers. Transgenders have been assured representation in the expert committee, which is going to review the policy<sup>67</sup>.

TGs were left outside the purview of inclusive growth vision of the Eleventh Five Year Plan. SCs, STs and minorities were mentioned as groups for whom economic growth has not been “sufficiently inclusive”. Adverse impact of structural changes on women was mentioned. But there was nothing to indicate that the TG community was considered part of this vision of inclusive growth.<sup>68</sup> The chapter on Social Justice again seemed oblivious of the very existence of TGs. The only categories that were mentioned as “historically disadvantaged” and “vulnerable” were social groups such as SCs, STs, OBCs and Minorities<sup>69</sup>. The only reference to TGs is in the recognition of ‘alternative sexualities’ in the chapter ‘Towards Women’s Agency and Child Rights’<sup>70</sup>. It is important to note that the mention of alternative sexualities is made only in the context of health.

In the various approach papers to the Twelfth Plan however, TGs are mentioned. The Approach Paper of Bihar talks of improving the quality of life of vulnerable populations

<sup>66</sup> Supreme Court of India, Record of Proceedings, Writ petition (Civil) No (s) 400 of 2012 Hearing on 01/10/2012

<sup>67</sup> Transgender, sex workers to help draft women policy, The Times of India, December 1, 2012, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/mumbai/Transgender-sex-workers-to-help-draft-women-policy/articleshow/17435397.cms>

<sup>68</sup> The ‘Inclusive Growth’ Chapter of the Eleventh Five Year Plan said: *“These positive factors notwithstanding, a major weakness in the economy is that the growth is not perceived as being sufficiently inclusive for many groups, especially Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and minorities. Gender inequality also remains a pervasive problem and some of the structural changes taking place have an adverse effect on women. The lack of inclusiveness is borne out by data on several dimensions of performance.”* It further said: *“The vision of inclusiveness must go beyond the traditional objective of poverty alleviation to encompass equality of opportunity, as well as economic and social mobility for all sections of society, with affirmative action for SCs, STs, OBCs, minorities and women. There must be equality of opportunity to all with freedom and dignity, and without social or political obstacles. This must be accompanied by an improvement in the opportunities for economic and social advancement. In particular, individuals belonging to disadvantaged groups should be provided special opportunities to develop their skills and participate in the growth process.”*

<sup>69</sup> Eleventh Five Year Plan, page 101

<sup>70</sup> Volume II, page 193, *“Health care access remains low for many women, especially the poor and marginalized who suffer from multiple exclusions and stigmatized groups such as sex workers and women with alternative sexualities.”*

such as “*children, women, disabled, old and others such as beggars, transgenders, etc.*”<sup>71</sup>. The section on Special programmes for the Ultra Poor also mentions the excluded community of transgenders. Tamil Nadu’s Approach Paper to the Twelfth Plan refers to transgenders as an “unreached population”<sup>72</sup>. It is also important to note that the first ever formal engagement of civil society organisations in the process of formulation of the 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan included representations from the TG community<sup>73</sup>. A significantly positive development is that the **Draft Twelfth Five Year Plan** proposes empowerment of the transgender community. Line ministries are directed to support the community in education, housing, access to healthcare, skill development, employment opportunities and financial assistance. The task of determining “the number of transgendered persons in India, map their socio-economic status in order to create a law to protect interests of the community and improve their living conditions” is entrusted to the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment along with the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation<sup>74</sup>.

### 5.3 Steps taken to look into their health concerns

Steps taken to address the health concerns of the transgender population have by and large been confined by the concern for prevention of the spread of HIV/AIDS. NACP III focused specifically on TGs, although they were considered a part of the MSM category. NACP IV invited TG representatives for consultations. Specific recommendations have been made for the community. There are separate Targeted Interventions being implemented for TGs. In Tamil Nadu four exclusively TG CBOS are implementing TI programmes with the support of Pehchan and TANSACS. Counselling for ART services have also been made available for TGs.

Apart from this, the only other area, which has received attention, is SRS. General Hospital Chennai in Tamil Nadu is designated to perform SRS free of cost. A Health Insurance Scheme floated by the Transgender Welfare Board is also on the cards, and is not yet implemented.

### 5.4 Developments in Tamil Nadu

On 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2003, the Tamil Nadu Social Welfare and Nutritious Meal Program Department issued a government order that said “the problem relating to the rehabilitation of eunuchs need a detailed study”<sup>75</sup>. A Sub-Committee was set up to examine the issues of gender classification and the strategies to be adopted for rehabilitation of eunuchs and the Committee was to submit its report to the Government within a month.

---

<sup>71</sup> Draft approach paper for Twelfth five year plan, Bihar, 2012

<sup>72</sup> Draft Approach Paper for Twelfth Five Year Plan (2012-17) Tamil Nadu, Chapter 9: Social Security and Inclusive Growth. “*The prime objective of the Government is to extend its benefit to all the unreached population of the society and uncovered areas of the state with special focus on widows, destitute, transgender and other vulnerable and marginalized sections. Training is imparted to SHGs for undertaking income generating activities and providing marketing support to these SHGs.*” Further the paper says: “*Financial assistance for transgender and poor women will be provided to undertake income generating activities.*”

<sup>73</sup> Approaching Equity, Civil Society Inputs for the Approach Paper, 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan, A WNTA Publication with support from UNDP.

<sup>74</sup> The Draft 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan (Volume III)

<sup>75</sup> Social Welfare and Nutritious Meal Programme Department, G.O.(Ms) No.201, Government of Tamil Nadu, <http://www.tn.gov.in/gosdb/deptorders.php?depid=29>

On March 6th, 2004, a writ petition was filed in the Chennai High Court asking for ration cards for transgenders<sup>76</sup>. In 2006 the Tamil Nadu Government issued an order *Rehabilitation of Aravani's (eunuchs)*<sup>77</sup>. The order noted that aravanis “live miserable lives”, are discriminated by the society and remain isolated. The order refers to a consultation meeting held in October 2006 and endorsed the recommendations of the Sub-Committee constituted in 2003. These include:

- i) Counselling for children and teachers;
- ii) Counselling for families to prevent abandonment of children;
- iii) Disciplinary action against schools and colleges in case of reports/complaints of denial of admission on the basis of sexual identity;
- iv) A detailed survey of aravanis in the state;
- v) Decision to be taken by Health and Family Welfare regarding legalised Sex- Re-Construction surgery in Government Hospitals for aravanis
- vi) Vocational training and skill development training to be given either through exclusive Self Help Group or as individuals, by Women Development Corporation and small and petty loans to be arranged for those aravanis who had undergone training;
- vii) Special grievance day redressal meetings once in a quarter exclusively for the aravanis to be conducted by Collectors and
- viii) Research on behaviour and life style of aravanis in order to help the Government to take a correct decision on their grievances.

A series of government orders have since been passed to ensure welfare of the community. Steps taken so far include creation of a database for transgenders; a government order for admission of transgenders into government run schools and colleges; free sex reassignment surgery in selected government hospitals; ration cards for transgenders. Seats have been reserved in colleges and universities of the state for members of the transgender community. According to transgender representatives of the Welfare Board, most of these schemes are in papers and not implemented so far. The data base creation was started but could not finish, as there were several disagreements on the way the process of enumeration is conducted and questions about validity of the data so far created. Hence published.

it was not

#### **Sensitisation**

*A one-day module has been developed by TANSACS and used by the State and district level master trainers to sensitise the police force on HIV/AIDS and related subjects. State level master trainers trained senior police officials up to the level of Deputy Superintendent of Police and Assistant Commissioner of Police; district level master trainers trained police in the category of Inspectors and Sub Inspectors. These trained officials, in turn, trained the remaining police personnel. This programme was implemented by TANSACS with financial and technical support from UNDP and the Constella Futures Group in 2009.*

<sup>76</sup> Padma Govindan and Aniruddhan Vasudevan, *The Razor's Edge of Oppositionality: Exploring the Politics of Rights-Based Activism by Transgender Women in Tamil Nadu*

<sup>77</sup> Social Welfare and Nutritious Meal Programme Department, G.O. (Ms) No.199, Government of Tamil Nadu, [http://www.tn.gov.in/gorders/social/sw\\_e\\_199\\_2006.htm](http://www.tn.gov.in/gorders/social/sw_e_199_2006.htm)

The Transgender Welfare Board was constituted in response to the health dangers faced by the community. The 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2008, announcement by the Governor regarding constitution of the Board, followed a public hearing organised by the Tamil Nadu AIDS Solidarity Action group (TASA), Tamil Nadu State Commission for Women and ActionAid<sup>78</sup>. Following doubts raised over the effectiveness of the Board, a Federation of Indian Transgenders (FIT) has been constituted to monitor the progress and efficacy of the Welfare Board<sup>79</sup>. According to TG representatives on the Welfare Board the idea to constitute FIT was only on paper and has so far not been implemented. The Transgender Welfare Board meetings are currently happening but no one is sure what is the agenda, or who is part of these meetings.

Specific schemes implemented by Social Welfare Department of Tamil Nadu for transgender community include providing transgender identity cards, house sites with title deeds, house construction support, ration cards (public distribution service), income generating activities, formation of Self Help Groups, assistance for self-employment – individual and group, free Supply of sewing machines, training in beauty therapy and Fine Arts, Scholarship for Education, Rs.1 crore allotted in the Budget Estimate for the year 2010-2011 as grant to the Welfare Board for the Transgenders. The 2012-13 citizens charter published by Social Welfare Department announces various schemes for transgender such as Identity Cards Short stay home, Family Card (Ration Card), Housing, Accident Relief Fund, Destitute Support, Self-employment, Educational Support (Degree / Post graduation / Technical Education & Training), Skill Building Trainings and Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS).

---

<sup>78</sup> First ever welfare board for transgender, February 2008, One World South Asia, <http://southasia.oneworld.net/archive/Article/first-ever-welfare-board-for-transgenders>

<sup>79</sup> Tamil's Transgender Community, June 29th, 2010, <http://indiaunheard.videovolunteers.org/transgenders-in-tamilneed-jobs/>

## **Budgetary Allocations, Utilisation and Reach of Programmes/Schemes for Transgenders in Tamil Nadu**

An RTI was filed to obtain budgetary details of the TGWB on June 27, 2013 for the purpose of tracking the budget and analysing patterns of allocation, expenditure and utilisation. The application requested for information on budgetary allocations and realizations for the year 2007-08 to 2012-13. The information provided by the Board in response to the RTI is included in the annexure 1. Information was provided only for 2011-12 and 2012-13. The response to the RTI says that budgetary documents for previous years got destroyed in a fire accident. The information that was provided is too sketchy to be analysed in great details. Nonetheless, the information obtained from the Board shows that in 2012-13, budgetary allocation to the TGWB Board for the Pension Scheme was 1.18 crores, of which only 35 lakhs were utilized for 833 transgenders above 40 years of age, which amounts to approximately 30% of the budget. In 2011-12, allocation to the Board was 1 crore for educational assistance, ID cards and 25% subsidy for Transgender SHGs. Out of this amount, 1 lakh has been allocated for educational assistance of which Rs. 48,250 has been utilized for one beneficiary and Rs. 15180 for issuing ID cards to 487 Transgenders. Rs. 55,44,875 has been utilized for TG SHGs for economic activities in which 442 TGs have benefited. In 2011-12, 56% of allocated fund was utilized.

Clearly in 2011-12, the major budgetary chunk has been allocated for welfare oriented economic activities, i.e. 55.44% of the budget. Educational support from the Board has benefited only one TG. There have been no specific allocations made to address the issue of stigma and discrimination, violence against TG and promoting education of effeminate children.

The secondary literature available on the subject provides some more details. Under a scheme for economic empowerment of transgenders in Tamil Nadu, bank loans up to Rs.15 lakh with 25 per cent subsidy are provided for taking up income generation activities. In August 2012, the state government of Tamil Nadu started a "Pension Scheme for Destitute Transgender" and allotted Rs.1.18 crore for it. The scheme entitles impoverished members of the community over the age of 40 to a monthly pension of Rs.1000<sup>80</sup>. Other steps taken in the state include an educational assistance of Rs.15,300 for transgender persons; approval of Rs.13,380 for starting a tailoring training for transgenders in Chennai; approval of Rs.1,05,000 for a documentary film on transgenders; distribution of Rs.2.25 Lakhs to the District Social Welfare Officer, Chennai for starting a beautician course for transgenders; a proposal to start self-employment of manufacturing agarbathis in Tuticorin; Rs.100 crores for group houses for 182 Transgenders in 10 districts; Rs.1,06,81 towards staff salary and maintenance of the short stay home for the Transgenders, which is being run in Chennai by the Government (which is not working at present); efforts in Chennai to get houses for 163 Transgender persons through the Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board and proposal to this effect has been sent to the Slum Clearance Board<sup>81</sup> (on paper). The Chennai Municipal Corporation, in 2009, set aside Rs.45 lakh for a pilot project to build three

---

<sup>80</sup> Transgenders to get Rs 1,000 monthly pension, The Times of India, August 2, 2012, [http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-08-02/chennai/33000445\\_1\\_transgenders-sahodari-foundation-kalki-subramaniam](http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-08-02/chennai/33000445_1_transgenders-sahodari-foundation-kalki-subramaniam)

<sup>81</sup> Address by the Hon'ble Chief Justice, High Court, Madras at the one day National Seminar On "Transgender" At New Delhi, 5 February, 2011

lavatories for transgenders in the city<sup>82</sup>. The Tamil Nadu AIDS Initiative in association with Self-Employed Women's Association, Ahmedabad launched a pilot health insurance scheme for transgenders and marginalised women (read commercial sex workers and destitute women) in Salem district of Tamil Nadu<sup>83</sup>.

Specific schemes implemented by Social Welfare Department of Tamil Nadu for transgender community include providing transgender identity cards, house sites with title deeds, house construction support, ration cards (public distribution service), income generating activities, formation of Self Help Groups, assistance for self-employment – individual and group, free Supply of sewing machines, training in beauty therapy and Fine Arts, Scholarship for Education, Rs.1 crore allotted in the Budget Estimate for the year 2010-2011 as grant to the Welfare Board for the Transgenders. The 2012-13 citizens charter published by Social Welfare Department announces various schemes for transgender such as Identity Cards Short stay home, Family Card (Ration Card), Housing, Accident Relief Fund, Destitute Support, Self-employment, Educational Support (Degree / Post graduation / Technical Education & Training), Skill Building Trainings and Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS).

The response to the RTI filed by Praxis also furnishes information about the reach of the various programmes launched by the TGWB. Details are provided in the Annexure 1, as data from TGWB based on RTI dated June 27, 2013, and see the table 1.1 below as consolidation.

**Table 1.1. Budget allocation and expenditure by TGWB during 2011-13**

Year	Items	Budget Allotment (Rs)	Expenditure (Rs)	Beneficiaries	% Utilization
<b>2011-12</b>		1,00,00,000	0	0	0
	Education Assistance	0	48,250	1	0.48
	Issuing of TG ID card	0	15,610	487	0.15
	Economic activity	0	55,44,875	442	55.45
	<b>Total (2011-12)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>56,08,735</b>	<b>930</b>	<b>56.08</b>
<b>2012-13</b>	Pension scheme	1,18,00,000	35,00,000	833	29.66

## 5.5 Milestones in the Movement for Mainstreaming the TG Community

The Chennai Rally by the Sexual Minorities on 9<sup>th</sup> August 2006 was a milestone in the history of transgender communities. More than 1100 community members from Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh, participated in an attempt to demonstrate their solidarity. Despite on-going Legislative Assembly sessions, the Chief Minister instructed the Social Welfare Minister, to receive the memorandum after the rally from

<sup>82</sup> Chennai: Move on toilets for transgenders sparks off debate, The Indian Express, March 9, 2009, <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/chennai-move-on-toilets-for-transgenders-sparks-off-debate/432575/0>

<sup>83</sup> First insurance scheme for transgender, sex workers, The Indian Express, JULY 27, Jul 28 2007, <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/first-insurance-scheme-for-transgenders-sex-workers/207304/0>

five delegates. The Minister promised to look into it and do the needful at the earliest. Key points of the memorandum were:

- i) State Government to do the needful with union government for repelling Section 377;
- ii) Sexual minorities' problems to be considered as a social problem like child labour and hence Government to sensitise the public through field publicity department;
- iii) Harassment of the TGs should be punishable under eve teasing Act;
- iv) Violations of the human rights in the police stations on sexual minorities to be stopped immediately
- v) In case of any complaints on TGs, they should be dealt with only in all women police stations;
- vi) Sexuality is not a disease. Government hospital doctors and paramedics should be sensitised on sexual minorities and their issues<sup>84</sup>.

In December 2011, the transgender community in Gujarat pushed for a Transgender Welfare Board. The demand was made after a public hearing on transgender and hijra community issues" organised by the Centre for Legal AID and Rights supported by the United Nations Development Programme<sup>85</sup>.

The transgender community in Karnataka also demanded the establishment of a separate welfare board. The Chief Minister of the state not only assured a consideration of the matter but also of "allocating huge money" for welfare of the community<sup>86</sup>. The Mitwa Mahila Sankalp Samiti, a transgender welfare organisation headquartered in Chhattisgarh, also made a demand for constitution of a Welfare Board for Transgenders<sup>87</sup>. In 2009-10, the Vice-chancellor of Bangalore University introduced the 'Others' category in the gender column in the Centralised Postgraduate Admission Application Form. The Bangalore University Academic Council has approved reserving a seat in each post-graduate department for transgender communities under the supernumerary quota<sup>88</sup>. In November 2010 Karnataka announced that TGs would be included in the 'Backward Classes' and would be entitled to pension, ration cards and housing assistance under the reservation scheme <sup>89</sup>. The Karnataka government passed a resolution entitling them to 15% reservations under the 2A category of the Backward Class Commission<sup>90</sup>.

Several other universities have taken the lead in rehabilitation and empowerment of the transgender community. Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University (YCMOU) has introduced certificate courses for the community at minimal fee. There are also

---

<sup>84</sup> <http://www.infosem.org/news.htm#chennairally> and <http://www.sangama.org/campaigns/Repeal377>

<sup>85</sup> *Transgenders push for welfare board*, The Indian Express, December 17 2011, <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/transgenders-push-for-welfare-board/888891/0>

<sup>86</sup> CM assures separate welfare board for transgender community, Jun 25, 2012, [http://www.moneycontrol.com/news/wire-news/cm-assures-seperate-welfare-board-for-transgender-community\\_722412.html](http://www.moneycontrol.com/news/wire-news/cm-assures-seperate-welfare-board-for-transgender-community_722412.html)

<sup>87</sup> Shobha Shukla, The Third Gender Does Not Deserve A Third Grade Treatment, [http://e-pao.net/epSubPageExtractor.asp?src=education.Human\\_Rights\\_Legal.The\\_Third\\_Gender\\_Does\\_Not\\_Deserve\\_A\\_Third\\_Grade\\_Treatment](http://e-pao.net/epSubPageExtractor.asp?src=education.Human_Rights_Legal.The_Third_Gender_Does_Not_Deserve_A_Third_Grade_Treatment); Transgenders demand welfare board, DNA, August 21, 2012, <http://daily.bhaskar.com/article/MP-BHO-transgenders-demand-welfare-board-3676866.html>

<sup>88</sup> Transgenders get quota in P-G courses, The Times of India, July 27, 2010, [http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2010-07-27/bangalore/28295111\\_1\\_transgenders-bed-colleges-intake](http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2010-07-27/bangalore/28295111_1_transgenders-bed-colleges-intake)

<sup>89</sup> Societal Abuses, Discrimination, And Acts of Violence Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

<sup>90</sup> Time to walk the talk, Hindustan Times; February 12, 2011; <http://www.hindustantimes.com/India-news/Chennai/Time-to-walk-the-talk/Article1-661669.aspx>

plans of starting vocational courses for the transgender community<sup>91</sup>. In June 2012, IGNOU opened admissions for the "other" category<sup>92</sup>.

In Haryana, several legal literacy camps were organised for transgenders in 2011 under the aegis of NALSA. The state government amended the Haryana State Legal Services Rules, 1966, to include senior citizens and transgenders in the list of people eligible for free legal aid<sup>93</sup>. Both the states of Haryana and Punjab have taken decisions to consider hijras for government jobs<sup>94</sup>. In 2010, the Punjab Government decided to create a separate category in application forms under which eunuchs can apply for government vacancies<sup>95</sup>. Voter registration and issue of national identity cards to members of the transgender community began in Punjab in 2012<sup>96</sup>.

### 5.6 Inferences from analysis of literature review and steps taken by union and state governments

The steps taken so far have been frittered and pigeonholed. What is required is a holistic approach and a comprehensive programme addressing every aspect rather than any one. By any stretch of imagination if steps taken so far can be called a social welfare approach based on the benevolence of state governments rather than rights of the communities then this must be replaced with an empowerment approach. Besides, welfare measures and other steps taken so far seem to have resulted from small isolated representations and public hearings and public interest litigations.

The report **Coherence Or Disjunction? Tamil Nadu Policies and Progress on MDGs, Poverty, Gender Equity, And SRHP** has assessed the progress in Tamil Nadu with respect to the TG community: **MDG 1: Poverty related:** Housing and employment access/scheme for transgender people, sex workers and lesbians and lack of health insurance coverage for partners of lesbian and transgender people (**Little Progress**); **MDG 3: Gender:** Lesser harassment for transgender women (**Moderate Progress**), Lack of legal provision for marriage for transgender women (**Little progress**); **MDG 5: Maternal and Reproductive Health:** Access of transgender women to condoms and ART (**Good Progress**), access to SRS and master health check-up (**Moderate Progress**) and access to mental health services (**Little progress**)<sup>97</sup>

While all the steps taken together definitely constitute a giant leap forward, these are not sufficient in themselves to address the concerns of a community which has suffered centuries of deprivation and marginalisation and is still struggling to gain an identity of its own. The concern articulated in the national planning process for the community has to be translated into concrete programmatic commitments for the TG community;

<sup>91</sup> Soon, sex workers in Pune will flaunt university education, [Mid-Day.com](http://www.mid-day.com), September 15, 2011

<sup>92</sup> IGNOU opens doors to hijra, transgender communities, Deccan Herald, June 2, 2012, <http://www.deccanherald.com/content/254121/ignou-opens-doors-hijra-transgender.html>

<sup>93</sup> Over 60 or transgender? Get free legal aid in Haryana, Hindustan Times, October 27, 2010, <http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P3-2173372991.html>

<sup>94</sup> Haryana, too, will now give jobs to eunuchs, The Indian Express, April 2, 2010, <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/haryana-too-will-now-give-jobs-to-eunuchs/598877>; Punjab creates 'transgender' job category for eunuchs, the Indian Express, February 12, 2010, <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/punjab-creates--transgender--job-category-for-eunuchs/578758/0>

<sup>95</sup> Punjab creates 'transgender' job category for eunuchs, the Indian Express, February 12, 2010, <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/punjab-creates--transgender--job-category-for-eunuchs/578758/0>

<sup>96</sup> Dream come true: Transgender community celebrates CNICs, voter registration, The Express Tribune, January 25, 2012, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/326911/dream-come-true-transgender-community-celebrates-cnics-voter-registration/>

<sup>97</sup> Ranjani K. Murthy, with Renuka, Fatima Bernard, Lakshmi Priya, Center for Women's Development Research team and Tamil Nadu Women's Forum: Coherence Or Disjunction? Tamil Nadu Policies and Progress on MDGs, Poverty, Gender Equity, And SRHP: <http://mdg5watch.org/>, 2011



sufficient budgetary allocations have to be ensured; the process of planning and budgeting for the community has to be made representative and accountable from the time of its inception. And most importantly, existing schemes and policies have to be thoroughly evaluated, both for elementary functionality as well as for their outreach. Participants of the roundtable in Chennai also reviewed the steps taken for welfare of the transgender community. They pointed out emphatically that most steps mentioned in reports and newspapers existed only on paper and the reality was very different from what was portrayed.

## 6. Life situation of Transgender women in Tamil Nadu

This section of the report outlines the life trajectory of transgender women. Various stages of their lives are described in the section below. These comprise adolescence (between 10 and 19 years of age), adulthood (between 20 and 40 years) and middle age (beyond 40 years).

### 6.1 Stage 1: Adolescence (10 - 19 age group)

All transgender persons interviewed as part of this study realised the feminine drive within them in the age between 10 and 13 and started associating with females in and around their family, school and neighbourhood. Most assisted their mothers in household activities such as cooking, cutting vegetables, fetching water, sweeping, mopping and washing utensils and clothes. Attempts to get more affection and support from family members were common during adolescence.

*"I was born as a transgender. I became aware of my identity and my body and started going through physiological changes when I was in VIII standard. Until Class VII, I would mostly play, dance and talk with other girls. I think there should be counsellors in schools for children to talk about these feelings. I was not able to talk and walk like boys of my age with a manly gait, and I would hold my books against my chest the way girls would."*

- Case story 3 (23 year old Transgender woman from Madurai)

*"When I was 10 years old I discovered that I felt different from other kids. My body was that of a boy but my heart was of a girl. I could not share these feelings with either my parents or schoolteachers. I used to sing and dance as a child, and would get scolded by my family members. Some people would tease me that I behaved like a girl. I felt confused but I could not ask anyone anything, neither my mother nor my schoolteachers. I would be reprimanded and asked to play with boys of my age, to walk and behave like other boys, to learn to ride a cycle - but I wasn't interested in those things. I liked talking to girls, and would find myself drawing 'kolam' (floor decoration) in the house, or putting 'mehendi'."*

- Case story 4 (27 year old Transgender woman from Madurai)

*"When I was studying in seventh standard, I started to feel very shy. I felt shy interacting with boys. I secretly began to admire them. I started to feel that there was a change in my behaviour and dressing pattern. I began to know that I am different. I knew that other boys do not like me. I was different from them. I started wondering why I was different from them. I was scared. I did not know what to do. I was not able to share this with anyone. I wondered why god made me like this. I used to be very upset. I did not know what to do or whom to share this with. I did not have any one to console me."*

- Case story 7 (35 year old Transgender woman from Tuticorin)

*"I became aware of my feelings as a transgender person from my childhood days, right around the time when I was 13-14 years old. I did not share these feelings with anyone in the house. At that time I wasn't aware of any sexual attraction towards men but since childhood, everyone in my village knew that I was effeminate, as I would only do household work. I have studied only up to 3<sup>rd</sup> standard."*

- Case story 13 (33 years old Transgender woman from Chennai)

*"I have studied up till Class XI. I realized I was not like other boys of my age when I was around 11 years old. I continued feeling this way until I was 15. I felt I was different, and that I belonged to another category. I would do household work such as fetching water, cleaning, washing utensils, cooking, despite my sisters being there. I would even sit with girls, delousing their hair! I liked to play with girls, with toys meant for girls and never with boys. My father's friend once commented on my behaviour, saying that I walk and talk like a girl."*

- Case story 17 (35 years old Transgender woman from Villupuram)

*"I started feeling something different in me when I was 11 or 12 years old. I talked and walked and behaved like females. My friends noticed this. They started teasing me by calling me 'pottai' and 'kosaa'."*

- Case story 29 (26 years old Transgender women from Coimbatore)

-

### 6.1.1 Identity crisis

Participants of focus group discussions and case studies recounted that during adolescence when parents and relatives got to know about the feminine behaviour of their sons, many reacted negatively while some reacted with hostility. Sometimes, mothers extended their support and acceptance but they were mostly helpless and feared the fathers' reactions. Fearing patriarchal dominance, mothers often persuaded and pressurised sons with effeminate behaviour to change without understanding the underlying causes. Such instances pushed them to the corners and forced them to repress their feelings, fearing rejection from their parents, siblings and relatives. Most respondents at this age were unable to understand why their behaviour and feelings were incongruent with their assigned gender. They said that this confusion continued until they met someone in a similar situation. Most participants said that their parents would accept off springs with physical deformities but not children who displayed incongruence between their sex and gender.

Boys with effeminate body language and behaviour, boys who show an inclination for household work and for women's make up and clothes are widely stigmatised in society. Fearing embarrassment and ridicule, families force such children to behave in a more masculine way. It is common for male relatives to comment on the behaviour, or walking and talking style of such children. Irked and embarrassed by comments of relatives and neighbours, parents start rejecting such children and even become hostile. There is no attempt to understand these behavioural patterns. Such children are deprived of enjoying their childhood. Most boys do not like to interact with them, as a result of which, they are forced to play with girls. Sometimes relatives do not allow their male children to mingle with such boys out of fear of their sons becoming effeminate.

Participants explained how parents forced such children to change their behaviour out of concern for status and honour of the family and due to fear of social exclusion. Such children are discriminated by their siblings and find themselves in a hostile atmosphere at home. Their body language and effeminate behaviour renders them different, and even if they try very hard, they cannot prevent themselves from being discovered. Parents often do not understand the real cause of their children's behaviour and try to seek a quick and crude solution. Some parents use violence to correct effeminate behaviour while others take the recourse of religious authorities or black magic. Some attempt to 'cure' this with shock treatment with the help of medical professionals. Some cases of admitting sons in mental hospitals were reported. In such an environment, explained the participants, children who do not fit the gender role ascribed to them by birth, often tried escape routes, which took them away from their families.

*"My father came and scolded me for playing with girls. I went home and cried. **My parents beat me up and even burnt my hand as a punishment.**"*

- Case story 2 (32 year old Transgender woman from Madurai)

*"There is no one available to counsel my parents. **If there were some educated people who could explain why I am this way, or about transgender people and their psychology, and that they are born this way, my parents would understand.**"*

- Case story 2(32 year old Transgender woman from Madurai)

*"I feel that a poor family can bear if their son becomes like this (transgender) but a **respectable family cannot bear this**. People usually say that the family must have committed sins because of which their son is effeminate."*

- Case story 5 (21 year old MSM from Tuticorin in the process of gender transformation)

*"My brother told me that **he would kill me because I was born like this**. My brother and father have beaten me."*

- Case story 6 (20 year old MSM from Tuticorin in the process of gender transformation)

*"My brother is creating problems for me even now. He says everyone is asking him why I am like this. He accuses my mother of allowing me to dance, and taking photos during childhood. He says I am behaving like this because she treated me like a girl. People at home say that if this was recognised in childhood and **if I had been beaten up then I would not have become an Aravani**. My brother says his friends tease him because of me."*

- Case story 6 (20 year old MSM from Tuticorin in the process of gender transformation)

*"My father told me, 'You are my son. **You can drink, smoke and if you want to rape you can do that too**. I will not say anything. But you should not become transgender or MSM."*

- Case story 12 (19 year old MSM from Nagarcoil in the process of gender transformation)

*"My uncle came to know that I was missing classes and visiting their (TG's) house. It became a big issue at my home. My uncle beat me severely and **caused me injury with burning firewood**. I did visit their (Jamaat) house the very next day. I shared my emotions with them and showed them injury marks inflicted by my family. All of them sympathized with me and said they would come and talk to my parents. The Guru of the Jamaat visited my home in my father's absence and tried to explain to them about transgenders. The Guru tried to convince my mother that feminine behaviour was not of my choice, that it was inborn and that people like me were also the creation of God. My mother cried a lot and pleaded not to behave like a girl in front of my father and male relatives."*

- Case story 20 (28 year old Transgender woman from Chennai)

*"My **mother became hysterical** knowing the reality of my association with TGs. She told me that regardless of what I do, I should always stay in Chennai and should always come home dressed in Pant and shirt. I went back to my Guru and continued to wear sari... and went home in pants and shirt"*

- Case story 21 (32 year old Transgender woman from Chennai)

*"When I was 12 years old, I participated in a cultural event where I cross-dressed and gave a remarkable dance performance during a village celebration. My uncle (who was to become my father in law as per community traditions) commented that he should have come to my family to seek a girl and not a boy. This angered my father so much that he beat me up badly. **He not only disowned me but also gave me a bottle of pesticide commanding me to kill myself before he returned back from the farm**. I followed his instructions and had almost killed myself. My mother found me dying and rushed me to the hospital."*

- Case story 22 (27 year old Transgender woman from Theni)

### 6.1.2 Sexual abuse by relatives and family members

Many such children are sexually abused by male relatives and in the absence of parental

support and acceptance, they long for love and affection from persons who understand their feelings and behaviour. Therefore, they become easy prey to male relatives. Such children are often also approached by neighbours for sex – and most effeminate boys feel happy at this attention from men, and engage in these relationships for solace, without anyone to counsel them.

*“My father sold clothes on the platforms. I would be sent to give him lunch, and during such time I went to use the public toilet. I saw men engaging in homosexual acts. A boy who was probably around 20 years old, hugged me and also approached me and I realised it felt good. The next day I felt like going again to the same place. At that time there was no awareness about HIV/AIDS, so we didn't use protection when I had sex with the boy.”*

- Case story 1 (42 year old Transgender woman from Madurai)

*“I was 13 years old when my aunt's son initiated sexual relations with me. I enjoyed it, and we continued our relationship. We were caught twice, but continued despite warnings from my parents. My cousin was 20 years old, but I was the one who was scolded and thrashed repeatedly by my brothers and parents.”*

- Case story 17 (35 year old Transgender woman from Villupuram)

*“Near my house there was a man who lived with his wife and when she went for delivery he called me to be with him. I liked him and his company. Then gradually he started making me do oral sex first and then anal. I was not aware what was happening to me.”*

- Case story 21 (32 year old Transgender woman from Chennai)

-

### 6.1.3 Discrimination and sexual harassment in schools and colleges

Participants stressed that harassment and stigmatisation from schoolmates was a very common problem faced by the community. Teasing, derogatory remarks, spreading of rumours about their sexuality, bullying, verbal, physical and sexual abuse by peers, students and teachers especially male teachers are common occurrences and these result in the child's discontinuation of schooling. Forced sexual relationships with older classmates were also reported to be very common. Complaints by classmates to the parents of effeminate boys further escalate the problem. Such complaints usually revolve around the potential bad influence of such boys on other children.

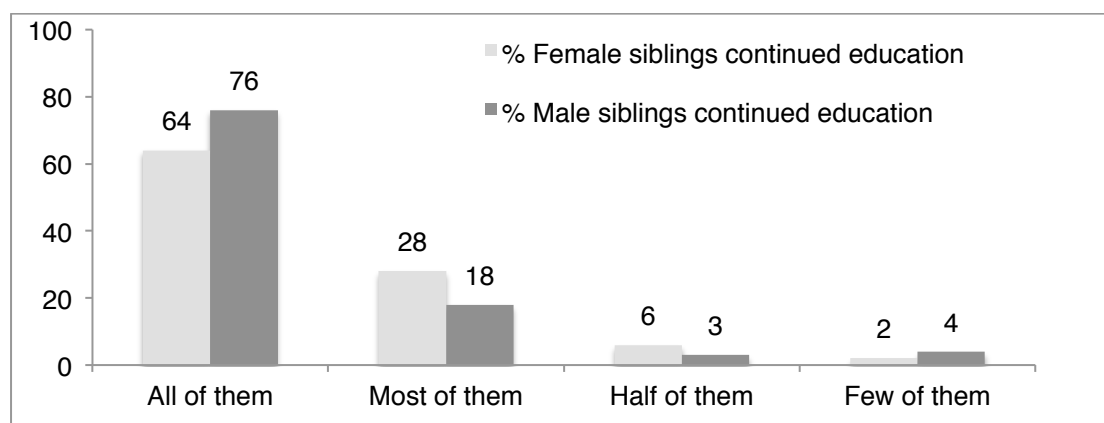
Female teachers often take advantage of them by making them do their personal chores. Participants reported cases of physical education teachers sexually abusing or physically and verbally assaulting them for not performing well in physical education classes or in sports. Many respondents reported having faced harassment and teasing at school. Schools were pointed out as one of the major sites of harassment and ridicule faced by such children.

Children who find themselves in hostile and unsupportive family environments are unable to focus on their education and invariably their performance is adversely affected. Inability to understand the psychological changes happening in them is made worse by the inability to confide in anyone. The school environment renders it extremely difficult for such children to cope with studies. They are often forced into tasks such as cleaning classrooms, toilets and corridors of the schools. Cases of teachers taking such children home to help with household chores were reported. Cases of sexual exploitation by male teachers were also reported. Respondents recounted how in cultural events organised at school, they were stigmatised and forced to perform roles preferred by girls. Constant bullying, sexist remarks and sexual abuse by fellow boys

and teachers forced them to skip classes and gradually to discontinue or dropout from schools. The school management and teachers lack the skills required to solve problems faced by boys who display effeminate behaviour.

Boys showing effeminate behaviour who live in hostels are approached by other boys for sexual favours. If they refuse sexual advances of monitors or wardens they are forced into physically rigorous and straining tasks. Participants and respondents recounted how they would be woken up from sleep in their dormitories and be forced to engage in sex. Figure 3 shows that while effeminate boys discontinued schooling due to stigma and discrimination, 64 percent of the sample reported that all their female siblings continued schooling and 76 percent of the respondents reported that all their male siblings continued schooling. 58 percent of the respondents reported that they discontinued schooling because of stigma, discrimination, exclusion and physical and sexual violence in the schools.

**Figure 3 Education of siblings of transgender women**



*"I was in an all boys' school, and because of this reason had no friends. I fell in love with my classmate but he rejected me saying I was a eunuch. After this, I attempted to commit suicide by mixing poison with buttermilk."*

- Case story 3 (23 year old Transgender woman from Madurai)

*"I had applied for B.Ed, but the college authorities told me that as I was a transgender, I shouldn't come inside the college or apply for a seat. This happened in front of my parents, who scolded me and said I was an embarrassment to them."*

- Case story 3 (23 year old Transgender woman from Madurai)

*"I don't remember a single day when I sat at my desk and studied. I was always sitting on the floor, because I wasn't considered an equal. The boys would pinch and touch me inappropriately. They'd call me awful names, such as "pondu", "pondugachetti", eunuch, "kandu", "baedi" among other things. I'd get beaten up ever so often. I complained to the teachers but they asked me to leave school, so I stopped saying anything."*

- Case story 3 (23 year old Transgender woman from Madurai)

*"In college, there was a lot of ragging. I began to realise that this was one of the reasons why transgender people did not attend school or college. I would cry every night, at the humiliation I faced. It was a boy's college. I would be beaten and chased using broken chairs on the college ground. When the issue of me constantly being ragged came up, one of my Psychology teachers in college asked me, why was I coming to study when I should be*

*working in a red-light area, and sent me out of his class. This continues to haunt me even till today.”*

- Case story 3 (23 year old Transgender woman from Madurai)

*“I am not allowed to bring home a transgender friend. Men are allowed...my college mates or friends can be brought home, they can be asked to stay also... I have done that...but even if they are slightly different in appearance my family members will identify them... they will yell... “ Get out, I say”.*

- Case story 5 (21 year old MSM from Tuticorin in the process of gender transformation)

*“They forced me to carry out sexual activities... when I was in 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> standard they were in 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>. So I was unable to resist... They used to take me to the street corners, dark places and bushy areas to have oral and anal sex... I felt something was wrong... then I slowly became addicted to it.”*

- Case story 5 (21 year old MSM from Tuticorin in the process of gender transformation)

*“ I was appointed as class leader. Once I went to staff room to update the details of absentees and the status of classroom. The teacher asked me to enter the marks in system. He said your class students did not perform well and they scored very poor marks. At that time, no one was there in the staff room. When I was entering the marks in system, he came near me and forced me to have sex. I was not interested in all this. I have suffered a lot.”*

- Case story 5 (21 years old MSM in the process of transforming to be a Transgender woman from Tuticorin)

*“In college everybody sits near me...they talk to me...the staff also speaks to me. In the first year, when they started mocking at me I told them that I was also a human being, and that I was like them, I cannot change my behaviour and I cried. Nobody behaves badly with me now.”*

- Case story 6 (20 year old MSM from Tuticorin in the process of gender transformation)

*“My Math teacher too took advantage of me. I was not all good in Math and took much longer to solve problems. One day he made it a point to send all students out of the class and when I went to get my answer corrected, he did not even bother to look at it and forced me to have sex in the classroom itself.”*

- Case story 18 (35 year old Transgender woman from Chennai)

*“One day my teacher saw me hugging and kissing other boys in the classroom. I requested him not to inform my father but he did and my father beat me up. Everyone at home got to know about me. They were very unhappy and I was warned. There after I did not want to go to school and used to take the bag and go to RPC ground and spent the days there not wanting to meet the teacher.”*

- Case story 21 (32 year old Transgender woman from Chennai)

*“One day when we (my friend and me) were alone in the classroom and were lying together in embrace the others noticed us. They informed the teacher, and the teacher in turn informed the Head Master. We were both beaten and asked to kneel outside the classroom with books on our head. At the end of the day the Master warned me that I could continue with school only if I brought my parents to school. Till then my mother was not aware of anything. The news reached home before I reached and my mother was so furious at me. She shouted at me saying when you are boy, why do you behave like a girl? She beat me up and then burnt my leg. Her frustration was not over with this and she tried to hang herself but luckily she was saved. That brought my school life to an end. I was not allowed to go out of the house.”*

- Case story 22 (29 year old Transgender woman from Chennai)

*“When I was thirteen I started encountering problems. My teacher identified me and he beat me up and my finger got fractured. It was very painful but what was worse is that I could not share it with anyone at home. I told them that since I did not do my homework well the teacher had punished me and they believed the story. Mean while the others in the class and school started calling me names “ Potta”, “Uoose”, “9” etc. Such incidents became common in school. I also had a friend in the class whom I liked. While in 9<sup>th</sup> class I had my first sexual interaction with my friend. But I did not expect my teacher to use me for his pleasure. We had tuitions after school hours and he would purposely hold me back till others went away and then have sex with me in the classroom.”*

- Case story 22(29 year old Transgender woman from Chennai)

*“When I joined the boarding hostel, I experienced mental and physical torture from other boys. After observing my body language they began to harass me. They would switch off the lights, and sleep next to me or touch me. They would write my name on the board and write that I was a eunuch. I couldn't talk to anyone, I had no friends and if I spoke to the teachers I was afraid they'd talk about everything publicly. They would wake me up and take off my sheets in the wee hours of the morning. I complained to the headmaster, who said that I should change my behaviour to prevent such incidents, as my behaviour provoked the boys.”*

- Case story 4(27 year old Transgender woman from Madurai)

*“After completing tenth standard, I joined ITI. I studied for two months in ITI and discontinued thereafter as boys tortured me. The boys teased me. I faced verbal abuse. It was unbearable. They touched and hugged me forcefully. They pulled me. They were very vulgar. I was helpless.”*

- Case story 7(35 year old Transgender woman from Tuticorin)

*“There would be special (extra curricular) classes after school till 4pm. One day I was asked to stay back by this teacher after the class, and help in arranging the classroom after the students had left. After I closed the doors and windows and arranged the classroom, the teacher asked me to come to the staff room with my notebooks. He asked my classmate, who had also stayed back, to leave. I was hesitant, but went with the teacher anyway. When we entered the staff room, he asked me to have oral sex. When I refused, he tried to assure me that no one else would come to know. I screamed for my friend, who came running and saw what was happening. He then threatened to complain about the teacher, and the teacher tried to explain that he was only trying to dissuade me from such things. After that that teacher would single me out in class for scolding. He would tell me to go and sit with the girls or pretend that I had not finished my homework properly”.*

- Case story 30 (25 year old Transgender woman from Coimbatore)

#### **6.1.4 Running away from the families**

Most respondents reported a strong desire to run away from home and be with people of their kind. By the age of 16, most seek solitude. Some said that their mothers were a source of emotional support and that their mothers were more willing to accept them as compared to other family members. But often, family members blamed mothers for spoiling the child. In many other cases however, it was reported that mothers also found it hard to accept feminine traits in their sons. Cases of respondents having been thrown out of their house were also reported. In such cases, with little or no education, respondents were left with no option apart from joining the Jamaat. Respondents explained that due to unfavourable family environments and restrictions on dressing



like women and wearing make up, they looked for opportunities to express their inner feelings. Their repressed emotions make them either assert their identity within the family or get out of these clutches by running away from home. Many children chose the second option, as they do not want to embarrass their family and relatives. According to the interviewees and participants of the focus group discussions, non-acceptance by the family is the foundation of all problems and risks faced by effeminate boys of this age. Many look out for the boys of similar nature. Non-acceptance by family also provokes them to rebel against the family, which exposes them to violence. Constant nagging from family, relatives and society result in such children seeking companionship of similar people. They are denied the right to live in the house and their right over property is also violated. Majority of such children move out of the family after the age of 15 years and are unable to continue their education. Sudden exposure to external environment makes them vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse by anti-social elements and often also by their clients.

Although they are accepted and supported wholeheartedly by transgender groups, they are expected to contribute financially and provide for themselves. It is very difficult to get work for survival and many experience constant threat of losing employment due to their sexual identity or sexual exploitation at the work place. In such situations, majority get into sex work during the night and begging during the day. A few work as child labourers at eateries for their survival where lack of shelter exposes them to various kinds of risks and abuses.

Effeminate boys who run away from their families find it difficult to continue their education with the support of 'Jamaat' or the Guru who provides shelter. They mostly fail to produce any supporting document of age or school last attended. Besides, 'Jamaats' and 'Gurus' do not encourage further education. They persuade and pressurise boys to bring/earn money.

*"At one point I decided to discontinue my studies, run away from home, and transform into a transgender person and live with my kind of people. So I found out the house of someone like me through papers and other people, but left soon after experiencing the atrocities committed in that house such as sex work and begging. I decided to leave. The people in that house said I'd have to undergo castration, where they'd use hot oil for the process. I decided to go back home and live with my parents."*

- Case story 3 (23 year old Transgender woman from Madurai)

*"Since we desire to wear women's clothes, wear make up and live that kind of a life with these freedoms, we are forced to go to these Jamaats and live by their rules because our own families don't accept us in a similar way."*

- Case story 14(30 year old Transgender woman from Madurai)

*"I did not want to hurt the feelings and status of my family. Therefore I decided to move to Mumbai. I discussed with my Guru. She gave a contact and sent a person to accompany me to Mumbai. I stayed in Mumbai for 10 days. I did not like being forcibly involved in sex work. Besides, language was a major problem. Everyday I had to cater to more than 10-15 clients. Therefore I escaped from there and reached Chennai."*

- Case story 20(28 year old Transgender woman from Chennai)

*"I wished to go to Bombay because it was very difficult in Madurai to dress in a sari and grow my hair. In those days, people harassed if they discovered that I was a transgender. They tried to pull my sari or pushed and shoved me on the road."*

- Case story 1(42 year old Transgender woman from Madurai)

*"I don't live with my parents now. When I was studying in 12<sup>th</sup> standard, I kept fighting with my brother all the time at home...he did not like me because of the way I was. So he fought with me and with my mother's support chased me away from home. So I came out... they jointly avoided me."*

- Case story 6(20 year old MSM from Tuticorin in the process of gender transformation)

*"My parents did not want to face humiliation from their relatives. So I was asked to leave. I did not understand what to do. I did ask my mother if I was not her child. I asked them if I was creating any problems for them. I cried a lot and later left for Bangalore. But I did keep in touch with my parents over phone. I kept talking to them. I was trying to make them understand. And slowly they began to understand my position. I stayed there for 2 years. I underwent surgery and then I returned."*

- Case story 7 (35 year old Transgender woman from Tuticorin)

*"My father was a well-known man, who cared for his prestige and reputation. Word about my sexual liaisons began to get around, and people started talking about it. At school as well, other boys who came to know about my inclinations and sexuality started humiliating me. They went as far as insulting my elder brothers. I feared tarnishing the reputation of my father and my family. So I decided to take some money (around Rs.300) from home and leave."*

- Case story 17(35 year old Transgender woman from Villupuram)

*" I left home at the age of 17 due to harassment and restrictions. My family members called me names like "potta" and dictated how I should dress and whom I should interact with. All domestic chores were forced on me. I felt frustrated and decided to leave"*

- Case story 19 (43 year old Transgender woman from Madurai)

## **6.2 Stage 2: Adulthood (between 20 - 40 age group)**

By this age majority of the effeminate boys in rural areas migrate to cities in search of their own community, where they start living completely like women and yearn to undergo Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS). Pressure of marriage is one of the commonly cited reasons for running away from the family. Most transgender people by this time have already entered into relationships, which result in a lot of domestic quarrels. Sexual abuse and harassment continues in college. Ragging and ridiculing by batch mates is a huge problem. College life is riddled with fear. Joining another college is not a possibility. Participants explained that once they are identified as effeminate, getting admission in a college becomes difficult. Professional courses like engineering and medicine are nearly impossible for transgenders to access and so are coeducational institutions.

### **6.2.1 Non-acceptance and violence from family**

Respondents explained that parents think of marriage as a way of preventing their effeminate sons from becoming a transgender. The usual trend is to get them married by the age of 20 or 21 and this is one of the main reasons for effeminate boys running away from home before they turn 20-21. Cases where parents got effeminate sons admitted to mental health institutions were reported. ECT (shock treatment) and witchdoctors are tried in the hope that they will rid the bodies of their sons of the evil spirit, which has made them effeminate. Parents and siblings also exploit for money. They approach them when they need money, but ask the transgender to hide their identity and pretend to be men when they bring money home. Some are asked to pay for the marriage of their siblings but are not even invited for the marriages. Respondents reported cases where

transgenders were denied right to ancestral property. Attempts to murder transgender women when they demanded property shares were reported. Few cases there were attempts to murder when transgender women approached the family in demand of right to property.

*"My family is not aware that I am a transgender woman who wears saris when away from home, has sex with men, and that I have been earning money for the marriage of my sisters through sex work and begging."*

- Case story 2(32 year old Transgender woman from Madurai)

*"When I came back from Bangalore I was not accepted by my family. My relatives and neighbours were confused about my gender. They saw me as a source of humiliation. It took me a long time to make them understand. I spoke to them slowly and made them understand. I had to put in a lot of effort. I explained to them about aravanis. I told them that we are not abnormal."*

- Case story 7(35 year old Transgender woman from Tuticorin)

*"My sister and her husband borrowed around a lakh from me for their daughter's wedding, which they said they'd repay within a week but there was no sign of the money. I'd borrowed this money as a loan from someone I knew so I went with two of my friends to ask for the money. But my sister and her family turned me away saying they did not even know me and I shouldn't be shaming them in such a manner."*

- Case story 13 (33 year old Transgender woman from Chennai)

*"My father expressed his desire to have a house of his own, as he was being ill-treated and isolated in his own home by my brothers and mother. So I gave him the money I had saved which was about 1.5 lakh and jewellery for the construction of a new house in our village. After the construction, I decided to go back to my village and stay with my father. My family members – my elder brothers, sister and their in-laws– decided to kill me. They felt that I was a source of shame for them, their caste as well as religion. My father was staying in the new house, so I'd visit him at times but the villagers and my other family members disapproved of this in general. Soon a village meeting was convened, where my father stated that his son wished to be this way, and he should be left alone. The village headman refused to help us. However, my father asked me to be present during the next village meeting. When I came, he had gone to pray. I was in the house when my siblings arrived. They ganged up on me, tore my sari and beat me. They chased me through the streets after breaking my head. I began to bleed profusely. My friend was in my house at that time but she couldn't help me as they also pushed her to the ground. No one in my neighbourhood came to my aid; they stood and watched this silently. When my father returned after offering Friday prayers, my family descended upon him as well. They began hitting him saying that he had asked a transgender to come and stay in the house and that both of us (me and my father) should die.*

*After this, my family asked me to visit them at night under the pretext of settling my share in the property. I knew they did not wish to accept me, but I trusted them and thought that they wanted to perhaps settle the dispute. I was with my father in the new house and was waiting for them, when my neighbours took pity on me and informed my father and me of their plot to kill me. I left the house immediately and have not returned so far. My father continues to stay there, and comes to visit me when he needs money for his medical requirements. But I am unable to go back to the house or stay with my father because I fear for my life."*

- Case story 13 (33 year old Transgender woman from Chennai)

*"I have suffered a lot, not being able to be a part of my own family. I paid for my sister's*

*marriage, but her in-laws did not even ask me to visit them. I didn't even go for her marriage. I've done a lot for my sister's and brother's children, who are grown up now, but they don't even bother with my whereabouts."*

- Case story 27(47 year old Transgender woman from Coimbatore)

*"I heard that my sister was pregnant and I wanted to visit her. But when I came back home, my parents asked me to get out, and never come home again. I've not had any contact with my family since then."*

- Case story 28(18 year old Transgender woman from Erode)

*"I decided to return home with my new identity. I reached home very late at night so that others would not see me. My family was so shocked when they saw me in pavadai (half-saree) with ear-rings and nose stud. My mother cried while my father and periyappa attempted to beat me. I told them very stubbornly, if they don't accept me as I am, I would leave the house immediately. Our neighbours woke up in the chaos. Later everyone calmed down. None of them slept that night."*

- Case story 29 (26 year old Transgender woman from Coimbatore)

*"I ran away from home after overhearing my parents' plan to poison me. I knew an older TG in my town, and she gave me the number of another TG in Bombay. I decided to go to Bombay using the money I had stolen from my family (Rs.700)."*

- Case story 30(25 year old Transgender woman from Coimbatore)

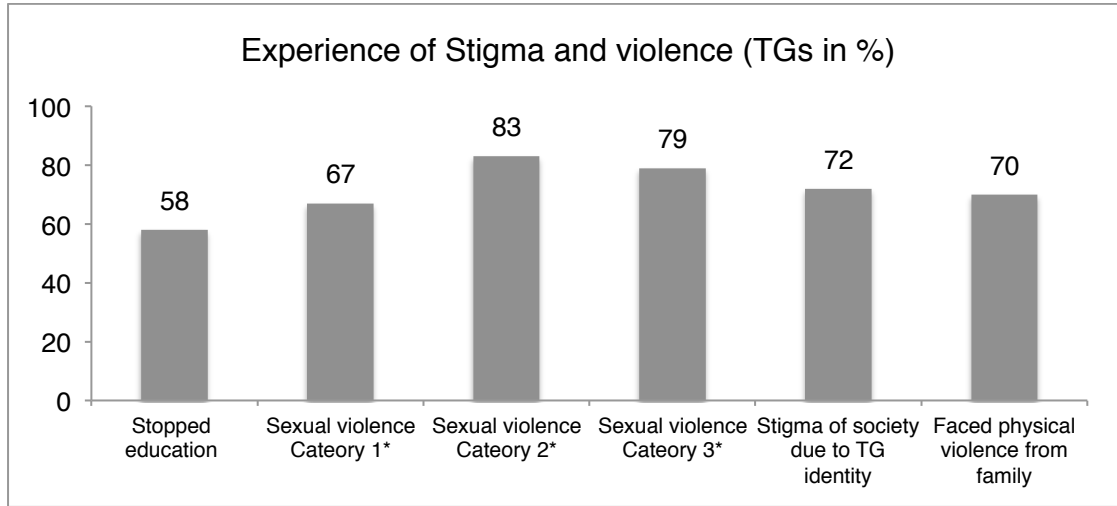
*"The first thing I wanted to do was to see my sister. I went home during midnight, and my dad opened the door. He was unable to recognise me. My mom came to the door, and screamed, having recognised me immediately. They started wailing in front of me, as my sister came and stood speechless. I went inside the house, and locked myself in a room. My mother opened the room, and a few relatives who had been informed barged inside and started beating me up. There were fove of my cousins who beat me so mercilessly that my lip and eyebrow tore, and I still have those scars. They hit me with an iron rod, and broke a bone in my leg. They rummaged through my belongings and threw out my money, saying it was dirty and they didn't want it. I was thrown out of my own house in my nightgown."*

- Case story 30 (25 year old Transgender woman from Coimbatore)

### **6.2.2 Discrimination and violence from Society – house owner, torture by rowdies, rape**

Participants felt that there were innumerable problems living with non-transgender people in society. Many transgender tenants paid higher rents. If 'guests' or clients come home, house owners and neighbours raise objections. Many house owners refuse to let their houses to transgender women. House rent is increased once owners find out that tenants are transgender women. House owners also charge excess money for electricity and water usage. Cases of demanding sexual favours too were common. Some transgender women reported that they had to provide alcohol to the house owner on a daily basis. House owners demand huge amounts of money as advance from TGs. Neighbours oppose congregations of transgender women on important occasions such as 'Paal Ootruthal' after the SRS and complain to the house owner. Society stigmatises them verbally, physically and sexually abuses them. Forced sex and rape is very common. Men think that they can do anything with transgender women and get away scot-free. Figure 4 presents data on stigma and violence faced by the sample. 70 percent of the respondents faced physical violence from the family and 72 percent reported that they faced stigma from society.

**Figure 4: Experience of stigma and violence**



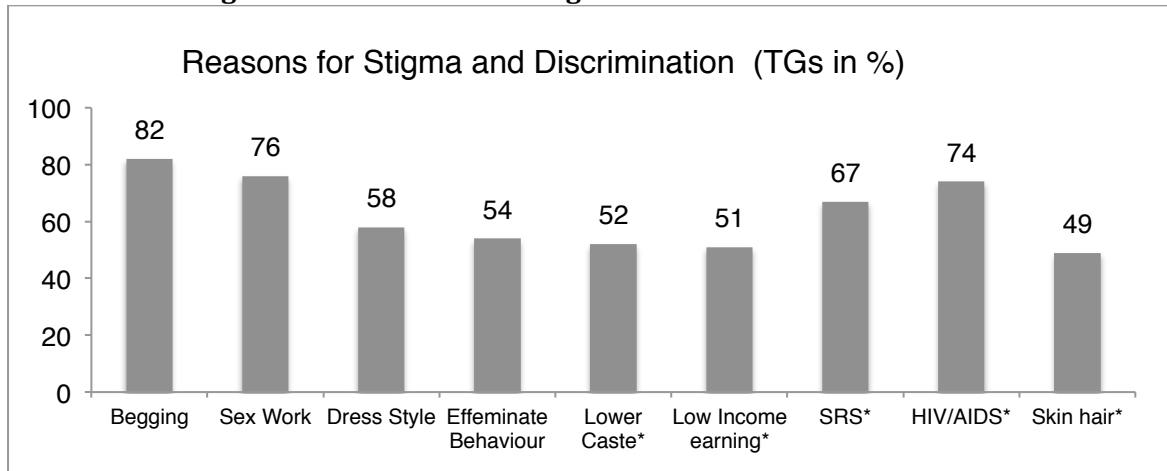
\*Sexual violence has been categorized into three.

**Category 1** includes forced sex from partners and regular clients when transgender women are not physically well due to illness or when they are in mental stress and not inclined to having sex.

**Category 2** includes rape by one or more than one men, usually rowdies or youth groups.

**Category 3** includes pain inflicted on the body while engaging in sex for instance burning with cigarettes, beating severely, biting, scratching with nails etc.

**Figure 5: Reasons for stigma and discrimination**

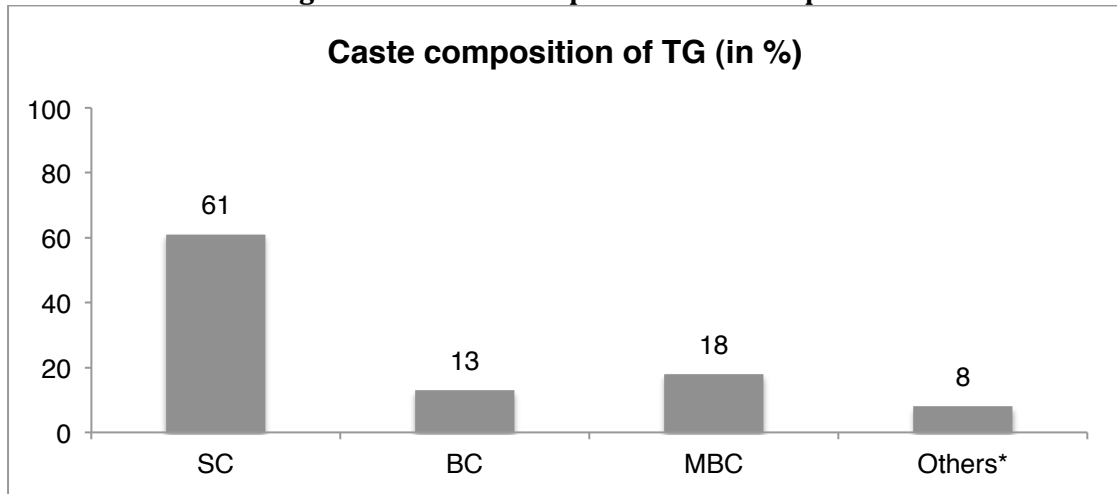


Very broadly, the stigma and discrimination faced by transgender women can be divided into two categories. Societal stigmatisation, which results basically from a disapproval of their trans status which is seen as a threat to heteronormativity. Underpinned on transphobia, this stigmatisation manifests itself in terms of disapproval of effeminate boys, censure of the dress code of transgender women, real or perceived sex worker status of transgender women, real or perceived HIV status, and association with begging. Besides societal stigmatisation, transgender women also face stigmatisation from within the very community they belong to. In-community-stigmatisation is based on caste, earning potential of the community member, HIV status, physical appearance (including skin colour and hair) and SRS. Those who have not undergone SRS for instance, and those who bring less money for the Jamaat due to unattractive appearance are stigmatised and discriminated within the community.

82 percent of the respondents reported that they were stigmatised due to their

association with begging. 76 percent reported stigmatisation on account of perceived association with sex work, despite the fact that almost 56 percent of the respondents were not involved in sex work. 51 percent of the respondents had faced discrimination within the Jamaat due to their poor earning potential.

**Figure 6: Caste composition of sample**



\*Others category includes forward/upper caste and scheduled tribe

Case studies and focus group discussions revealed that stigmatisation, discrimination and honour killings of effeminate boys and men were more severe among the forward/upper caste communities. Hence a relatively smaller number of effeminate boys from upper castes risk joining the transgender women community.

*“Once I was standing outside a bus stand and it was around 1 o’clock in the night. A guy on a motorcycle approached me and negotiated the rate. Finally I agreed for Rs.300/- He took me away to a place behind the bus stand and there were 4 others with him. They brutally used me and finally left me to die there. I was helpless. The next day when my friends came to that area, they found me lying there and got me admitted in the government hospital. I was there for 20 days.”*

- Case story 22 (29 year old Transgender woman from Chennai)

*“Yet another incident happened two years back. A ‘panthi’ took me to have sex and after that he beat me up with an iron rod and broke my leg. ‘ See my scars’ (shows the scars). I had to stay in bed for 60 days in bandage/plaster.”*

- Case story 22 (29 year old Transgender woman from Chennai)

*“I happened to be in a secluded area where there was a lot of dense growth of trees. A man stopped me and asked me why I was alone to such a secluded spot without any money. He snatched my clothes and threw them aside.”*

- Case story 1(42 year old Transgender woman from Madurai)

*“Transgender discrimination is more severe, than dalit experience in urban areas. On the one hand, transgender can only get homes in dalit bastis as these are the only places where we can get any acceptance - but we usually have to pay higher rent than others. It hurts a bit when dalits discriminate, even though they discriminate less than savarnas - as it feels like my own people shouldn’t discriminate against me at all due to our shared understanding of oppression as dalit. It is paradoxical for me to face added social disadvantage as a transgender.”* (Transgender and caste lived experience - Transphobia as a form of Brahminism: An Interview of Living Smile Vidya; January 26, 2013 - <http://sanhati.com/excerpted/6051/>; By Kaveri Karthik and Gee Suleiman)

*“I feel like transgenders who are working class have no dignity of labour because socially they are allowed to only beg or do sex work. We are reduced to the status of just beggars or sex workers. This is similar to what some dalit groups have faced as manual scavengers. This occupational fixity in both dalit and transgender communities, is done by closing off alternative options. Thus, manual scavenging becomes an occupation enforced on dalits through the exclusion of access to other jobs; in a similar way begging and sex work are forced occupations for transgenders through exclusion from other jobs.”* (Transgender and caste lived experience - Transphobia as a form of Brahminism: An Interview of Living Smile Vidya; January 26, 2013 - <http://sanhati.com/excerpted/6051/>; By Kaveri Karthik and Gee Suleiman)

*“It is better for us to have caste and gender based reservation so that dalit women and dalit transgenders get representation. Otherwise reservations will only benefit savarna transgenders and dalit men.”* (Transgender and caste lived experience - Transphobia as a form of Brahminism: An Interview of Living Smile Vidya; January 26, 2013 - <http://sanhati.com/excerpted/6051/>; By Kaveri Karthik and Gee Suleiman)

*“Once I was approached over telephone by a client and I met him on the outskirts of this city in the bushes. When I reached the place, there were two of them. Then three of them came in. Then five of them joined. Then another 7 more. Finally there were 25 of them. They said that they would allow me to go only if I had sex with all of them. This happened 6 months ago. I was not able to manage. But they did not let me go. I was forced to satisfy them. I cried a lot. They took away my mobile phone and dress. So I was not able to contact any one.”*

- Case story 9 (27 year old Female Sex Worker who identifies herself as a Transgender from Tuticorin)

*“Both men had wooden sticks and started beating and chasing all four of us. My other friends escaped. My Gurubai was beaten up severely. But my heart wouldn’t let me leave my Gurubai as she was my relative too. So I could not leave her. I called out to her to escape but she couldn’t tie her ‘sari’. With her blouse torn and without being able to wear her skirt, she was chased from one compound to another in a naked state. Every one on the road was watching her.”*

- Case story 24(25 year old Transgender woman from Tuticorin)

*“I have faced a lot of harassment being a TG. People on the road used to throw stones at me, call me bad names, and shopkeepers beat me up for begging near their shops.”*

- Case story 19(28 year old Transgender woman from Madurai)

*“The house owner was not providing me water and was charging extra money from me because I was a TG. When my house owner came to know I was positive he threw me out of the house and refused to return my deposit. With the help of some of my friends and neighbours I was able to reclaim it from him with much difficulty. I have been shifting from one house to another since and it is difficult to get one.”*

- Case story 19 (43 year old Transgender woman from Madurai)

*“My house owner charges a lump sum as electricity bill and expects me to treat him every day with food or with a bottle of drink. If I do not comply he threatens to throw me out of the house. That’s how I have managed to live in this rented house for the last 5 years.”*

- Case story 22(29 year old Transgender woman from Chennai)

### 6.2.3 Life in ‘Jamaat’

Transgender women leave home mostly because of non-acceptance by family members and social stigma. They look for acceptance, friendship, association with females, freedom to wear female dresses, make up and jewels and hence they join Jamaats. But once they are in the Jamaat they need to earn a lot of money so that they are able to afford SRS. If a transgender woman wants to change or leave a particular Jamaat, the Jamaat leader charges huge sums of money. Although they face various problems within Jamaats, they stay with them because they are unable to find a home of their own or are unable to afford sex reassignment surgery (SRS). Being part of Jamaat, they incur huge debts for SRS, which they have to repay by doing sex work and begging.

TABLE 3. ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF JOINING A JAMAAT

Advantages of joining a Jamaat	Disadvantages of joining a Jamaat
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provide acceptance, affection and love.</li> <li>▪ Provide food, security and shelter</li> <li>▪ Provide support at times of crisis such as police violence, unlawful arrest, rowdy attack etc.</li> <li>▪ Confer a certain status and identity within the TG community</li> <li>▪ Provide means for health care, treatment and undergo regular medical tests</li> <li>▪ Gurus (Jamaat Leader) often dialogue with parents to create awareness on transgender identity</li> <li>▪ Provide freedom to dress up like and wear jewellery and make up.</li> <li>▪ Provide financial support to undergo sex reassignment surgery</li> <li>▪ Provide space to share personal problems and issues</li> <li>▪ Satisfaction in taking up responsibilities and providing financial and labour contribution to the commune and community</li> <li>▪ Act as sources of information about historical, social and cultural aspects of transgender communities</li> <li>▪ Impart knowledge about healthy practices and health seeking behavior</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Constraints on mobility</li> <li>▪ Pressure to do sex work and begging</li> <li>▪ Earning is given to the Guru. Hence no savings. Pressure to bring more money by catering to more clients</li> <li>▪ Excessive subservience to the Guru</li> <li>▪ Severe punishment for disobedience</li> <li>▪ Isolation if affected with HIV/AIDS and discrimination in case of low earnings</li> <li>▪ ‘Physically weak inmates assigned cleaning and menial jobs</li> <li>▪ Indebtedness to the Guru because of the money spent by the Guru on SRS. Inmates have to engage in sex work and begging for several years to repay the Guru and exploitation is common. Often the money that has to be repaid to the Guru is much more than what was actually spent on the SRS. In the eventuality of a member running away without repaying the debt, attacks by rowdies sent by the Guru are common. There is no uniform system of functioning of Jamaats. Each Jamaat has its own mode of functioning and each Guru decides what to do and what not to do.</li> <li>▪ Sometimes members get caught in tussles between two Jamaats with each Jamaat claiming the member as theirs.</li> </ul>



The experiences of transgender women in Jamaats are presented in many case stories.

*"The 'Guru' in the Jamaat began forcing me to have sex with all kinds of people...some of whom were people who picked up trash and cleaned bathrooms. I was not be given a share of my earnings either. My customers would also be rough with me; one of them even bit me all over. I kept crying."*

- Case story 1(42 year old Transgender woman from Madurai)

*"This time I told them (Jamaat) that I did not wish to continue sex work but was willing to go begging. Yet things did not change. Other transgender people living in the same house would squabble with me, saying I could not choose my customers. Because I was forced to engage with all customers, some of them would be really rough with me, and the condoms would break. It came to a point where I was asked to attend to 13-14 clients in a day. I would also be woken up at night, when I was fast asleep, by other TGs who'd collect money from the client, and force me to have sex with the client. This greatly depressed me and I kept crying."*

- Case story 1(42 year old Transgender woman from Madurai)

*"I was at a new place. They dressed me up in a 'sari' and asked me to earn money by clapping hands. I was crying. It was embarrassing for me. But I had a strong desire to undergo surgery. I was not happy. It was hell. I had to adjust to all this. I wanted to earn money for the operation. Whatever I earned I have to give to the Guru. Even if I earned Rs. 500, I had to give it. I was required to give away all the money I earne for one year. Only then they would help us undergo the surgery."*

- Case story 7(35 year old Transgender woman from Tuticorin)

*"There's a lot of hierarchy in Jammats. So when the elders are around, the younger ones will have to sit on the floor or at their feet. If they ask us to bring something, be it water, tea, tender coconut, we have to obey them without any questions. They will not pay us, so we have to make do with our own funds. If you disobey them, you will be kicked and beaten up. This is the reason why many of our people keep moving to different Jamaats."*

- Case story 14(30 year old Transgender woman from Madurai)

*"I enjoyed going for collections, but did not like the idea of going for sex work. Even after I protested they (Jamaat) kept insisting (after the surgery), saying that since I looked like a woman now, I would bring in more money."*

- Case story 14(30 year old Transgender woman from Madurai)

*"We were required to bring home a certain amount of money, and our Gurus knew the approximate collections from each area. So there was not much scope of keeping any money for ourselves. As they paid for our rent and food, we were not allowed to keep any money for ourselves or send any earnings to our family. So if we earned more than what we expected from a particularly high yielding collection area, we'd keep the remaining money for ourselves without telling them. I knew that they put so much pressure on us, so that they can control our lives."*

- Case story 14 (30 year old Transgender woman from Madurai)

*"There aren't many freedoms being part of a Jamaat. You have to be subservient to them, and no matter what you do, they tend to find faults with you all the time. One benefit is that if you belong to a Jamaat, then when you travel outside, you are received warmly as part of a family when they find out that you are from this or that particular Jamaat. The name of your Guru brings you respect as well. I miss the Jamaat only a little at times, but life would not have been easy if I were a part of that system. You are not allowed to live life the way you want."*

- Case story 14(30 year old Transgender woman from Madurai)

*"My bitter life began after I was thrown out of my house and came to the street. During that time, my TG friend took me and linked me to local Jamaat. I started enjoying my femininity in the Jamaat, but I had to give Rs.150 daily to my Guru for continuing my life in Jamaat. To earn this money, I started to do sex work and begging."*

- Case story 16(30 year old Transgender woman from Thiruvallur)

*"I went begging in the morning hours and in the after noon I went for sex work. My earning amounted to Rs.5000 per day on an average including what I received from begging. I stayed with my 'Guru' for five years. She used to give me Rs.1000 per week for my personal expenses and an additional Rs.1000 for clothing. Having stayed in the Jamaat for 5 years I realised that life consisted of long hours of work, no unity among TG members in the Jamaat and no personal savings in spite of all the work. So I had a confrontation with my 'Guru' and left the place. While being there, having different types of customers I got infected with HIV and I became positive in 1998. From then on I have started living on my own."*

- Case story 19(43 year old Transgender woman from Madurai)

*"Even within Aravanis, there are some issues, because they compete intensely amongst themselves. They do black magic behind my back especially when I get new customers. I have no savings as of now, because some of my community people constantly force me to buy them food or booze. I am not part of a Jamaat, because I'll be forced to pay them a part of my earnings. In fact just before this interview, I got kicked out of my rented house and now have to look for a place to live."*

- Case story 28(18 year old Transgender woman from Erode)

*"A few members of the transgender community who are dalit have figured out I am dalit and have secretly told only me because they knew I'm dalit. They have also told me not to talk about eating beef so that no one in the transgender community figures out I am dalit. Some castes though are very proud, such as Thevars and Pillaimars, who are always proudly asserting their caste. I have seen some kothis and hijras and say things like, "I might be a transgender like you, but I am a Thevar in the village"*

*(Transgender and caste lived experience - Transphobia as a form of Brahminism: An Interview of Living Smile Vidya; January 26, 2013 - <http://sanhati.com/excerpted/6051/>; By Kaveri Karthik and Gee Suleiman)*

*"I prefer staying by myself, because if I stayed within the community, they would demand that I share my earnings with them or buy alcohol for them."*

- Case story 27(47 year old Transgender woman from Coimbatore)

#### 6.2.4 HIV stigma and discrimination

Case studies and focus group discussions revealed discrimination within the transgender community due to HIV positive status. Real or perceived HIV positive status was also a reason for societal stigmatisation and discrimination.

*"Worse was the discrimination from my own community of transgender people. I would often hear people saying in front me 'She's positive. She has AIDS'".*

- Case story 1 (42 year old Transgender woman from Madurai)

*"I revealed my HIV positive status to my family after my diagnosis. They excluded me, because they felt if I came to their house and stayed in touch it was dangerous for their children."*

- Case story 1 (42 year old Transgender woman from Madurai)

*"I haven't been tested since the last one year and I don't have the courage anymore. What if they say that I have HIV/AIDS? Where will I go? If something happens, I hope it kills me. Most days I am thinking of how to get the work done and leave, because I can't negotiate with these people because if they refuse to use condoms, I can't do anything about it. I don't think there are many options – there's so much competitiveness among transgender people too, no one really comes to others' aid because they are fending for themselves."*

- Case story 15(22 year old Transgender woman from Madurai)

*"The news that I am a HIV positive, spread very fast among my community members. If one TG comes to know she informs 10 others in turn and that is the speed at which the news spreads. I have been facing severe discrimination from community members. They abuse me when they see me begging saying 'Boochi niee... Vaarathe... Ninne motte Odachiduve ... Dandha panniyal Mande Odaipe' (You are a positive, do not come, if you came we will shave your head)".*

- Case story 19(28 year old Transgender woman from Madurai)

*"People of my community pretend they are sorry for me, and speak ill of me behind my back. There is a lot of competition for clients, so sometimes they'd inform the client of my HIV status in front of me. Even the people who administer ART and the counsellor talk to me in a discriminatory manner."*

- Case story 27(47 year old Transgender woman from Coimbatore)

*"I do have the bus pass meant for HIV positive people, but I never use it out of fear of discrimination. The card clearly says 'HIV positive' which immediately marks me out to the bus conductor."*

- Case story 27(47 year old Transgender woman from Coimbatore)

Respondents reported facing discrimination from health service providers too due to HIV status. Out of 124 cases of visits to various government hospitals (of which 47 percent visits were made for the purpose of accessing HIV related services, another 47 percent for general ailments and 6 percent visits were made for accessing services related to sexual transmitted infections), transgender women faced stigma, discrimination and exclusion in 68 percent of the visits. Of these, 47 percent were from doctors, 20 each from nurses and others that included attendants, security staff, canteen staff etc., and 13 percent from paramedical staff (see figure 7).

**Figure 7: Discrimination by health service providers**

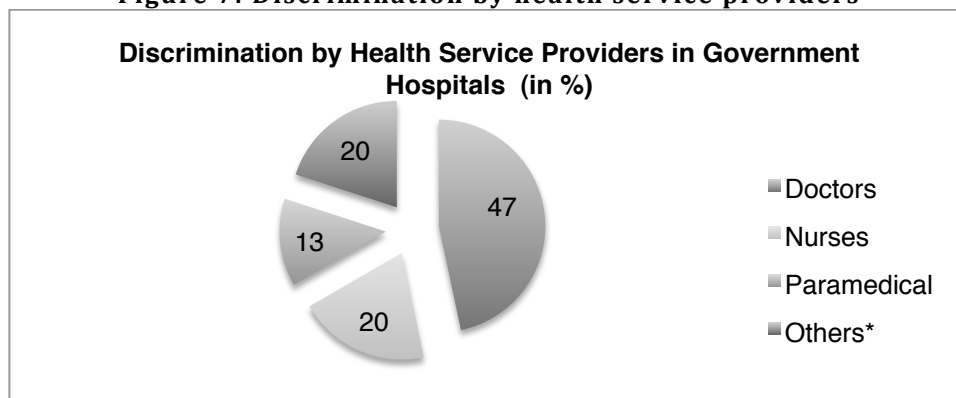
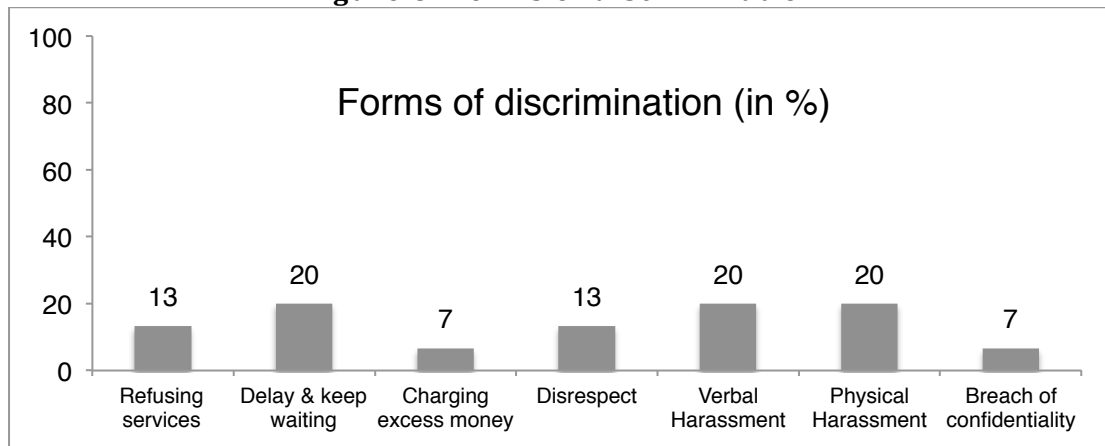


Figure 8 shows the different forms of stigma, discrimination and exclusion faced by transgender women while accessing health services.

**Figure 8: Forms of discrimination**



*“When I go to hospitals for treatment the doctors and nurses never come near me. They maintain distance. So I keep a smiling face and try to be friendly with them. Then I explain to them that we are also human beings. I had a tumour in the lip. I got it operated in the hospital. When we stand in female’s queue they avoid us. They tease us and at times mock us and talk about us among themselves. I used to get angry. I shouted at them and asked how they differentiate themselves from me.”*

- Case story 7(35 year old Transgender woman from Tuticorin)

*“During winter season, my lips cracked because of the dryness. I visited a Government hospital in my locality for treatment. I got an OP chit and went to see the doctor. When I went there, an attendant informed the doctor that I was an MSM and they should not treat me. Having heard that, the doctor asked whether I always had oral sex with men. He also asked how many men I had sex with every day. He said things like how could you suck men’s genital organs through the mouth with which you eat; Didn’t you feel ashamed doing that? He verbally abused me. I argued with him saying that the wound in the lips was because of the weather and not because of oral sex. The doctor said that there are no medicines for this. He also said that it was due to AIDS. He referred me to the STI department. I only had wounded lips. But the doctor in the STI department asked me to show my genitals. Then, he forced me to bend down and show my anus. The STI test was then done. After 4 days, I got the report from the STI department, which said that the wound was not a sexually transmitted infection.”*

- Case story 11(21 year old MSM from Nagarcoil in the process of gender transformation)

*“Once I had a fall and had to visit government medical college hospital and I openly shared with the doctor the fact that I was positive. On hearing that he refused to attend to me and did not give me any treatment and I had to consult a doctor in a private clinic. So most of the time I land up consulting private doctors except for my regular CD4 for which I go to the government hospital.”*

- Case story 19 (43 year old Transgender woman from Madurai)

### 6.2.5 Livelihoods related issues and social welfare

Transgender women have very few options for employment. The stigma associated with their identity results in large numbers of the community being unable to find suitable employment. Many are unskilled when they leave home and join the Jamaat before completing education. Most often, the only option they have after leaving home is to

enter sex work and/or begging. They are engaged in sex work and begging to ensure the guardianship and protection of 'Gurus'. It was reported by respondents that some 'Gurus' are exploitative. They force them to attend to a large number of clients during night and beg during daytime. Sex work makes them vulnerable to HIV/AIDS and other infections. Transgender women in sex work face several other problems such as physical torture, denial of payment. Begging exposes them to rebuke and reprimand. 'Why are you begging when you are not handicapped?'

Another problem faced by transgender women in search of suitable employment is the discrepancy between their birth certificates and their official documents after transformation. The name and sex change after transformation results in confusion regarding whether to enrol them for employment under the women's or men's quota. Exploitation at workplace is rampant. Transgender women are often paid lower wages and subject to sexual advances and harassment from colleagues.

*"At regular places of employment, people harass and tease us. But in sex work, it's give and take. I give my body, and the client gives me money."*

- Case story 4(27 year old Transgender woman from Madurai)

*"I've tried to stop sex work twice in the past. Once when I was in an NGO because I was earning well at that point (six thousand rupees per month). But once I left the job and re-established contact with my parents, expenses increased. So I was forced to come back to sex work."*

- Case story 17(35 year old Transgender woman from Villupuram)

*"After completing ITI I began working in a refrigerator repair shop. But there wasn't enough work in the shop. I had already started wearing make up while going to the shop. The shopkeeper fell in love with me. His wife used to bring food for us those days. When she went for delivery I took up his wife's place. Started cooking and keeping house for him in her absence. When his wife returned, she realised that she had no place and she made sure that I was sent out of the shop. That was the end of a phase of my life. I became jobless. Since I did not have any income and wanted money I was forced to do sex work on railway tracks."*

- Case story 21 (32 year old Transgender woman from Chennai)

*"I was working as an English and Tamil teacher. The correspondent (Manager) called me saying that I have to take "special classes" for him alone at night in his room. When I did not go to his room, he announced in the morning assembly that the management had hired a transgender person, but this transgender person would now be asked to leave. When I questioned him, he said that if I stayed in school, I would influence children in the school to become like me."*

- Case story 3 (23 year old Transgender woman from Madurai)

*"I had joined as a guest lecturer in another college. I went to college in men's clothes. But it was very difficult for me to go into men's toilets or sit and talk with them. The staff members ganged up against me and were hostile. They said that because I was a eunuch I should quit my job."*

- Case story 3 (23 year old Transgender woman from Madurai)

*"I earn my livelihood by begging, dancing and sex work. In addition, I work as a cook as I cook good chicken biryani. I dance at the temple festival and at the event of death. I charge Rs.5000 for performance. Out of my earning I spend around 4000-5000 on food and around Rs.2000 for cosmetics and beautification such as facial, hair straightening etc."*

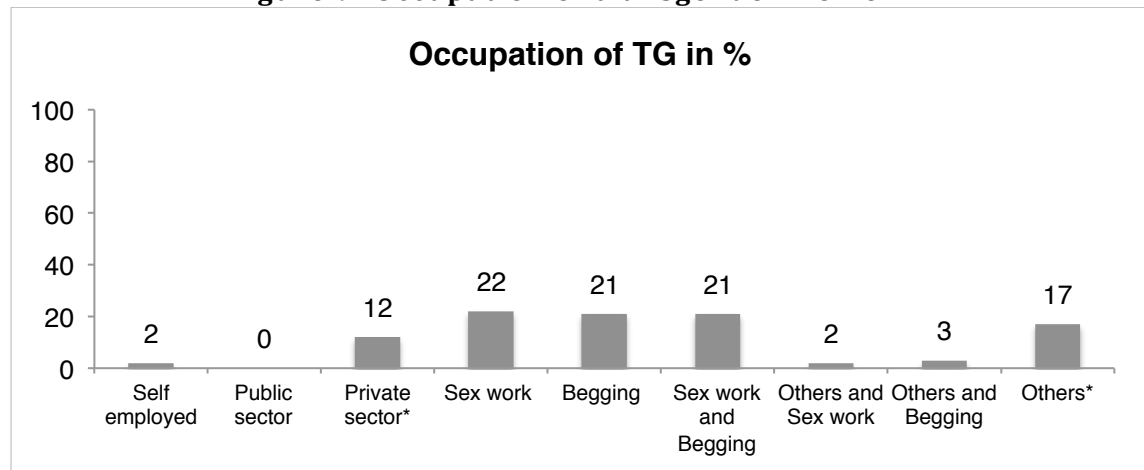
- Case story 29 (26 year old Transgender woman from Coimbatore)

“There is no longer any discrimination or stigma to being a transgender. Now, I am respected by society, my neighbours and family members,” says K. Gunavathi (23), a transgender and native of Oddanchatram, who is serving as a security guard in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit of Dindigul Government Headquarters Hospital on consolidated pay, “The government job brings unimaginable changes in my life and career. Now, I am economically independent. I am treated well in the office and at home,” she said with confidence.”

- Transgender secures job at GH, respect in family and neighborhood – The Hindu, Staff Reporter, May 18, 2013

Figure 9 shows the employment profile of transgender women who participated in the survey. Sex work and begging constituted the major source of income as 69 percent of TGs were dependant on either sex work or begging or both together.

**Figure 9: Occupation of transgender women**



\*'Private sector' includes jobs in NGOs and companies and 'others' includes domestic work, dance, drama, in the shops etc.

Figure 10, 11 and 12 present data on income and expenditure of the sample. These include average monthly income based on occupation, percentage of TGs who belong to different categories of monthly earnings and average monthly expenditure pattern respectively.

**Figure 10: Average monthly income as per occupation**

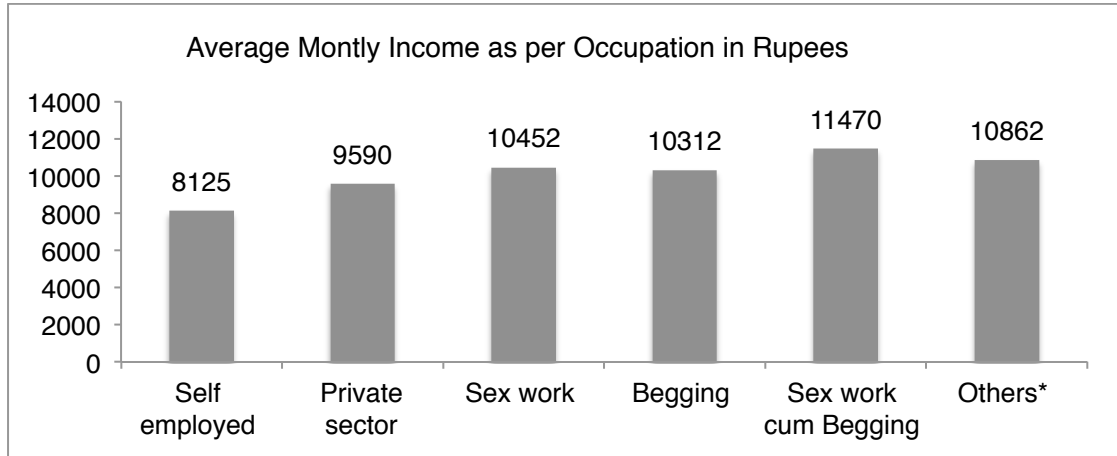
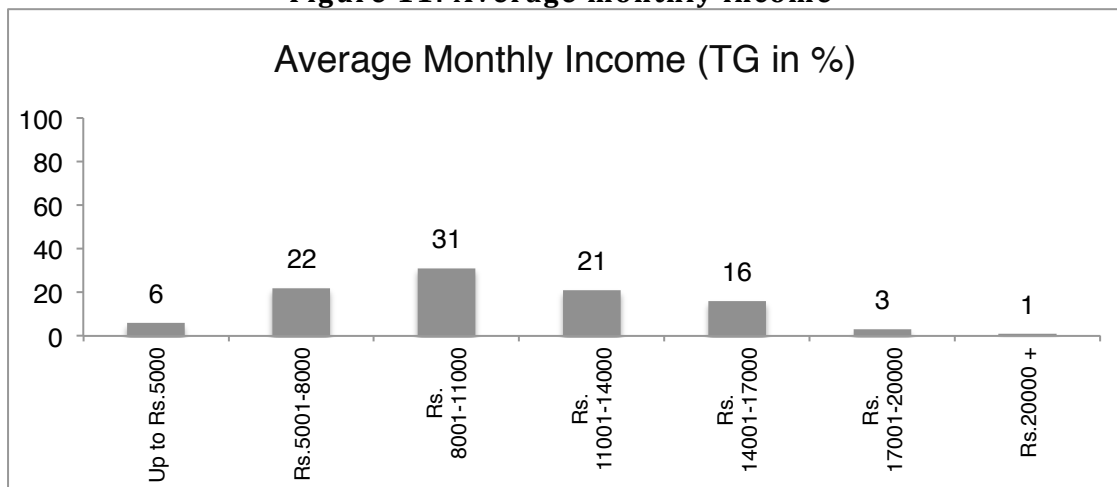
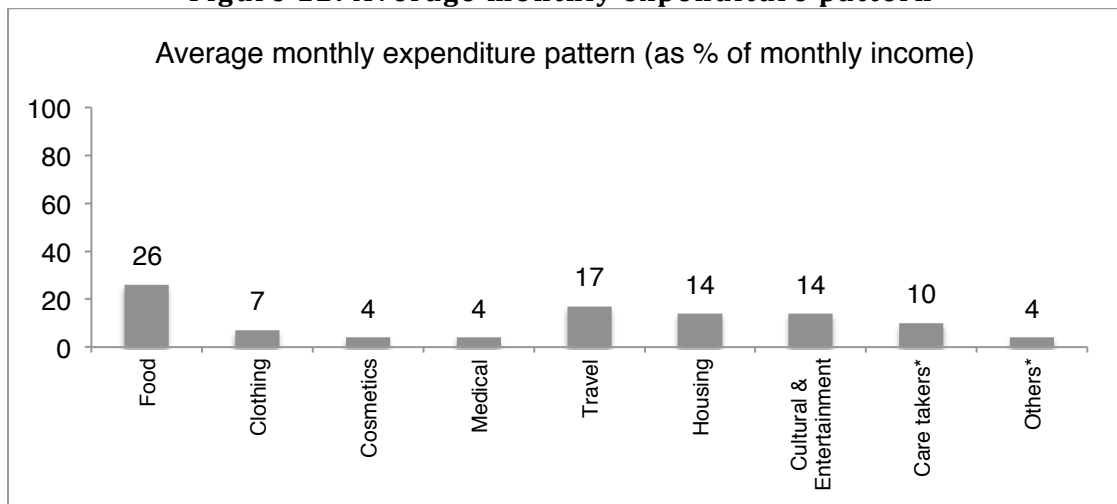


Figure 11: Average monthly income



Though the average income level of the sample is above the poverty line what is important to note is the uncertainty of income because employment in the case of TGs is high risk in terms of health, stigmatization and discrimination.

Figure 12: Average monthly expenditure pattern

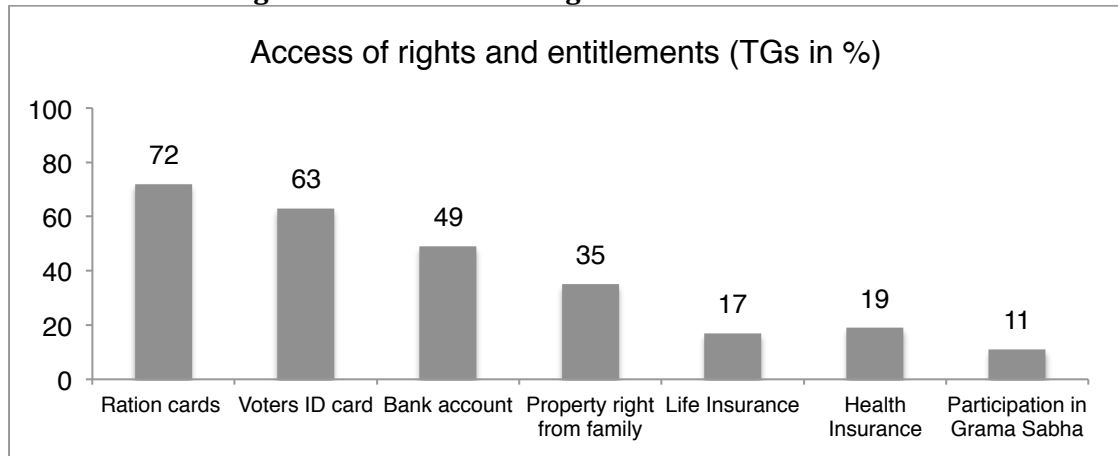


\* 'Care takers' include parents and adopted children and 'Others' include crisis management, savings etc.

The expenditure pattern reveals that after food, travel is one of the major heads of expenditure. Respondents mentioned that they hired private vehicles and huge expenses were incurred on travel because of harassment on public transport.

Though many (see figure 13) of the TGs have rations cards and voter ID cards, they are deprived of the benefits of welfare schemes due to their trans gender identity. The ID cards do not recognise their transgender status. Name and gender certification is a problem. TG Card is not accepted as proof of identity. With birth certificates and school certificates left behind at home, most transgenders find it very difficult to apply for jobs and access schemes and social welfare programmes.

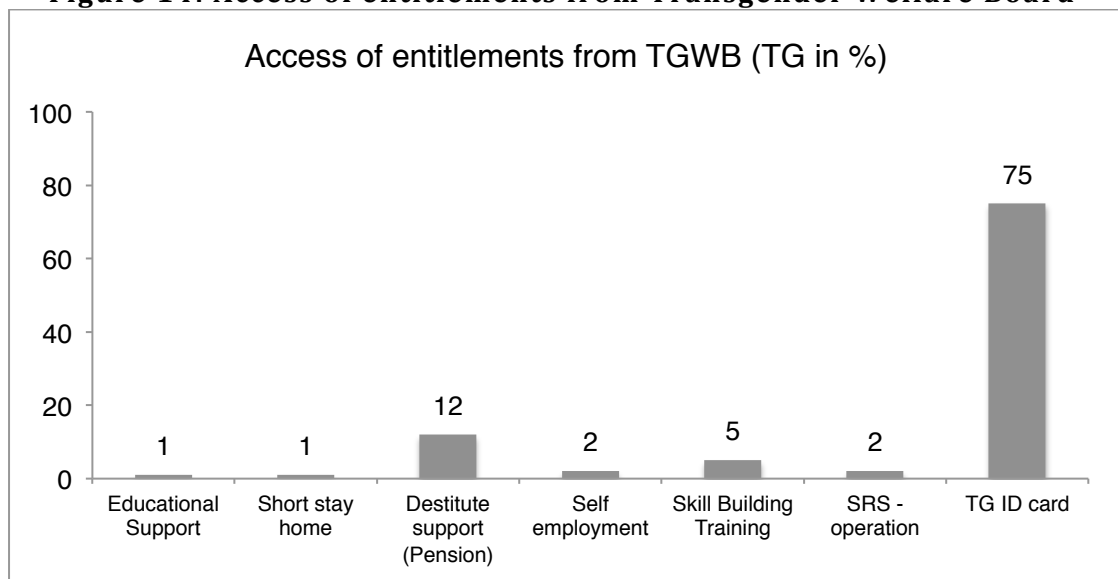
**Figure 13: Access to rights and entitlements**



### 6.2.6 Transgender Welfare Board

The constitution of the Transgender Welfare Board in Tamil Nadu has been widely acclaimed all over the world. Since its inception in 2008, a series of welfare measures have been taken for the transgender community under the aegis of the Board. The schemes fall in categories of education, housing, employment, SRS, ID cards and others. Figure 14 presents data collected from the sample on access of schemes floated by the Board.

**Figure 14: Access of entitlements from Transgender Welfare Board**





75 percent of the respondents had obtained the TG Identity Card. Except for the TG Identity card however a very small numbers of respondents had accessed other schemes. A mere 1 percent had successfully obtained educational support from the Board and an equally small number of respondents had availed of the short stay home facility. Only 2 percent of the respondents had availed of the self-employment schemes initiated by the Board and 12 percent had received destitute support. The insignificant numbers of respondents who had benefited from schemes of the Board raises serious questions about the functionality and reach of the welfare schemes for transgenders.

### 6.2.7 Love failure and cheating

Most transgenders are physically attracted to the opposite sex during teenage. Betrayal, cheating and exploitation by male lovers are common. Most respondents reported that they had undergone exploitation cheating, violence and black mailing in the name of love. Unable to cope with rejection and betrayal, many respondents reported having attempted suicide.

Others take recourse in alcohol and tobacco. To meet the expenses they attend to more clients and get involved in unsafe sex. Getting new partners and luring them with money and gifts is a common way of taking revenge. Hard earned money is thus squandered away and many transgenders end up in debt and pay exorbitant rates of interest. Money is also spent on hormone tablets, creams and cosmetics to acquire more feminine looks with which partners and clients are lured.

*"I found a partner. He did not have proper work and always came to me for money and sex. He would land up at my house in the middle of the night just to have sex and leave me. If I refused either money or sex he would beat me. Since I wanted to have someone, I held on to him. Finally I heard that he got married and stopped coming to me. I too did not go after him. I realised no one can be trusted."*

- Case story 22(29 year old Transgender woman from Chennai)

*"I found a stable partner there. He was a painter. We got married after six months of courtship. His family created problems but I didn't leave because he was supportive throughout. I was the breadwinner in our marriage, and our relationship lasted 4 years. I helped him get his sister married by lending 4.5 lakhs. The entire money came from my earnings through sex-work, and he didn't seem to let that bother him. Soon after his marriage was fixed. His parents requested me, because they said they needed a male heir, and I consented because of that reason. After this I left him. I soon came to know that they were using me for my money alone. After his marriage he approached me for money. I didn't have money with me at that point. He went back to his wife and told her to never speak to me again (I used to communicate with his wife often, we were on good terms). He also instructed his family members to break off all ties with me."*

- Case story 17(35 year old Transgender woman from Villupuram)

*"Thrice my lovers cheated me. We know that no one will dare to marry us. We also do not expect or demand. Let the male be with their family and children and at the same time they can share their love and affection with us too. I had a long-standing relation with a person. He was an auto driver. He would take on his auto in and around the town. In the beginning we were friends but later turned out to be lovers. He was the one who proposed to me. We enjoyed for nearly three years. All my neighbours knew him. There was pressure from his family for the marriage. He refused to budge under their pressure. It was me who persuaded him to marry the girl his parents had chosen. I borrowed money and spent it on*

*his marriage and gifted him 'Hero Honda splendour' worth Rs.60, 000. After his marriage, he slowly started keeping away from me. After his first child was born he completely stopped visiting me. I was totally disappointed. I had spent a lot of money on him. To cope with the let down I started consuming alcohol. I even thought of committing suicide. Males are selfish. They exploit us for their lust and need. At the end they throw us like 'shit'."*

- Case story 29(26 year old Transgender woman from Coimbatore)

*"After my first failure in love, I decided not to have affairs anymore. But I could not control my self beyond six months. That is the problem with 'aravanis' – they want to have 'boy friends' at any cost although they know that their love will not last long. This time I fell in love with a married person. He is the father of two children. We had an affair without the knowledge of his wife, hoping that he would be able to convince his wife in future. I told him clearly, that I would not at any cost disturb his family and would be his second wife. He agreed to everything. I supported him on many occasions when he was in need of money. But all of a sudden his wife found out about our relationship and came to my residence with her male relatives. They beat me and scolded me a lot in public. He too reached the spot and tried his level best to protect me from them but could not succeed."*

- Case story 29(26 year old Transgender women from Coimbatore)

*"After the operation, I started keeping a partner and everyone knew about him. He was much younger than me and not educated either. But I liked him and he was very fond of me and possessive too. Due to this I got into trouble with him. If he found me talking to any one or anyone taking extra interest in me he would get upset and beat me up. But I cannot live without him. Once such event lead to a disastrous situation. He saw me talking to one of my friends and got drunk and while I was sleeping came and beat me so badly and I was forced to file a case. But later on I changed my mind and withdrew the case because I still love him."*

- Case story 18(35 year old Transgender woman from Chennai)

*"I got married a year ago. My husband is an interior decorator, and we met through a mutual friend. Our courtship lasted for six months, after which we decided to get married, both at a temple and at the registrar's office. He treats me well, and knows about my past. I have stopped sex work and begging as my husband takes care of me now. He does not mind that I will not be able to bear him a child, and my in-laws have also accepted me. I'm now searching for a good job."*

- Case story 30 (25 year old Transgender woman from Coimbatore)

### **6.2.8 Sex reassignment surgery and beautification**

Respondents reported borrowing huge sums of money for SRS and beautification. Apart from what these costs, transgender women suffer various post SRS complications and side effects of hormonal tablets and silicon implantation. In the course of the focus group discussions, many transgender women expressed their dissatisfaction with SRS done at the state hospital and with follow-up services because of which they prefer accessing services of private medical professionals and end up paying more money. They lack an understanding of the side effects of several cosmetic products. They consume medicines without proper medical prescriptions. Understanding their urge for looking more feminine, many unauthentic beauty products are suggested to them by pharmacists including fake medical practitioners. Transgender women spend a lot of money on hormonal tablets and injections, which have serious side effects. Money is also spent on implanting silicon breasts and laser treatment for hair removal. Most transgender women end up in a cycle of debt because of the money they owe to their

Guru and other transgender women for SRS. Government hospitals take a long time processing applications and consent of family is needed, which complicates matters.

*"I had gone to a well known private hospital for a consultation for my surgery, where the attending doctor (a physiotherapist) asked to see my private parts. After that he asked me to come the next day and said he would help me get the surgery on the condition that I perform oral sex on him."*

- Case story 3(23 year old Transgender woman from Madurai)

*"After my SRS, initially I thought that the pain was due to the wound. But besides this pain, I realized I couldn't urinate at all. Even after consuming water and tender coconut, I couldn't urinate at all. Since there was immense abdominal pain, I felt like tearing my stomach with a knife and taking it out. When I sat to urinate, it would pain like hell. I went to the hospital again. The doctor told me to undergo another surgery. I was very scared. I couldn't bear the pain after the first surgery. I wondered if I needed to die for this once again. I then realised and decided that I needed to undergo the second surgery. The second surgery was done after three months. But the pathetic thing is that even now I cant urinate properly."*

- Case story 10(28 year old Transgender woman from Chennai)

*Doctors in private hospitals in many cities do not have basic knowledge about us. I had this experience. A private doctor did the surgery. But they did not know what to do. They did not know what had happened to me. They were blinking. It was a big question mark to them. They did not know any thing about the operation. Ten days after the surgery I was not able to urinate. So I was taken to the hospital. They too did not know what to do. They did not attend to me. They saw me as an object of disgust. Though they were doctors they were not willing to serve. They did not understand my problem and did not know what to do. The doctors said that the urinary passage was blocked and I would have to undergo another operation. I got scared. So I called up my sister and I left for home. I made a cut in the urinary tube myself. The doctor did not even undo the stitches. He mocked me. I do not know if he was scared or if he felt disgusted. But he did not remove the stitches. I requested him to remove the tube but he said that another surgery should be done and he made me sit in a corner. A tube is attached for the passage of urine. The doctor told that I could remove the tube only after 39 days. But the tube got blocked. My sister asked me to come out of the hospital. And she said that she could cure me with traditional treatment. I undid the stitches. So when I reached home, I cut the tube and my sister started hot water treatment. I did not seek help from anyone. I kept a mirror underneath and I removed the stitches. When the tube is there the hot water will not be poured vigorously. But after the removal of tube it will done vigorously.*

- An FGD participant from Tuticorin

*Regardless of where we get the operation done, we invariably land up in Chennai. At times surgery is done in Bangalore. After surgery we are brought to Chennai. And we stay in Chennai in a house. Whenever required we are taken to the government hospital. They know what 'nirvana' is and they do the surgery effectively. We are properly taken care of by the hospital staff and the doctors in Chennai.*

- An FGD participant from Tuticorin

*"After 3-4 months, I was taken to a private doctor in the neighbouring district (Dindugul) for surgery. The doctor charged around Rs.10000. My Guru took care of me post surgery. But very soon I had problems in urinating. It was so painful. I was again taken to the same doctor. This time he charged Rs.30, 000. My Guru mobilized the operation charges by borrowing from a moneylender. The amount has multiplied a lot. Only recently I have*

*repaid the money fully.”*

- Case story 29(26 year old Transgender woman from Coimbatore)

### 6.2.9 Problems from Police

Transgender women face constant violence, harassment and blackmail from the police. They are prone to verbal and physical abuse by policemen. They face problems in registering complaint cases. It is common for policemen to blame victimised transgender women who seek protection. Those involved in sex work have to regularly bribe officials. They are implicated in false cases and put behind bars. Rape and forced sex in the lock up is common. Respondents also reported that verbal abuse by policemen was rampant.

*“In the police lockup, they had hit us with sticks. We were treated like animals; they did not ask us anything about our lives or what we do. They only said that there were complaints against us.”*

- Case story 4(27 year old Transgender woman from Madurai)

*“The policemen beat us up whenever they find us. So I have to take care of some of them by trying to entice them on the side. They don't do anything to the people who approach me for sex, but insist that I am the one who's doing something wrong.”*

- Case story 15922 year old Transgender woman from Madurai)

*“The police do not spare us. In case of any robbery or theft of money, mobile etc they come and harass us.”*

- Case story 22(29 year old Transgender woman from Chennai)

*“A month ago the police beat me up for no reason other than that I was out at 2am. They took me away to a police station, and made me press the legs and arms of the Sub Inspector (SI) of the station. They played music, and made me dance. I wasn't given any food or water, and the SI forced me to have oral sex with him, and when initially I refused to do it, he tore off my wig, and stripped me naked. I must have been in the station till 10pm, when finally my Guru came and rescued me.”*

- Case story 28 (18 year old Transgender woman from Erode)

*“I did not feel like staying in Chennai anymore because the ways of earning a livelihood were becoming increasingly hard. Police raids had increased, and they would hit us whenever they came across any of us. They didn't ask us what the issue was or what we were doing. It didn't matter to them if we were standing for sex work, or if we went to a shop. They would just come and beat us if they found us outside after 7pm. Once I was standing outside a hospital because I was unwell. Despite that they came and beat me. Once several of us went and filed a complaint, but they did not register it. All these developments made me stop sex work completely.”*

- Case story 13(33 year old Transgender woman from Chennai)

*“In Coimbatore, two of my clients disappeared after soliciting my services and promising me Rs.100. Out of nowhere a policemen appeared and started thrashing me. They locked me up, and this time no one came to rescue me.”*

- Case story 27(47 year old Transgender woman from Coimbatore)

### 6.3 Middle age (beyond 40 years)

At this age transgender women are physically debilitated due to SRS, hormone and silicon implantation and others. Diseases such as diabetes, tuberculosis, sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS and hepatitis, affect most transgender women in their middle age. Health problems result in large numbers dropping out from sex work. By this period of their lives several have been cheated by their lovers and husbands. Since their marriages are not legally registered there is no legal recourse for these abandonments and cheating. Added to this is the political inconsistency. Schemes keep getting discontinued and changing with change of government and this creates problems for the community members.

There is no support system in place to take care of transgender women during their middle age. Chelas and nathis sometimes take care of ageing transgender women. PLHAs are more vulnerable. Some don't even have money or family to perform their funeral or last rites. Many at this point aspire to go back to their family but reintegration with parents and siblings is a huge problem. This is further complicated by the fact that most do not have any assets or savings. Due to declining health, they cannot take up as much sex work and begging as before. As a result they end up taking more risks (unprotected sex) as well. Most TG women around this age find themselves completely alone.

The support system that comprised chelas and adopted children also seem to be giving way due to increased migration and shifting loyalties. Excluded from their community, and abandoned by their biological families, failed by their chelas, with no or very little savings and no or very few employment options, transgender women at this stage of their life cycle find themselves totally abandoned.

*"Being HIV+ I cannot engage in sex work, and there are very limited options for employment for me. I am thinking of looking for work where I can clean houses. This place that I'm staying in at the moment, there are non-community members living in the neighbourhood who do not know that I'm HIV+. I wish there was some government home for transgender people and that we received some form of monetary incentive every month. There are places for the general population, but there needs to be something for transgender people alone."*

- Case story 1(42 year old Transgender woman from Madurai)

*"I adopted my son when he was a baby. Now, he has grown up and is studying in Class 9 in a hostel in Kanchipuram. Someone brainwashed him saying that I am a transgender and make a lot of money. He is now demanding property from me. When I do not have a house of my own how can I give him a share? He does not respect me when I go to visit him. This causes me great concern. I feel like I nursed a snake that is ready to attack me. Only recently I came to know about welfare schemes of the government. I have not been able to access any of them so far. I think it would be good if the government can support transgenders with job opportunities and provide houses. If the public can accept us, we will be able to get houses on rent to live in just like others. Above all our families should accept us as we are."*

- Case story 19(43 year old Transgender woman from Madurai)

*"I continue to live on the streets; but I have my own little space here. I even have my own PDS card, Welfare Board card, Voter ID and the Aravani Card. Venkatesh the owner of Malik Medicals has been very helpful by lending us his shop address for these purposes. All of us siblings live together here with our families. I am 44 years old now. Being born and*

*brought us as a pavement dweller on the streets really did not affect me negatively. I think I have enjoyed my life and have had the best of blessings. Looking back, it was my family's acceptance that secured my life."*

- Case story 26(44 year old Transgender woman from Madurai)

*"These days cultural festivals are not held as before. Earlier we would always be invited to these events, where we would perform "Karakattam". I started training my daughters (community members) in dance, and I would earn some money from the bookings. Nowadays TGs fights amongst themselves. We were revered and praised in those days, and people would eagerly come to see our dances and performances. But now the respect has gone down because of the rampant sex work and fighting. There are also more diseases because of that. The younger TGs also do not respect the elders, they are disobedient, and want to rush through everything. Things have changed drastically within the community."*

- Case story 31(75 year old Transgender woman from Erode)

The life trajectory of transgender women shows that very specific problems are encountered in each stage of their life. Despite recurrent issues such as stigma and discrimination in all walks of life owing to their gender identity or lack of it, the finer details of what they suffer and what is required varies in every stage of their life. For instance, their experience of abandonment by their families in adolescence is fundamentally different from their experience of abandonment by their communities in middle age. During adolescence some of the major areas requiring intervention include opportunities for basic counseling both for effeminate boys as well as their parents, teachers and classmates; prevention of sexual abuse by relatives and neighbours; prevention of harassment and abuse in schools and colleges. During youth, while many of the problems encountered during adolescence continue, some fade away and a completely new set of issues come to the fore. The areas requiring intervention include the vulnerabilities on account of having run away from their families; the risks, dangers and stigma associated with sex work and begging; scarcity of employment opportunities and harassment and discrimination at the workplace; police brutality; exploitation in the Jamaat; the perils of SRS and its financial and health implications etc. For aged transgender women, some of the problems faced in youth cease being important, several others continue and failing health, failing income, lack of savings and abandonment of a fundamentally different kind from what was experienced during adolescence, become major concerns. Through the ups and downs of the life trajectory of transgender women, what remains constant is the stigma and non-acceptance owing to their non conformity to the gender binary system.

## 7. Analysis: Multiple Discrimination

Case studies, focus group discussions and survey findings reveal that transgender women in the state of Tamil Nadu face multiple discrimination. Stigma, discrimination and exclusion start very early in the lives of effeminate boys, continue throughout adolescence and youth and show no signs of abating during old age. The discrimination and exclusion manifest itself in myriad ways. The following boxes provide an overview of different forms of discrimination suffered by transgender women in different settings and social spaces. The information in the boxes is only indicative of what transgender women go through in a few settings. It is not a comprehensive list detailing all experiences.

**The Experiences of Stigma and Discrimination in the Family:** sexual abuse by relatives, punishments of various kinds like locking up in rooms, physical torture for example burning, breaking of legs and hands, cutting etc, denial of education, violation of property rights, restrictions on movement and dressing code, restrictions on interacting with friends, mental torture and bullying, emotional blackmailing, shunning from family celebrations/functions and social functions, forced marriage, forced sex with other women, forced hair cuts / shaving of head as a shaming technique, forced psychiatric treatment / Electroconvulsive therapy (ECT), ousting from home etc.

**The Experiences of Stigma and Discrimination in Schools:** forced sex by classmates and senior students, sexual abuse by male teachers, forced domestic work by female teachers, pressure to drop out from school, physical torture by senior students, denial of admission to institutions of higher education, denial of seat in hostels, physical torture and sexual abuse in the hostels, forced tasks such as cleaning of classroom and toilets, blaming the victim and denying justice, rejection of request for friendship, bullying, verbal abuse

**The Experiences of Stigma and Discrimination in Society:** denial of entry to public places and functions, rape and forced sex and sexual violence, bullying, ridiculing, insulting, reprimanding, physical violence/torture and rowdy attack, negative media projection (not just visual media depiction is offensive and discriminatory, but the nature of the language in it as well is highly insulting), false allegations of crime, , partner abandonment and cheating, discrimination in renting houses, charging higher rent for houses, forced sex by house owner, charging higher rate of interest by the money lenders, denial of service by legal and medical professionals, charging higher fees, torture and harassment in public transport

**The Experiences of Stigma and Discrimination at the Workplace:** forced sex by co-workers, sexual abuse by higher authorities, denial of job, disparity in wages and low wages, job insecurity, mismatch between qualification and competence, discrimination in promotion and capacity building, verbal abuse and bullying, assigning of menial jobs and cleaning of toilets etc.

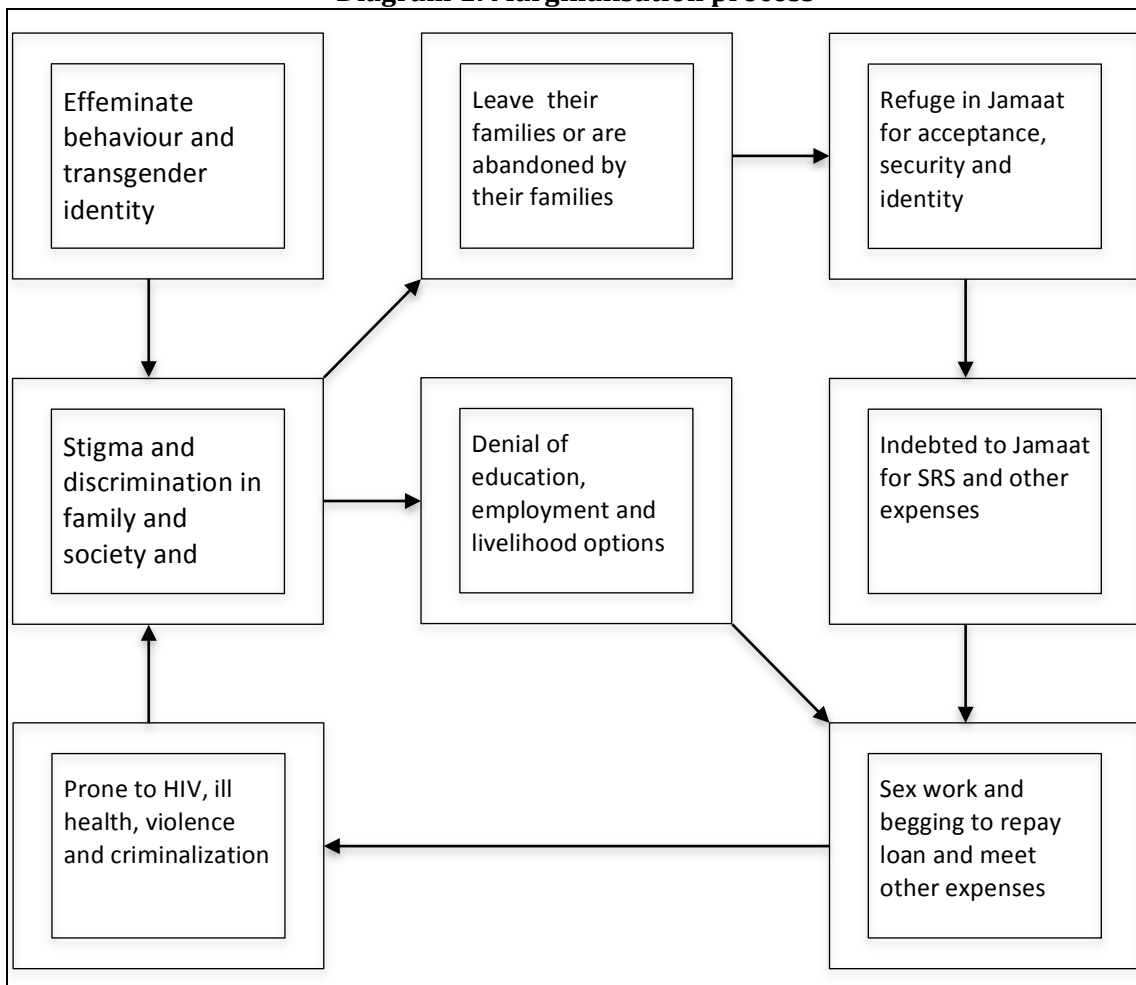
**The Experiences of Stigma and Discrimination with the Police:** verbal abuse, physical assault, sexual assault and rape in lock ups, refusal to and harassment in the process of registering cases, petitions and complaints committed against transgender women; blaming the transgender (victim) and letting go the offender, bribery, extortion, false implication in crimes, arbitrary arrest, seeking sexual favours.

**The Experiences of Stigma and Discrimination with Health Service Providers:** bribery, charging excess fees and money, denial of services and facilities, keeping physical distance during examination, , assuming and alleging HIV positive status,

delaying tactics, demanding sexual favor, prescribing medicines without listening to their health problems, trying to avoid, segregation from general patients, shouting and verbal abuse, forced checking for other abnormalities during regular check up, dissuading them from undergoing SRS .

Based on case studies and focus group discussions the following ‘stigma and discrimination cycle’ (as shown in diagram 1) has been constructed. This ‘cycle’ portrays the broad contours in the lives of most transgender women - their stigmatisation at home, school and in society because of their effeminate behaviour results in discontinuation of education and running away from or abandonment by the family; stigmatisation also results in very few employment opportunities being available; the stigmatised, abandoned, unemployed transgender women take refuge in the Jamaat; the Jamaat provides them with security and an identity, but at the same time subjects them to further exploitation and discrimination; the struggle to make ends meet, the pressure from the Jamaat to bring in money and the debt incurred to undergo SRS forces them further into the clutches of sex work and begging; further stigmatisation results from association with sex work and begging; vulnerability to violence and HIV and criminalisation increases; stigmatisation and discrimination increases.

**Diagram 1: Marginalisation process**

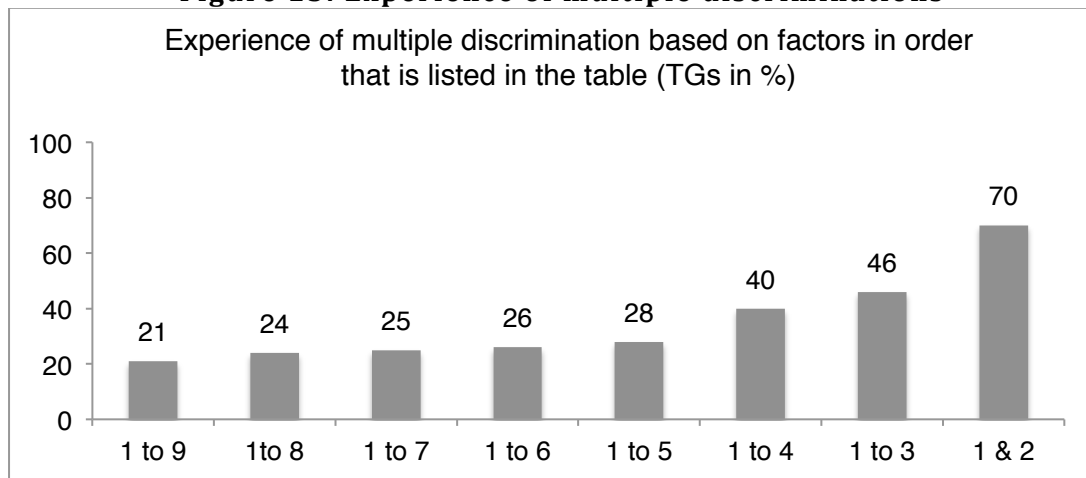


Marginalization of transgender women is clearly enunciated sequentially as instigated through **stigma** enforced by society (→) taking to the level of **discrimination** (→), which **excludes** transgender women from mainstream society including violations of human rights, denial of justice and entitlements (→) result into highly **marginalized**



state of life. The survey data testifies to the fact that transgender women face multiple discriminations in all walks of life. The multiplicity of discrimination faced by transgender women is illustrated in figure 15, 16 and 17.

**Figure 15: Experience of multiple discriminations**



**TABLE 4. REASONS FOR DISCRIMINATION**

Numbers in Order	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Reasons for stigma	Begging	Sex Work	Dress Style	Effeminate Behavior	Lower Caste*	Low Income earning*	SRS*	HIV/AIDS*	Skin hair*

About 21 percent of respondents reported having faced stigma and discrimination on account of all nine factors listed above. 24 percent of the respondents had faced stigma and discrimination on account of the first eight factors. Nearly half of the respondents (46 percent) had been stigmatised on account of their association with begging, sex work and due to their dress style.

**FIGURE 16: EXPERIENCE OF MULTIPLE DISCRIMINATION BASED ON ANY FACTORS**

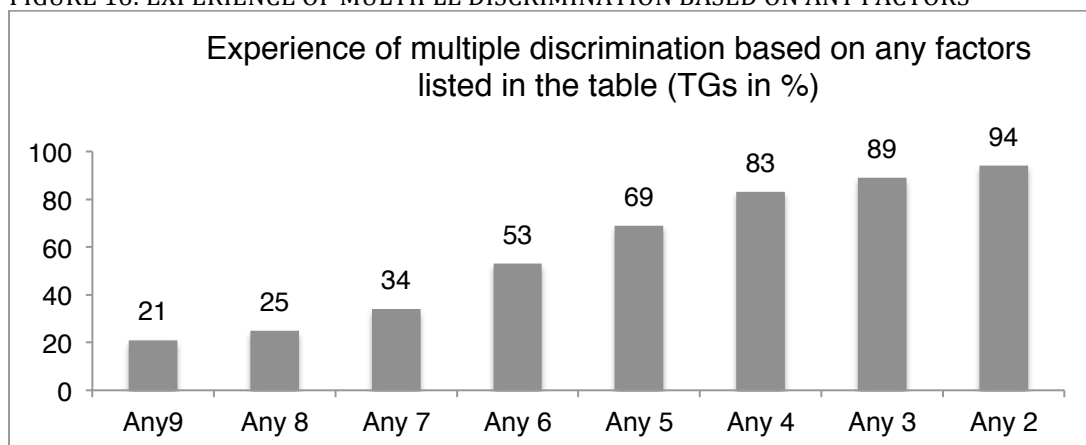


Figure 16 shows that 94 percent of the respondents faced discrimination based on any two factors. 69 percent of the respondents faced discrimination on account of any five factors and more than 50 percent faced discrimination on account of any six factors. The data shows how vulnerable the transgender community is to multiple discrimination.

**FIGURE 17: MULTIPLE DISCRIMINATION BASED ON SELECTED FACTORS**

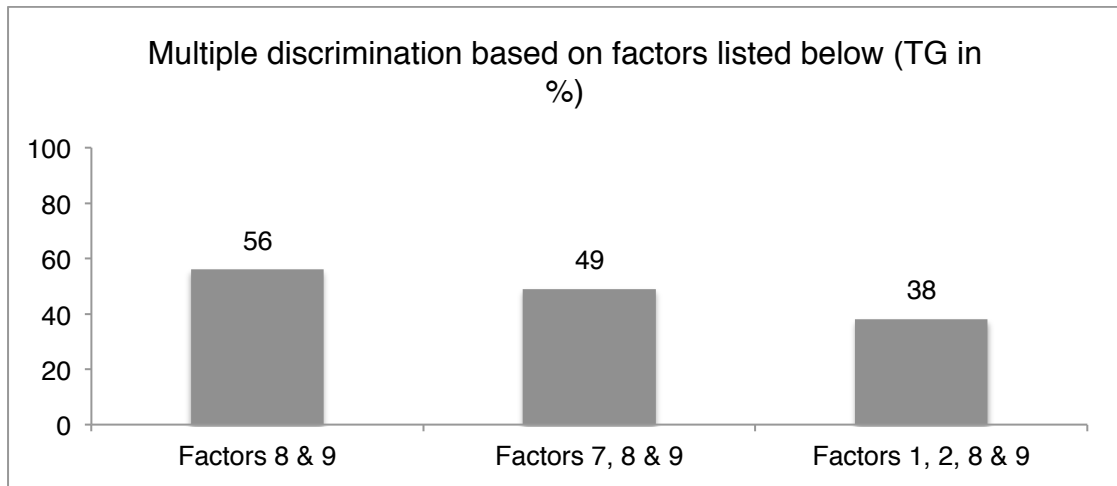
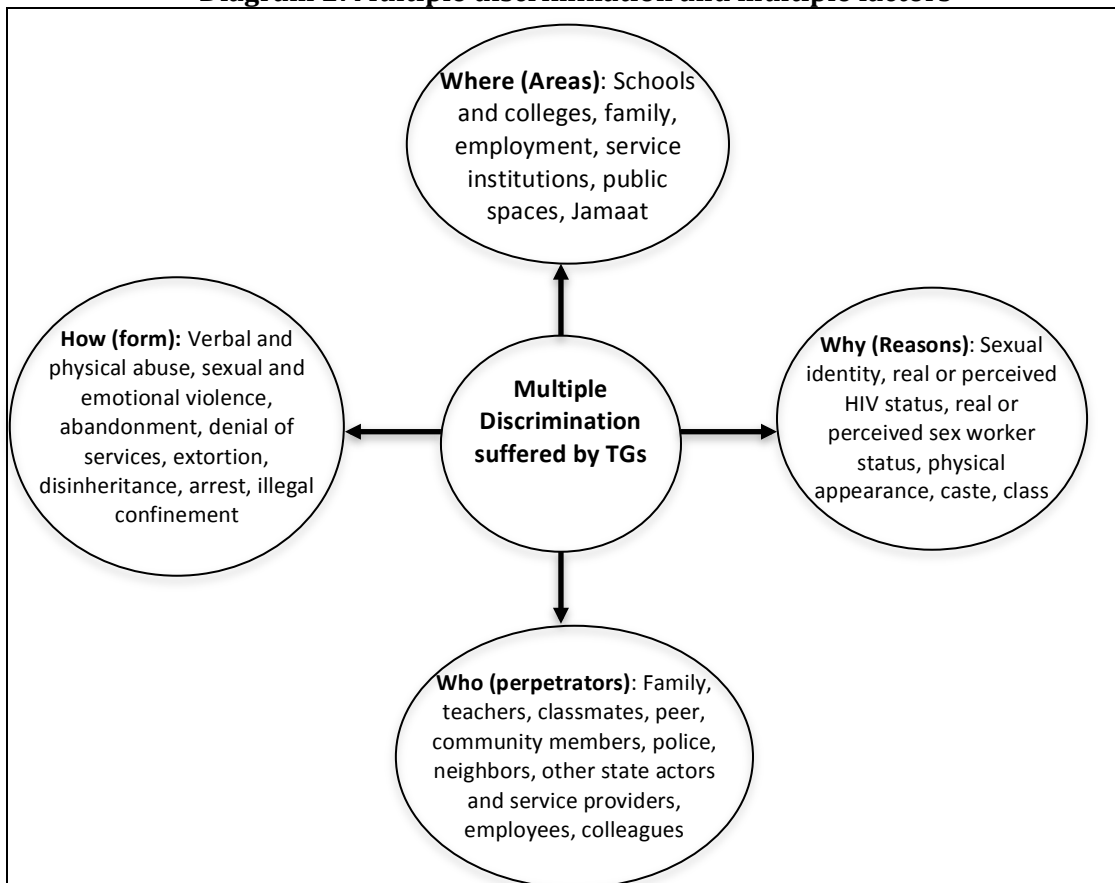


Figure 17 shows that more than half of the respondents (56 percent) faced discrimination on account of factors 8(HIV) and 9 (skin, hair), and nearly half (49 percent) faced discrimination on account of factors 7 (SRS), 8 and 9.

**Diagram 2: Multiple discrimination and multiple factors**



The study reveals that transgender women **face multiple forms of discrimination** (verbal, physical, sexual violence; harassment; refusal to provide services; false arrests; denial of share in ancestral property; denial of admission in educational institutions; victimisation by teachers and fellow students and several others) **in multiple settings** (family, school, workplace, health care settings, public spaces including also the Jamaat) **by multiple perpetrators** (family members including parents and siblings, friends, school and college authorities, employers, neighbours, house owners, health service providers, police, clients and what is worse from their own community members, Gurus

etc) **due to multiple reasons** (effeminate behaviour, trans status, real or perceived association with sex work; real or perceived HIV status, dress code, physical appearance and others ).

A few other issues merit a consideration. The discrimination that transgender women face is **not sporadic in nature**. It is routine, 'everyday' and embedded in every step they take. Unlike several other marginalized and discriminated groups whose invisibility often acts like a shield against stigmatization and discrimination, **transgender women's visibility** (in terms their physical appearance which makes it impossible to evade detection and recognition) **becomes the reason for multiple discrimination** in every walk of life. Worse still is the fact that **birth in an affluent and respectable family and/or birth in a dominant caste family, which otherwise work to the advantage of individuals, become reasons for further discrimination and violence in the case of transgender women**. A respondent (case story 5) reported that respectable families show greater reluctance to accept effeminate sons out of concern for their family status. What should have worked to their advantage (in this case affluence and status) in terms of the resources available to the family to create a conducive environment for their child, or perhaps just the shield afforded by money from social disapproval, therefore becomes reason for further harassment and abandonment. Similarly, it was reported in another case story (case story 23) that belonging to a dominant caste which was mobilized around a strong masculine and warrior identity, was one of the main reasons for the cruelty and ruthlessness with which the effeminate son was asked to kill himself. Non-acceptance in this case was fuelled by concern for caste honour.

Transgender women constitute a community whose being a community is in itself symptomatic of discrimination, abandonment and stigma from the very institution meant to protect and nurture - the family. The very existence of a community/communities of transgender women can be taken as a reference point to assess the extent of discrimination and exclusion suffered by them. A member of the community at the roundtable in Chennai on May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2013, pointed out that the basic community driven approach towards the rehabilitation and mainstreaming of transgender women is in itself problematic and that the approach should instead focus on prevention of their abandonment by their families- so that gender non conforming children remain part of their families instead of becoming part of the community.

Unlike several other marginalized communities living on the fringes who have one or more than one overlapping identities (a Dalit woman for instance is recognized as a Dalit and as a woman and a disabled Dalit woman is both a Dalit and a woman, besides being recognized as a disabled), in the case of transgender women, their basic identity remains a big question mark- whether to consider them in the category of women after SRS; whether to retain them in the category of 'Other' or 'E' ; whether to extend to those born in disadvantaged castes the benefits of caste based reservation when evidence shows that belonging to a dominant caste is equally disadvantageous; whether to consider them a sexual minority when evidence shows that in many ways they do not fit the typical LGBT category and have faced marginalisation even within the LGBT movement; whether to bring them within the purview of disability and so on. Inconclusive nature of the discourse on where to fit in transgender women strengthens the case in favour of an 'intersectionality lens' where the multiplicity and plurality of their identities is recognized. Any assessment of the discrimination suffered by transgender women must necessarily be made along all axes- sex, gender, caste, class, religion, occupation, age, HIV status, instead of one or a few.

The study establishes that transgender women in Tamil Nadu face multiple layers of discrimination in almost spaces, including the safe spaces represented by the Jamaat; the stigma associated with their existence results in discrimination assuming many different forms, some of which are overt and violent and others more insidious but equally damaging in nature; besides their trans status, which in a sense is the point of origin of the entire cycle of stigma and discrimination, transgender women face added categories/reasons for stigmatization and discrimination for instance their real or perceived association with sex work and begging, their real or assumed HIV positive status etc.; and virtually everyone and every institution they interact and associate with come across as perpetrators. The gravity of the situation is best understood in terms of the fact that the sample for this study was drawn entirely from Tamil Nadu- a state which has taken giant steps towards rehabilitation and mainstreaming of the transgender community. Given the scale and magnitude of discrimination suffered by transgender women in a state which has seen a movement by aravanis spanning nearly two decades, their condition in other parts of the country is best left to imagination.

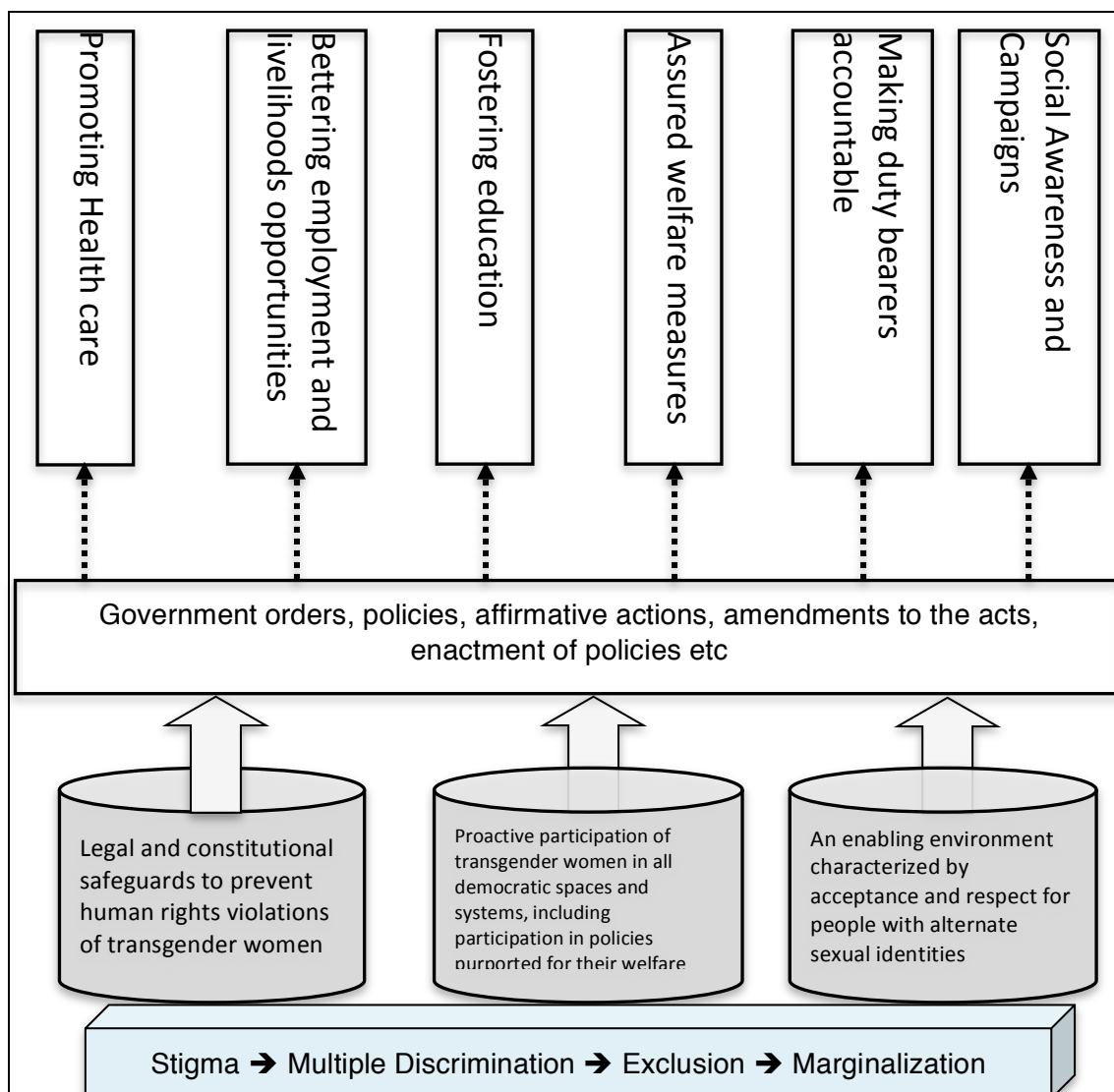
## 8. Recommendations

The measures taken so far, though praiseworthy, are not sufficient in themselves to address the concerns of a community which has suffered centuries of deprivation and marginalisation and is still struggling to gain an identity of its own. Ongoing efforts have been frittered and pigeonholed - looking at addressing specific issues and aspects rather than the entire spectrum of violations suffered by transgender women, while what is required a holistic and comprehensive approach. Lack of a database is a major impediment in addressing the issues of discrimination faced by transgender communities in a holistic manner and formulating comprehensive packages for them. Another area of concern is the social welfare approach. The discourse continues to visualize the community as recipients of/deserving charity, rather than as citizens and holders of inalienable human rights. An empowerment approach is long overdue. What is also completely missing from the agenda is a set of steps and measures to prevent abandonment of transgenders by their families- a step which could literally nip the problem in the bud and knock down the entire cycle of stigma and discrimination.

Fundamental to any kind of recommendations are the three pillars i.e.

- i. Legal and constitutional safeguards to prevent human rights violations of transgender women
- ii. Proactive participation of transgender women in all democratic spaces and systems, including participation in policies purported for their welfare
- iii. An enabling environment characterised by acceptance and respect for people with alternate sexual identities. Any amount of effort will be in vain unless every investment is built on the above pillars as it has been illustrated through diagram 3 below.

**Diagram 3: Foundation of recommendations**



### 1. Legal and constitutional safeguards to prevent human rights violations of transgender women

- Basic recognition of transgender identity in all documents, policies and government orders
- Steps to ensure all identity documents such as ration card, passport, voters ID, pan card, aadhar card, are made available to transgender women with their gender specifically mentioned as women
- Implementation of the recommendations of the Sub-Committee constituted in 2003 which was endorsed in October 2006
- Time bound enumeration of transgenders in the entire country
- Inclusion of transgender women in the category of women i.e., incorporation of transgender women' in every government document including the planning and budgets documents where women are referred to
- Provision for research on cultural practices and festivals of transgender community
- Affirmative action to open up professional courses like medicine, engineering, management etc., for transgender communities

- Establishment and authorization of board/committee/office to issue basic documents that endorse the changed name and changed gender of transgenders
- Formulation of policies that prevent abandonment of effeminate boys and transgender women by their families

**2. Proactive participation of transgender women in all democratic spaces and systems, including participation in policies purported for their welfare**

- Ensuring representation and participation in decision-making bodies at all levels of administration, development programmes and departments
- Making provisions for strengthening CBOs and CBO leadership; providing project support to CBOs of transgender women
- Constitution of a monitoring committee at the state level with at least 70% representation of TG persons to exclusively monitor access and availability of welfare schemes for the transgenders; provisions for the efficient and effective functioning of this committee on a regular basis
- Community representation in the monitoring of welfare and development programmes.
- Ensuring eligibility of transgender women to contest in all democratic platforms (three tier Panchayat, legislative assembly and parliament) under or similar to the constitutional provisions to ensure participation of women Bringing transgender women within the mandate of the Ministry of Women and Child Development
- Reservation of at least one seat in the legislative assembly of each state for transgenders
- Constitution of a national level Transgender Welfare Board with proportional representation of transgender women from different states; constitution of state level Transgender Welfare Boards in each state; mechanisms to ensure coordinated functioning between the state level boards and the national board.
- Constitution of a separate National Commission for Transgender Women; A National Transgender Commission Act must be formulated and enacted

**3. An enabling environment characterised by acceptance and respect for people with alternate sexual identities**

- Stringent laws to deal with violence, harassment, discrimination against transgenders; transgender women to be brought within the ambit of anti-rape laws of the country
- Complaint mechanism must be set up at the state and district levels to prevent abuse, torture and harassment by police and other service providers including public and private sector
- Incorporation of the words 'including transgender women' in all acts, laws, government orders, policies that protect the security and rights of women
- Issue of government order that transgender women are eligible for all rights and entitlements that are earmarked in gender budget, (both schemes that have 100% and 30% budget allocations)
- Provision of Marriage Right for transgender women, including registration of their marriages; legal procedures to ensure transgender women are eligible for compensation in the case of divorce
- Waiving of conditions that are difficult for transgender women to fulfil in case of adoption of children
- A policy to protect the rights of those who wish to change their gender and names A policy to prevent violation of rights of transgenders undergoing sex reassignment surgery
- Legal reforms to ensure transgender women are entitled to their share in ancestral property
- Specific mention of 'including transgender women' in crisis management and

accessing rights and entitlements.

#### **4. Promoting Health care**

- Provision of free Sex Reassignment Surgery for all aspiring transgender persons
- Provision of free medical services, and medical insurance for all transgender persons
- Orientation and skill building of both government and private hospital doctors, nurses, paramedical staff etc., on treatment of transgenders and specifically on SRS; sensitization to the issues and rights of transgender communities and their medical requirements
- Availability of specially trained and skilled doctors and facilities in the government hospitals at the regional (for cluster of districts) level in each state to deal with health care issues of transgender persons
- Proper counselling to those who opt for SRS about the side effects of hormone tablets/injections/silicon implantation etc.
- Reduction of procedural bottlenecks in undergoing SRS
- Proper guidelines in government hospitals for SRS and silicon implants so that transgenders are not considered objects for medical experimentation
- Addressing HIV related concerns with in a holistic manner with due consideration for the transgender identity, life situation and culture Research on reproductive abilities of transgender women

#### **5. Bettering employment and livelihoods opportunities**

- Reservation for transgenders in government jobs as an affirmative action and instruction and incentivisation to private sector to recruit transgender persons
- Creation and regular update of employment database for transgenders by District Employment Officer and issuing/endorsing certificates of approval to the transgender persons for job
- Recruitment of transgender persons in specific sectors such as police/traffic police and fire fighters, nurses, teachers, lectures, airhostess, community health workers, government bus drivers and conductors, railways ticket inspectors, railway catering service, ICTC counsellors, clerical staff in Transgender Welfare Board etc. in an effort to reduce stigma and discrimination. Provision of loans for self-employment, and to start SHGs; simplification of procedures and formalities for transgender persons to access services from financial institutions
- Promotion of vocational training (tailoring, making sanitary napkins, computer, travel and tourism, catering etc.) To increase employment opportunities; extensive marketing and publicity initiatives are needed so that companies can approach TG groups.

#### **6. Fostering education**

- Sensitisation and awareness building of teachers and students towards effeminate boy students.
- Counselling to ensure effeminate boys are not singled out, teased and discriminated in school and colleges
- Counselling for families to prevent abandonment of children
- Disciplinary action against schools and colleges in cases of discrimination in admission and in cases of sexual, verbal and physical violence and harassment
- Reservation of seats for transgender students in educational institutions including higher and professional education and financial incentives for institutions which admit transgender persons
- Development and incorporation of appropriate material/themes on sexual minorities and alternate sexual identities, specifically on transgender issues in the academic curriculum from high school onwards, including teachers training



- Incorporation of transgender women in all initiatives to bring about gender equity and gender sensitivity in the education systems
- Provisions for sex education and personality development at an early age.

#### **7. Assuring Welfare**

- Regeneration of Transgender Welfare Board and devolution of decision making powers for TG members in the Board; insulation of the Board from regime change
- Periodic evaluation of Transgender Welfare Board's performance by a team of experts which includes representatives of transgender women
- Targeted and time bound implementation of 11 schemes introduced by Tamil Nadu TG Welfare Board (Identity Card for the Transgender persons, Educational Support (School Education), Short stay home, Family Card (Ration Card), Housing, Accident Relief Fund, Destitute Support, Self-employment, Educational Support (Degree / Post graduation / Technical Education & Training), Skill Building Trainings, Sex Reassignment Surgery); regular monitoring of these schemes
- Sufficient budgetary allocations for the day to day functioning of Transgender Welfare Board
- Appointment of adequate numbers of transgender women as staff in the welfare boards at the state level and regional/district level
- Housing support for transgenders in the form of construction of new houses, allocation of land for houses, and free housing scheme for all transgenders Provision of shelter homes with vocational training facilities for transgenders
- Establishment of Community Resource Centres to reach hidden community members and access information about various rights, entitlements and welfare schemes
- Inclusion of transgender persons above 40 years in the special priority groups under food security and they should be given food grains and other provisions at a very subsidized cost as committed in the Food Security Act
- Periodic upward revision of pension amount for transgender persons who are above 40 years old
- Establishment of old age homes for transgender persons and provision of palliative care for them
- Free access of transgenders to community halls for organizing cultural function or events
- Steps to ensure access and eligibility of transgenders to schemes for single women/destitute/HIV positive women Provision of free bus passes and train passes for transgender women who are above 40 years old
- Provision of financial support for funeral services Dissemination of information about government schemes to transgenders at the district level and through Panchayats.

#### **8. Making service providers and duty bearers accountable**

- Awareness building and sensitization of all service providers in health, education, revenue department, Panchayat, and other government departments, banking etc. towards the rights and entitlements of transgenders and schemes for them Legal action against duty bearers for verbal and physical harassment, denial of services and violation of rights of transgender persons; legal action to be extended to private sector service providers too
- Constitution of an approachable and accessible grievance redressal mechanism to address day-to-day rights violations of transgenders
- Inclusion and special mention of transgender women in the sexual harassment policies of private and public sector companies, organizations and enterprises

## 9. Addressing Stigma and discrimination

- Media campaigns and awareness generation programmes for sensitization of society towards transgender persons, their problems and rights; all form of media must be used consistently and simultaneously to educate people about transgender issues in order to help develop a positive and accepting attitude towards them
- Special awareness creation and campaign programmes to address issues of stigma and discrimination faced by the community
- Specific communication material about transgender communities and their rights has to be made available for the public
- Documentary films detailing problems and exploitation faced by children and who are forced to leave the family; telecast of such documentaries
- Involvement of popular film personalities and political leaders in creating the awareness on transgenders .
- Positive projection of TGs in movies and serials to inculcate a positive mind-set among the general public
- Inclusion of transgender women in film censor boards to ensure there is no negative projection and ridiculing in films; tax exemption for movies, which portray transgenders positively.

## **9. Conclusion - Way forward**

The recommendations listed in this report draw substantially from recommendations in existing reports and studies. Each recommendation of the draft report was critically reviewed by participants of the round table organised in Chennai. Suitable changes, additions and deletions were made depending on the opinions of the participants who were all members of the community. The entire process of the study and the roundtable underscored the need to initiate a coordinated and synchronised effort under the leadership of transgender collectives including their CBOs and networks, with the support organizations like NALSA and its State Legal Aid structures, other national and state agencies, civil society organizations, development support organizations, academic and research institutions, political parties and people's representatives, etc. An evaluation of existing budgetary allocations, critical review of how budgetary allocations have been spent and what ends have been met, and the need for sufficient resources to be kept aside were also felt throughout the course of the study. A state level dissemination workshop has been proposed to chalk out a concrete and detailed roadmap.

## References

1. A society in denial: 'Ghosts' who live among us, demand basic rights (July 8, 2012) Retrieved from <http://www.sunday-guardian.com/artbeat/a-society-in-denial-ghosts-who-live-among-us-demand-basic-rights>
2. Address by the Hon'ble Chief Justice, High Court, Madras at the one day National Seminar On "Transgender" At New Delhi, 5<sup>th</sup> February, 2011
3. APCOM (2012) *South Asia Legal Environments for Men who have Sex with Men and Transgender People*, Policy Brief Retrieved from <http://aidsdatahub.org/en/whats-new/287-all-data-alerts/884-apcom-policy-brief-south-asia-legal-environments-for-men-who-have-sex-with-men-and-transgender-people-may-2012->
4. Aravanigal: Udaliyal, Ulaviyal Vazhviyal (Maharasan, Sandhya Pathipagam, 2007) (Transgender- Physiology Psychology Life)
5. Aravanigalin samooga urimaigal (Priya Babu) (Social rights of Transgender)
6. Babu, Priya (2007), *Aravanigal – Samooga Vairaviyal*, Thentisai Veliyeedu, Chennai.
7. Babu, Priya, (2007), *Moondram Paalin Mugam*, Sandhya Pathippagam, Chennai.
8. Babu, Priya, *Thamil Naattil Aravanigal Varalaru* (Monograph)
9. Barathi, Bala S., (2008), *Avan – Athu=Aval*, Thozhamai Press, Chennai. 2008.
10. Census 2011: Transgenders prepare to be counted for first time (January 9, 2011) Retrieved from <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/article1075028.ece>;
11. Census 2011: Transgenders prepare to be counted for first time, Retrived from <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/article1075028.ece>
12. Chakrapani, Venkatesan, Babu P, Ebenezer T. (2004) *Hijras in sex work face discrimination in the Indian health-care system*. Research for Sex Work. Vol.7: (12–4).
13. Chennai: Move on toilets for transgenders sparks off debate, (March 9, 2009), Retrieved from <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/chennai-move-on-toilets-for-transgenders-sparks-off-debate/432575/0>
14. CM assures separate welfare board for transgender community, (Jun 25, 2012), Retrieved from [http://www.moneycontrol.com/news/wire-news/cm-assures-seperate-welfare-board-for-transgender-community\\_722412.html](http://www.moneycontrol.com/news/wire-news/cm-assures-seperate-welfare-board-for-transgender-community_722412.html)
15. Crenshaw, Kimberlé Williams (1989), *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics*, in *Feminism in the Law: Theory, practice and Criticism*, University of Chicago Legal Forum, University of Chicago.
16. Delhi High Court strikes down Section 377 of IPC Retrieved from <http://www.hindu.com/2009/07/03/stories/2009070358010100.htm>
17. Draft Appraoch Paper for Twelfth Five Year Plan ( 2012-17) Tamil Nadu,
18. Dream come true: Transgender community celebrates CNICs, voter registration, (January 25, 2012), Retrieved from <http://tribune.com.pk/story/326911/dream-come-true-transgender-community-celebrates-cnics-voter-registration/>
19. EC makes it easy for first-time transgenders to vote, (August 21, 2012), Retrived from [http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-08-21/india/33301768\\_1\\_rose-venkatesan-young-transgender-voter-registration-form](http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-08-21/india/33301768_1_rose-venkatesan-young-transgender-voter-registration-form)
20. First ever welfare board for transgender, (February 2008), Retrieved from <http://southasia.oneworld.net/archive/Article/first-ever-welfare-board-for-transgenders>
21. First insurance scheme for transgender, sex workers, (July 27 2007) Retrieved from <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/first-insurance-scheme-for-transgenders-sex-workers/207304/0>
22. First-ever National Seminar on Transgenders and the Law, Retrieved from <http://www.jagranjosh.com/current-affairs/firstever-national-seminar-on-transgenders-and-the-law-1297081479>
23. Government of Bihar (2012), Draft approach paper for Twelfth five year plan, Bihar.

24. Government of India (2006), *Strategy and Implementation Plan, National AIDS Control Programme, Phase III (2006-2011)*, NACO, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, New Delhi
25. Government of India, *Eleventh Five Year Plan, Volume II*, Planning Commission, New Delhi.
26. Government of India, *The Draft 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan (Volume III)*, Planning Commission, New Delhi.
27. Government of Tamilnadu, Report of Review meeting of Tamilnadu Transgender Welfare Board and The details of activities held at the meeting held on 15.04.2010,
28. Government of Tamilnadu, (2010), *Demand No.45: Policy Note: 2010- 2011*, Social Welfare and Nutritious Meal Programme Department, Minister For Social Welfare.
29. Govindan, Padma and Vasudevan, Aniruddhan (2009), *The Razor's Edge of Oppositionality: Exploring the Politics of Rights-Based Activism by Transgender Women in Tamil Nadu*, Paper presented in inaugural conference, Law and Social Science research Network.
30. Haryana, too, will now give jobs to eunuchs, (April 2, 2010), Retrieved from <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/haryana-too-will-now-give-jobs-to-eunuchs/598877>; <http://www.iaadhaar.com/enrollment-form/>
31. Humsafar Trust (2009), Estimated: Mumbai, 2009 ([www.neoncarrot.co.uk/h\\_aboutindia/india\\_statistics](http://www.neoncarrot.co.uk/h_aboutindia/india_statistics))
32. IGNOU opens doors to hijra, transgender communities, (June 2, 2012), Retrieved from <http://www.deccanherald.com/content/254121/ignou-opens-doors-hijra-transgender.html>
33. Kannampilly, Ammu, (2011) *AIDS stalks gay and transgender Indians*, (August 23, 2011). Retrieved from [http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5hk15G0Fn\\_LLC5RRXebFoVNsu5PFg?docId=CNG.6609f7833a09a214a3c3001a6af9169b.6a1](http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5hk15G0Fn_LLC5RRXebFoVNsu5PFg?docId=CNG.6609f7833a09a214a3c3001a6af9169b.6a1)
34. Landmark meet on sexual minorities: National Hijra Habba Consultation, (June 5, 2012) Retrieved from <http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/WO1206/S00043/transgendered-indians-hold-landmark-meeting.htm>
35. Madhu, Manjusha (2012), *A society in denial: 'Ghosts' who live among us, demand basic rights*, The Sunday Guardian, (accessed online on 8th Jul 2012).
36. Minutes of Social welfare – women's welfare - Tamilnadu Transgender Welfare Board - Seventh Board Meeting to be held on 30 07 2010
37. Monro, Surya and Richardson, Diane, (2010), *Intersectionality and Sexuality: The case of sexuality and transgender equalities work in UK local government*, in Yvette Taylor, Sally Hines and Mark E. Casey (ed.) *Theorizing Intersectionality and Sexuality* Palgrave MacMillan, New York.
38. Munish, V (2008), *Tamizh Ilakkiyathil Aravanigal*, Jeyam Pathippagam, Madurai
39. Murthy, Ranjani, K., (et al.,) 2011 *Coherence Or Disjunction? Tamil Nadu Policies and Progress on MDGs, Poverty, Gender Equity, And SRHP*, in *Breakingthrough Development SILOS, Sexual and Reproductive Health & Rights, Millennium Development Goals, and Gender Equity, Development Alternative with Women for a New Era*, Philippines.
40. NACO (2011), *Transgender – Hijra strategy, NACP IV working groups Hijras TG*, (Draft version 1.0), New Delhi.
41. Nanda, S, (1990), *Neither Man Nor Woman: the Hijras of India*, The Wadsworth Publishing, California, U.S.A.
42. NALSA Newsletter April – November 2010
43. Narrain, Siddharth (2009), *Crystallising Queer Politics – The Naz Foundation Case And Its Implications For India's Transgender Communities*, NUJS Law Review, 455.
44. Over 60 or transgender? Get free legal aid in Haryana, Hindustan Times, October 27, 2010, <http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P3-2173372991.html>

45. PUCL (2003), *A Study of Kothi and Hijra Sex Workers in Bangalore*, Human Rights Violations against the Transgender Community, Bangalore.
46. Punjab creates 'transgender' job category for eunuchs (February 12, 2010), retrieved from <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/punjab-creates--transgender-job-category-for-eunuchs/578758/0>
47. Punjab creates 'transgender' job category for eunuchs, the Indian Express, February 12, 2010, <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/punjab-creates--transgender-job-category-for-eunuchs/578758/0>
48. Reddy, Gayatri (2006), *With Respect to Sex: Negotiating Hijra Identity in South India*, Yoda Press, New Delhi.
49. Revathi, A (2010), *The Truth About Me: A Hijra Life Story*, Penguin, India
50. Revathy (2011) *Unarvum Uruvum*, Adaiyalam Publication, Chennai,
51. SAATHI (2009), Report of the Regional Transgender / Hijra Consultation in Eastern India, Kolkatta.
52. Samuthiram, S. (1994) Vaanathi Pathippagam, Chennai
53. Sathasivam, P. (2011) Rights of Transgender People – Sensitizing Officers to Provide Access to Justice; Retrieved from <http://www.hcmadras.tn.nic.in/jacademy/article/Rights%20of%20Transgender%20PSJ.pdf>
54. Seeking Identity, Interview with Priya Babu, Retrieved from, <http://www.frontline.in/static/html/fl2626/stories/20100101262610000.htm>
55. Sexual minorities may be boxed into Backward Class category, (Sep.7, 2010), Retrieved from <http://www.deccanherald.com/content/80244/sexual-minorities-may-boxed-backward.html>
56. Sexuality, Politics and HIV, (April, 2009), Retrieved from <http://infochangeindia.org/hiv-aids/interventions/sexuality-politics-and-hiv.html>
57. Singh, Suneeta et.al (2013) *A People Stronger – The collectivisation of MS and TG Groups in India*, Sage Publications India Pvt. Ltd, New Delhi.
58. Sirajudeen, A., (2010), *Transgenders – Social and Legal Dilemmas*, Council of Indian Jurisprudence, Chennai
59. Social Security and Inclusive Growth; Chapter 9: Retrieved from [http://www.indiaenvironmentportal.org.in/files/file/Draft\\_Approach%20Paper\\_TN\\_ver1.pdf](http://www.indiaenvironmentportal.org.in/files/file/Draft_Approach%20Paper_TN_ver1.pdf)
60. Social Welfare and Nutritious Meal Programme Department, G.O. (Ms) No.199, Government of Tamil Nadu, Retrived from [http://www.tn.gov.in/gorders/social/sw\\_e\\_199\\_2006.htm](http://www.tn.gov.in/gorders/social/sw_e_199_2006.htm)
61. Social Welfare and Nutritious Meal Programme Department, G.O.(Ms) No.201, Government of Tamil Nadu, Retrived from <http://www.tn.gov.in/gosdb/deptorders.php?depid=29>
62. *Societal Abuses, Discrimination, And Acts of Violence Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity* retrieved from <http://indiahivaidalliance.files.wordpress.com/2012/05/india.pdf>
63. Sood, N, (2010), *Transgender People's Access to Sexual Health and Rights: A Study of Law and Policy in 12 Asian Countries*, Arrow.
64. *Soon, sex workers in Pune will flaunt university education*, (September 15, 2011), Retrieved from <http://www.ndtv.com/article/cities/soon-sex-workers-in-pune-will-flaunt-university-education-133854>
65. Suneeta Singh, Sangita Dasgupta, Pallav Patankar, Minati Singha (2013), *A People Stronger: The Collectivization of MSM and TG groups in India*, SAGE Publication, New Delhi.
66. Supreme Court of India, Record of Proceedings, Writ petition (Civil) No (s) 400 of 2012 Hearing on 01/10/2012
67. *Tamil's Transgender Community*, (June 29th, 2010), Retrieved from <http://indiaunheard.videovolunteers.org/transgenders-in-tamilneed-jobs/>

68. The Chennai Rally by the Sexuality Minorities, Retrieved from <http://www.infosem.org/news.htm#chennairally> and <http://www.sangama.org/campaigns/Repeal377>
69. The International Seminar on Trans Genders, An Initiative of Udavaum Ullangal, Palayamkottai, Tamil Nadu, 2011 Retrieved from <http://udavumullangaltvl.org/images/reports/Report-of-the-TG->
70. The Third Gender Does Not Deserve A Third Grade Treatment, Retrieved from [http://epao.net/epSubPageExtractor.asp?src=education.Human\\_Rights\\_Legal.The\\_Third\\_Gender\\_Does\\_Not\\_Deserve\\_A\\_Third\\_Grade\\_Treatment;](http://epao.net/epSubPageExtractor.asp?src=education.Human_Rights_Legal.The_Third_Gender_Does_Not_Deserve_A_Third_Grade_Treatment;)
71. Time to walk the talk, (February 12, 2011); Retrieved from <http://www.hindustantimes.com/India-news/Chennai/Time-to-walk-the-talk/Article1-661669.aspx>
72. *Transgender and caste lived experience - Transphobia as a form of Brahminism: An Interview of Living Smile Vidya*; (January 26, 2013) Retrieved from <http://sanhati.com/excerpted/6051/>; By Kaveri Karthik and Gee Suleiman
73. *Transgender secures job at GH, respect in family and neighborhood*, (May 18, 2013) Retrieved from <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/tamil-nadu/transgender-secures-job-at-gh-respect-in-family-and-neighbourhood/article4724898.ece>
74. Transgender, sex workers to help draft women policy, (December 1, 2012), Retrieved from <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/mumbai/Transgender-sex-workers-to-help-draft-women-policy/articleshow/17435397.cms>
75. Transgenders demand welfare board (August 21, 2012, Retrieved from <http://daily.bhaskar.com/article/MP-BHO-transgenders-demand-welfare-board-3676866.html>
76. Transgenders get quota in P-G courses, (July 27, 2010), Retrieved from [http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2010-07-27/bangalore/28295111\\_1\\_transgenders-bed-colleges-intake](http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2010-07-27/bangalore/28295111_1_transgenders-bed-colleges-intake)
77. *Transgenders knock at the door of Backward Classes commission*, (March 04, 2010), Retrieved from <http://www.hindu.com/2010/03/04/stories/2010030455740600.htm>;
78. *Transgenders push for welfare board*, (December 17 2011), Retrieved from <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/transgenders-push-for-welfare-board/888891/0>
79. *Transgenders show high awareness about HIV/AIDS: Survey*, (2 May 2007), Retrieved from, <http://twocircles.net/2007may01/transgenders-show-high-awareness-about-hiv-aids-survey.html>
80. Transgenders to get 'other' category in electoral rolls, (December 22, 2009), Retrieved from [http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2009-12-22/india/28096637\\_1\\_electoral-rolls-electoral-system-navin-chawla](http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2009-12-22/india/28096637_1_electoral-rolls-electoral-system-navin-chawla)
81. *Transgenders to get Rs,1000 monthly pension*, (August 2, 2012), Retrieved from [http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-08-02/chennai/33000445\\_1\\_transgenders-sahodari-foundation-kalki-subramaniam](http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-08-02/chennai/33000445_1_transgenders-sahodari-foundation-kalki-subramaniam)
82. Transgenders: A separate category in Census 2011, (12, December,2010), Retrieved from [http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2010-12-12/news/27614381\\_1\\_transgenders-rti-reply-separate-category](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2010-12-12/news/27614381_1_transgenders-rti-reply-separate-category)
83. Transgenders: A separate category in Census 2011, (December 12, 2010), Retrieved from [http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2010-12-12/news/27614381\\_1\\_transgenders-rti-reply-separate-category](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2010-12-12/news/27614381_1_transgenders-rti-reply-separate-category);
84. UID/Aadhar Project: A government initiative Retrieved from <http://www.merionews.com/article/uidaadhar-project-a-government-initiative/15855258.shtml&cp>
85. *UN lauds India's efforts to provide homosexuals, transgender people with HIV services*, (5 July, 2011), Retrieved from <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=38939&Cr=hiv>

86. UNAIDS (2001), *India: HIV and AIDS Related Discrimination, Stigmatization and Denial*, Geneva, Switzerland.
87. UNDP (2010), *Hijras/Transgender Women in India: HIV, Human Rights and Social Exclusion*, Issue Brief, December 2010, India.
88. UNDP, (2008), *Missing Pieces, HIV Related Needs of Sexual Minorities in India*, National Stakeholder Consultation Report, UNDP, New Delhi.
89. UNDP, (2009), *National Consultation on Issues of Transgender/Hijra Community*, New Delhi.
90. Vidhya, Living Smile (2007), *I am Vidhya*, Kizhakku Pathippagam, Chennai.
91. WNTA, *Approaching Equity, Civil Society Inputs for the Approach Paper, 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan*, Retrieved from [http://www.undp.org/content/dam/india/docs/approaching\\_equity\\_civil\\_society\\_inputs\\_for\\_the\\_approach\\_paper\\_12th\\_five\\_year\\_plan.pdf](http://www.undp.org/content/dam/india/docs/approaching_equity_civil_society_inputs_for_the_approach_paper_12th_five_year_plan.pdf)



**Annex 1. Data from TGWB based on RTI dated June 27, 2013**

Transgender Pension Scheme

Sl. No.	Subject	Year	Budget Allotment Rs.	Expenditure Rs.	Beneficiaries
1.	Transgender's pension Scheme (age group 40 and above)	2012 -13	1.18 crore	* 10,00,000 ** 25,00,000	333 500
			<b>Total</b>	35,00,000	833

\* For three months (August, September, October 2012)

\*\* For five months (November, December 2012, January, February and March 2013)

**TAMIL NADU TRANSGENDERS WELFARE BOARD**  
**EXPENDITURE DETAILS**  
**(2011-12, 2012-13)**

Sl. No.	Subject	Year	Budget Allotment Rs.	Expenditure Rs.	Beneficiaries
1.	a) Educational Assistance	2011 – 12	1.00 crore  (@ Rs.1 lakh allocated for education assistance)	*48,250	1
	b) ID Card Issued (Transgender)	2011 – 12		15,610	487
	c) 25% subsidy for Transgender SHGs for economic activities.	2011 – 12		55,44,875	442
<b>Total</b>				56,08,735	930

\* Actual claimed.

Intersectionality Framework to Track Budgets for Transgender Communities in Tamil Nadu

DETAILS OF WELFARE ASSISTANCE GIVEN THROUGH TRANSGENDER WELFARE BOARD (2011-12, 2012-13)

S.No	Name of the District	No. of transgender as per censuses	No. of Identified Trans genders	No. of identity cards supplied	No. of Transgender pensioners in the age group of 40 & above (from 29.07.2013 onwards)	Ration card	House Pattas	sewing machines	Health Insurance Card
1	Ariyalur	30	24	10	1	10	0	0	0
2	Chennai	647	578	578	9	223	0	5	205
3	Coimbatore	332	332	332	41	281	29	5	0
4	Cuddalore	185	131	131	17	28	43	6	30
5	Dharmapuri	87	87	85	2	53	87	5	0
6	Dindigul	148	148	134	17	50	29	0	0
7	Erode	164	141	127	10	13	102	5	57
8	Kancheepuram	119	85	68	8	32	15	3	0
9	Kanyakumari	41	41	39	10	41	39	4	0
10	Karur	110	44	29	5	28	28	0	0
11	Krishnagiri	32	26	26	5	12	15	0	22
12	Madurai	317	237	225	22	80	103	4	0
13	Nagapattinam	54	49	28	3	17	0	4	0
14	Namakkal	159	159	123	10	63	29	4	0
15	Nigeris	16	9	1	0	1	0	0	0
16	Perambalur	19	19	19	2	17	19	4	0
17	Pudukottai	20	8	8	1	10	10	3	0
18	Ramanathapuram	104	53	53	8	31	21	3	0
19	Salem	189	189	150	34	80	143	3	5
20	Sivagangai	32	32	32	0	18	15	3	10
21	Thanjavur	56	40	40	3	10	15	1	0
22	Theni	127	125	125	8	68	72	0	0
23	Thiruppur	68	45	26	7	16	7	4	0
24	Thiruvallur	222	105	105	0	48	0	4	105
25	Thoothukudi	68	62	62	0	3	0	5	0
26	Thirunelveli	62	62	47	4	21	12	4	0
27	Thiruvannamalai	145	86	68	13	22	57	5	0
28	Thiruvarur	14	14	14	0	7	7	0	0
29	Trichy	162	127	121	0	60	58	5	13
30	Vellore	181	143	143	12	80	20	4	35
31	Villupuram	250	175	148	1	86	42	6	80
32	Virudhunagar	116	114	114	8	16	36	3	31
	Total	4276	3490	3211	261	1525	1053	102	593

D:\WW1\TGWB one page.xls

## **Annex 2: Abstract from Focus Group Discussions and key informant interview**

### **1. Transgender women in Tutucorin**

#### **Participant - A**

From my childhood my desire was to lead life as a woman. That was my only aim. I have 5 brothers. They never rejected me. Only aravani's rejected me. I was not isolated or rejected by my friends or my teachers. Women never rejected me. They respect me and I lead a respectable life. I am married for five years and he serves in the military. I have adopted male and female children. I have also adopted aravains. Both men and women treat me with respect. Only aravaanis isolate me. I was taken to police station due to them. I used to wear 'sari' and nighty like a woman. Even my family members accepted my dress pattern. They wanted me to be myself. But I had to undergo surgery only due to aravaanis. They were not willing to accept me. They said that they would accept me as a female only if I get myself operated. I was considered as a man. Just to get accepted among aravani, I had to undergo surgery. I got myself operated 4 months ago. I did not receive any help from aravaanis.

#### **Participant - B**

The doctors in private hospitals in many cities do not have any understanding about us. I had this experience. The surgery was done by a private doctor. But they did not know what to do. They did not know what had happened to me. They were blinking. It was a big question mark to them. They do not know any thing about the operation. After 10 days I was not able to pass urine. So I was taken to the hospital. They also do not know what to do. They did not attend me. They saw me as an object of disgust. Though they were doctors they were not willing to serve. They did not understand my problem and did not know what to do. The doctors said that the urinary passage is blocked. So he said I should undergo another operation.

I got scared, so i called up my sister and I left home. I made a cut in the urinary tube by myself. The doctor did not even undo the stitches. He mocke us. I do not know if he was scared or he felt disgusted. But he did not remove the stitches. I requested him to remove the tube but he said that another surgery should be done and he made me sit in a corner. A tube is attached for the passage of urine. The doctor told that I can remove the tube only after 39 days. But the tube got blocked. My sister asked me to come out of the hospital. And she said that she could cure me with traditional treatment. I undid the stitches. So when I reached home, I cut the tube and my sister started hotwater treatment. I did not seek any ones help. I kept a mirror underneath and I removed the stitches. When the tube is there the hot water will not be poured vigorously. But after the removal of tube it will done vigorously.

#### **Participant - C**

Now, wherever we get the operation done, later we are brought to Chennai. At times surgery is done in Bangalore. After surgery we are brought to Chennai. And we stay in a house. Whenever required we are taken to the government hospital in Chennai. They know what is 'nirvana' and they do surgery effectively. We are taken care well by the hospital staff and the doctors in Chennai.

#### **Participant - D**

We do face violence. When we enter an area, they take away our mobile phone, purse, etc. they use blade. Even if we go as two or three together we do face this problem. We are forced to do as their wish. They call up their friends and they say that they have got hold of two and they ask them to come over. Our mobile phone and cycle keys are taken away. They do it for sex. Even if we have sex they do take away the cell phone, cycle and other things. They do not pay us. They only take away the things, which we have. They do promise to pay us. And they will say after the sexual act they do pay us. But they take away our mobile and keys. And they do beat us and ask us why we are in this profession. At times they do advice us to behave like man not be a woman.

#### **Participant - E**

It happens everywhere. It happens in Madras, Bangalore and Pune. It is felt that we do not have any one. They think that they are not answerable and no one will question them. Even if they are questioned they can say that we called them. One day we two were walking down the bridge. Two of them kept calling and shouting at us, they called us with the colour of our dresses. As we kept walking they had called their friends, so two became three then six. They rounded us and we had to shout. It happened in broad daylight. We cried for help and few elderly men did come to help. But these boys used abusive language and chased them. They touched us everywhere, they wanted to have sex then we refused. We do not know what they had in hand. It was like blade and they hurt our hand.

#### **Participant - F**

This has happened to me recently. A boy on the road was very abusive to me. He used abusive language. I filed a complaint against him in the police station. But no action was taken. I was very upset and I cried. Then I called my sister. We visited SP's office. He asked me if we had a fight, I told him that the boys were very abusive and that I got upset and I beat him and he also beat me. We have filed a complaint but no action was taken. He asked us to go home. The SP promised to take immediate action. He said that action would be taken before I reach home. In the same way even before I reached home I got call from police station. They asked me as why I met SP. I said that I visited police station first but I did not get any positive result, so I was forced to visit SP. Now that you have got a call from SP's office please do take action if not I will try through other aravaanis. I also told him that I would not let the boy escape. I was not a sex worker and I do not go for collection also. So he has no rights to abuse me. I am not a sex worker and I never step out of my house. Few minutes later a jeep full of policemen came and spoke to me. I went to the police station. They asked me to be patient. The boy belonged to a rich family. So they wanted me to be calm. So am I not a human being? If he is rich I have nothing to do with it. I became very angry and when I am angry I lose control. I said that I would beat him with slippers. I threw my saree away in the police station. I was very angry, and I threw my saree and told them that I would go to another police station and complain that the men in this station forced me to have sex with them. So they got scared and called the boy and they requested him to record an apology. And then the boy apologised to me.

#### **Participant - G**

We have two types of people - those who have undergone surgery and others who have not. People who have undergone surgery do mock at the people who have not done surgery. They scold them and they ask them to undergo surgery and they would tell 'we are women and they are just dressed as women and they are not real women'. My sister, even before the surgery, won first prize in a beauty contest. But she was verbally abused. She was abused so much that she was forced to undergo surgery. You can verify this with her. As people were abusive she had to take up surgery. People who have done surgery dominate us. They do lot of mockery. You need not undergo surgery to become

an Aravani. The minute you wear a saree and you are out in the street and you are an aravani as you have taken the decision. There are many elders in our community though who have not undergone surgery.

## **2. Transgender women in Chennai: 1<sup>st</sup> Focus Group Discussion**

### **Participant A**

I am 40 years old and educated till 7<sup>th</sup> standard, now working in a CBO/NGO as a social worker. I live alone in Chennai earning about Rs.6000/month. However, my income is insufficient as I have an adopted child. I live in my own house and availed ration, PAN, voter ID cards and TG identity card too. I was denied proper school education, job, house for rent as well as any means for livelihood. During my school days I was ridiculed and insulted by my classmates due to feminine style. When I was in 5<sup>th</sup> grade my feminine styles were commented as “Pottai” and “Nine”. Henceforth I stopped my education in two years and restarted. However I was frequently ridiculed almost everyday by my classmates and called me “Pottai”. At the age of 10, I left home because I was treated brutally by my mother. Later, I joined for work at a glassware shop where my Manager tried to abuse me sexually and I refused, and therefore I was sent out of the job. But his harassment continued even after leaving the job, inviting me for illegal relationship.

### **Participant B**

I struggled a lot for a smooth living as job was denied everywhere being a Transgender. Of all the struggles, I am able to achieve many things in my life, now I am the President of Transgender Association, being a guest lecture for few colleges in Chennai. I gained access to hospital services – both private and government; have bank account, gas connection and am invited for family and social functions. I availed services in HIV intervention and involve in Grama Sabha and other social meetings.

I am 27 years old Transgender, mainly practicing sex work and earn through ‘kadai kettal’ (begging). I was insulted in my early days due to my feminine behaviour both by family and co-students. I joined hostel in 9<sup>th</sup> grade, and because of my feminine behaviour, I was called as “Akka”, “Warden” and “Japan Lady”. I was hated and discriminated often by my classmates, roommates and teachers. I fell in love with a boy and had relationship with him at my school days. I was sexually abused at hostel and by a cousin in the family.

My family has beaten me for wearing “Saree” but now the same family have accepted me. When I was in a brothel, I experienced violence from men. Sometimes I am not paid in sex work and humiliated with words saying, “You are a sex worker and for sex work only”. I lost hope in government schemes as I am delayed extensively in getting the ration card since 2 years. I was also refused livelihoods support, as I do not have apparently any heir. I live in a jamaat - Aravani nagar. Though I love to adopt, but was denied adoption rights due to my Transgender status. I earn approximately Rs. 10,000/month and have a TG card and a certificate. I rarely participate in family and social functions.

### **Participant C**

I am 26 years old and working in an NGO as a social worker. My monthly earnings are around Rs. 5500/ but I used to spend more than that. At the age of 12, I realized that I was no more an ordinary male but blessed differently with feminine feelings and attitudes. It was too early for me to know the world and that was enough reason for me to get sexually exploited. It all started with my schoolteacher, who used to gently slide my thighs and one day, he stripped down his pants and made me run out of school. Such abuses did not stop with me and it continued even in my job. Actually, I experienced

great difficulty in getting a job due to my gender and in the job I was tortured by my supervisor. He used to stand nude in front of me and ask me to accept him. I ran out from there but he was followed me. I was also not allowed by the police to complain for a case.

But I was determined and trained well in serving my community through an NGO. Now I work in an office, acts in films, give dubbing for the movies. I also organise several awareness events; I possess TG ID, bank account and PAN Card and freely access the government hospital services. These factors made me attractive and popular and now often I visit my family, as I am alone here at Chennai for the past decade. I have a sister and I am now more social through participation in festivals and social functions.

#### **Participant D**

I am still scarred of my horrible memories despite the fact that I am now relatively better at age 24, placed at an NGO and earning a monthly income of Rs.1500. My trauma experienced in early years is still haunting me and I hardly believe that no good things had happened to me without a selfish motive. At the age of 16, I lived with my family but as my behaviour was different from other boys, my parents asked me to leave the house at those tender years and they even burnt my certificate. At my school, despite being a student who scored 80% and I was ambitious of standing first in the state, my co-students abused me and this shattered my dreams. At the work place everybody had insulted me and treated me badly. This made me leave that job. I was also once robbed of my mobile and beaten for being a transgender when alone at a beach. When I approached the police, they refused to take any action against the offenders but insulted me.

I was never ready to believe that good things could happen to me. My parents have now accepted me because, I am now earning and I feel other children should be saved from my curse, of being a TG. Though the family receives me, it is not taking me to any function or marriage; they do now and then discriminate me in such occasions. My parents look after me now with the intention that in turn I will take care of them in old age as I am earning now. The relatives also accept me as I am providing them money as and when it is needed.

#### **Participant E**

I am aged 31 and live alone at Chennai. I work as a Project Manager in a CBO earning Rs 8000/ month. I earlier lived along with my mother and 3 siblings. In my school days I was teased by my co-students and also teacher who called me as 'Onbadhu' while taking attendance. Due to this, I used to be late to school to avoid attendance and hence failed in 8th standard. When I was shifted to another school, there also I faced insults and then I left it. Even among my neighbourhood, I faced rebuke and felt very much disgraced. And while at my job, I experienced sexual abuse and this had upset my work performance.

But now, with the CBO, I am working for my community and I take care of my self. I have got ration card, bank account and TG identity card and now I am an influential person in my community. I have gained my property rights and have free access to government hospital services. I feel safe and have been able to voice my stand against any sexual or physical violence.

#### **Participant F**

I am graduate in English and working in an NGO with a salary of Rs 60, 000/- per year. I am 26 years old and live with family including 3 brothers. I have obtained a transgender

certificate and have access to avail services in private and government hospitals. I participate in social and family functions.

I have no big trust in government schemes and services. I have actually been denied of ration card after making me run around for the same for several months. I found difficulty in getting a rented house. I have also been denied of my rights in getting my house and property. The family accept me as they are sensitised on the nature of transgender. Of course, I understand that there are initial resistance in the family but they have taken me back because I was able to convince the family.

### **Participant G**

I am a trained tailor and earn around Rs.5000/ month and live with my family along with 3 brothers. I am 28 years old, and due to my gender status and despite my castration, I am being harassed often to get married. My parents quarrel with me due to my inability to get any job as I am a transgender. This is stressful and I couldn't manage my parents.

Earlier, I have undergone sexual abuse and exploitation as I was practicing as men having sex with men (MSM); I used to get teased as *pottai*, *ali* and so on. Now I am with my family as my behaviour is good and not bringing any problem to my family. I am obligated to my family norms and adjust well with them. This has developed good family support. I want to plead with the government to provide facilities for jobs and other entitlements as applicable to general public. I have not so far availed ration card, voter ID, bank account, TG identity card, etc.

## **3. Transgender women in Chennai: 2<sup>nd</sup> Focus Group Discussion**

### **Participant A**

Abuses are frequent and often; they call me *pottai*, *uss* or *onbadhu*. The services are denied to me at hospitals. They deliberately have made me wait in queues to harass me. This hurts me. I am unable to get houses for rent. Police also several times beat and grab money at nights from me.

The society, families and educational institutions have to be sensitised on human values and understanding every human. This only helps the future generation to understand about TG. Well-educated TGs need to be provided with appropriate jobs. Otherwise, we are forced to rely on immoral acts. Every TG should strive to make the public understand about their issues. One has to focus on every front – politics, law, society and family – to make them understand about TG.

Though I get benefited in different areas, I have not received any support for my job. I was born, have grown and educated and gone to job and without being known as Transgender. But when I became a TG, dressed in saree and asked for job informing my status, I was denied. They asked back “which man would work under a TG? What would be your response?” They reported that this would bring unnecessary controversy and denied me the job. This happened at Technosoft, Chennai. I am still waiting to get a good job. Having seen the struggles of my other friends and our community, I am so much disappointed. I have not received any entitlements from the government.

### **Participant B**

I am 50 years old now. In my young age I was very beautiful. During my school days, I was compelled to have sexual relation by my schoolmates. I tolerated the torture till I completed plus two. My gradual progress towards third gender made me an object of exhibition and I had to undergo mental agony. When I reported about my change to my



family, all of them became angry and I was asked to get out from the house or live in isolation. I left my hometown and came to Chennai.

At Chennai, I joined a company hiding my identity. But, it came out on a day and my co-workers drove me out from the company. They also mocked at me as *pottai* and *Onbadhu*. I felt depressed and I realised that I could not continue to work there. Left with no work, I found no other option except begging. That forced me into the good old profession – sex work for my livelihood. During this period I was unable to get a house on rent. I was told that my stay would make others stigmatised and the children in their neighbourhood would also be looked as *pottai*. I started living on streets and begging at times. In my later years I became part of the TG community.

### **Participant C**

In 2009, I had a big fight with my elder sister to retain the house that I was entitled to. When my sister had beaten me, I dipped myself in kerosene and went to police. But my sister with political influence seized the house from me through a forced agreement.

Now I am aged 38 and live alone. I earn through begging and live by myself. I do not have anybody even just to say, “You may take rest, I will go and buy some medicine for you”.

### **Participant D**

In 2003, I recognised myself as TG and at that time, I was with my parents in a rented house. My parents feared that the house owner would expel all of them from the house and therefore sent me out of the house. In my school days, I used to get mocked by my friends as I exhibited feminine behaviour. I was teased and subject to sexual harassment. I had a violent incident in my life that once I was picked up by a client but he was riding his bike very fast almost like a kidnapping situation. I was afraid and I wanted him to drop me and shouted. But he refused and started twisting my hand. I shouted out of pain and the public rushed in there. The client accused me of robbing his purse. But, the public found no purse with me. They wanted to hand over him to the police but he swiftly escaped.

Now I am 32 years old and do sex work. I have a bank account and I am earning over Rs 10,000/- per month. But getting a house for rent is very difficult for me.

### **Participant E**

I became conscious of the change in my gender at the age of seven. I slowly started exhibiting feminine qualities and attitudes. My teacher first sexually abused me and later I developed sexual relationships with others. I was often abused through vulgar words like *pottai* and *onbadhu* by my classmates.

I have just completed my school final and engage in sex work and begging; I am also a playwright and involve in street dramas. I have obtained TG identity card. Initially, my family hated me and refused to accept me, but over the years, as I became an earning member, my family accepted me. I am now accepted whole-heartedly by my family and my village. Being a popular dramatist, I have been able to convince my people.

### **Participant F**

I had bitter experience in the early years due to my feminine traits. My uncle forced me into sex at the age of nine. My boy classmates always ridiculed me for being a TG. Even when I went for begging (‘Kadai Kettal’), I am mocked at and abused as *Onbadhu* and *Uss*. I got scolded when begging, people asking me to work instead of begging. But who is there to give a job for a TG? I also faced similar insult at the collectorate when I had gone

there for demanding my right to job and ration cards. It makes me feel bitter about the society.

At the beginning itself, I had explained my position very clearly to my parents. This has helped my family to accept me. I take care of my parents and do my duties without fail. They treat me as equal to any other daughter and I have been never denied of any rights. I am left free to act and do of what I want to do.

A widespread knowledge and general awareness among my society has helped my parents to treat TGs very normally. Media has helped them to have easy acceptance and access to the community at large. In a service organisation, TGs are accepted because the organisations get benefits out of involving TGs – because by showing TG employees, service organizations fulfil their needs.

#### **Participant G**

I was experiencing stress several times due to negligence and discrimination by my friends and relatives as I am a TG. When one of my close friends at college came to know about me, he left me permanently. Once I gave an interview to a magazine and when friends learnt about me, they started boycotting me. Even at the dining table, they left me alone; similarly I was often sent out of the house whenever relatives visited the house. I was also unable to go to my relatives' marriages. They used to raise several questions about my behavior. All these had affected me mentally.

Such insults and discriminatory practices towards me continued in my career too. I am a graduate. I along with another TG friend attended several interviews at MNCs but we were denied jobs citing several other reasons. The primary reason had been non-conforming names – the names that we would like to call ourselves as TG and the ones that are in records. Further, there were problems in allocating toilets to us in offices – male or female. All these make me feel stressed and discriminated.

In order to change the names in the gazette, I visited the government office but none had any courtesy even to respond to me. They made me visit frequently but finally refused to change the names. I am 23 years old, HIV+ve and have a degree in business administration and work in an NGO for Rs 5000/- per month as salary. Despite facing discriminations, I have been successful in getting TG Card, Voter ID and opening a bank account. I also get ART.

#### **4. Transgender women in Chennai: 3<sup>rd</sup> Focus Group Discussion**

##### **Participant A**

I am a sex worker by profession and this had led me to many problems in my life. Both in my work circle and in my living area, I am constantly experiencing violence and atrocities by rowdies and the police as well. The abuses by the society and its insulting activities have often led me to stressful situations. Day after day, I am subject to these sufferings. Being a sex worker and TG, any complaint to police has always ended in blaming me instead of police taking actions on the accused.

I have been severely denied of my property rights. Virtually, I was stranded on streets along with my TG group in respect of demanding my rights to get my property due to me. My maternal aunty abused me and threatened me accusing that I am *Nine/Onbadhu* and I do not deserve to avail any property. Police also support my aunty and police is not taking any action on my complaint; instead, they also threaten me. But my parents, and friends have been supporting me in my fight.

Fortunately, I had support from my family. I have completed my school final. I have obtained ration card, aadhar card, TG identity card and voter ID. I also have a bank account and health insurance. Initially as any other family, my parents too discriminated and boycotted me due to my gender difference. But after many years, they have become satisfied with my good conduct. My mother accepted me first; next was my father saying that it was the divine's choice. Later followed my brothers and sisters. I give money to my parents, brothers and sisters.

### **Participant B**

I belong to the Brahmin community and I had many occasions to be with my community people in several functions. When many of my people gather, there are always questions about my gender. This has irked and irritated my parents. So, I used to be left alone and not taken to any function. My feminine behaviour and activities were questioned and insulted even by my classmates when I was doing my diploma course. I was mocked and abused for my feminine characters. They used to call me 'Akka' (sister). They reported my status to my brother and this made him hate me and he stopped talking to me.

### **Participant C**

At the age of 12 when I was in class six, I realized that by then I was different from being a male. I did not have any friends. My history teacher came to know this and he started to insult and abuse me. He forced me to do menial jobs and always scolded me in front of other boys. My class mate Ragu used to call me pottai, onbadhu and abuse me. He also gathered other boys and teased me in front of them. They used to laugh at me and beat me at the ground. My complaints to the teacher went in vain.

In my neighbourhood, Praveen, my friend was harassing me and he saw me once having sex with someone. He chased him away but Praveen began to give torture to me. He frequently compelled me to have sex with me and he also brought his friends who exploited me. Once I did not consent to sex and he complained about me to my uncle. My uncle beat me brutally. Bearing all these sufferings I grew up and got a job in a textile unit. Everybody there knows me as kothi. There I befriended Ramesh and used to please him and also offer him money. This slowly turned to be a love affair and I became dependent on him. Over time, Ramesh started exploiting me and demanded money from me. After sometime, I came to know that Ramesh had contacts with another lady. It made me sad and it was unbearable to me. I left him but not his thoughts. I attempted suicide but was saved by my parents.

### **Participant D**

When my elder sister came to know the changes in me, she beat me and sent me out of the house. The irony is, now after many years, I am looking after her family where I was treated as an insult.

Actually it was a shock to me when I was stranded on streets and I did not know what to do. I went to government medical college for a surgery and they wanted somebody to be with me. Then, I went with a TG whom I met first. I pleaded with her and she was kind to help me. Only, after the surgery, I had a sigh of relief. But, I did not look like a female even after my surgery. No matter where I go, I am looked down upon by men, women and even children. They even talk ill of me and sometimes, I was physically assaulted by them. Similarly, men look at me as sex machines and misuse me. I am denied education, property and even a house for rent. I have no bank account as I was not able to give supporting documents. I don't have a ration card to avail subsidised food items. I live by alms.

### **Participant E**

I am 21 years old, and belong to the mudaliar community. I completed class 12 and have good work experience in a jewellery shop before I was identified as TG. On knowing my status, the owner changed my profile to a telephone operator due to my voice, thus replacing the current male operator. The employer was all along very supportive to me after knowing my gender but not the operator. I left my job believing that my colleague, the operator who was working with me as assistant was really loving me and would marry me. But, my colleague duped me and he pretended to be my lover and made me leave the job. In my early school years, I always used to sit with girls and the boys also encouraged me to move with girls due to my soft approach. I studied, dined and slept with girls even in my school days. I also used to sit with a female teacher when I studied in boys' higher secondary school.

Later, I met a lady doctor in a private hospital where my mother was working. On knowing my status, the doctor gave advice and counselling. She spoke to me as a friend and not as a doctor. She boosted my confidence and I underwent surgery. Now I am working in an NGO and earn Rs. 5000/month. I take ART and go to a private hospital for any treatment. I have not got property, voter ID and am not welcome to participate in social and family festivals. When my sister got married; I was not allowed to attend her marriage due to my gender change. If I was to attend the marriage, I needed to change my dress and hairstyle so I did not go. My brother in law did not like her sister even talking to me. He told her wife to go with me and not live with him if she continued to talk to me. After which we both never talked to each other.

### **Participant F**

It is comparatively difficult for us to get any benefits and entitlements from the government. Further, we do not have any proof and supporting documents that is usually asked for. Therefore, we are not getting any services. Sometimes, they make us roam from pillar to post; in the same way, our rights are denied. Police used to abuse us sometimes; if we question them and asked back what we could do to them. They also threaten if there is any show of agitation we would be booked and put into jail. Even if we go out casually, the police used to threaten us. Only if our rights are recognised, we can have access to services.

As regards to my family, I left as I was criticised for my feminine habits; they wanted me to change but it was not possible. I had strong feelings in me as transgender; I also did not want to stay with them. I do not have any contact now with my family. I never go there; they also have not come and talked to me.

I experienced many problems in my work place. They used to heckle me at my habits, practices and my dress; they used to call me for sex. Otherwise, they threaten to complain against me. Such issues are many. Though we have education, we are denied of job opportunities due to our sexual status. Hence, we are unable to earn; we are forced to beg and do sex work. We don't have any other chance. If we are able to get any better jobs, we will never be in this profession.

We need to make the world understanding about TGs. Since experience some physical and emotional changes, we become transgender and this fact needs to be reinforced among the public. If there is any such transgender in any families, please do not discard or discriminate them. If we go out of the families, we face many challenges. So, they should not discard us; please understand us; keep us within the family. Help us to avail all our entitlements. In a society, let us have the belief that all are equal. Then, there is no discrimination; there is no negligence. We need to sensitise our families too about the transgender.

## 5. Transgender Women in Erode

Discrimination is daily part of life for transgenders from birth to death. At family level we face non-acceptance of parents, non-acceptance of male siblings, ridiculing of feminine behaviour by male relatives from parents, expectation of sex appropriate behaviour by the parents, relatives and society, unfriendly home environment – and they force, restrict or prevent us from being ourselves, forced to wear boys dress etc.

At the personal level we have beginning of sexual feelings generally at the age of 12-13 years and become sexually active at the age of 13-14 years with strong feelings/ crush towards males, sexual abuse by relatives, friends and teachers, sexual favouritism demanded by teachers and relatives and feel the need to leave the house.

In the school we face stigma and discrimination, unfriendly environment, unsympathetic management, insensitive peers and teachers, forced to participate in boys' centred games and sports activities, bullying/ nagging/ teasing peers and other students affect our interest to attend the school, attraction towards boys, sexual abuse by peers and teachers and are unable to concentrate on studies and have lack of interest in schooling.

We are eagerly looking for the companionship of people with similar behaviour - strong feelings to come out of the clutches of all family restrictions, unfriendly home environment they make us move out of the family and join with our own community, after the migration, our exposure to a new environment where language, food and culture affect us psychologically and make us more vulnerable to abuse, harassment and violence. We are highly conscious of beauty and fair skin through peer group influence and pressure; growing interest in beautification and the craze of fair skin make us spend huge amounts of money on beauty products.

We have a strong urge to under go 'nirvan' at the earliest and at any cost without understanding the complications involved in it, unaware of high risk behaviour, false projections/ promises of 'becoming rich' and wrong guidance by a few 'selfish' elder kothis who trap 'pinju kothis' (young kothis).

### Issues faced by transgender

- Lack of employment opportunity in government sector and private sector
- Private shops - those who employ transgenders even for menial work for low wages boast of having done 'something great' to others. The transgender feels uncomfortable when they are introduced to visitors/ new customers.
- Transgenders employed in tea/petty shops and food stalls are not paid salary equal to that of male employees.
- Sexual harassment at the work place by the owner, co-worker and even by customers which discourage them to opt for earning through a 'decent' way
- Lack of livelihood opportunity forces them to be dependent on sex work and begging for fulfilling their basic needs (food/ clothes/ shelter/ make up)
- Petty shops and business started by TGs are not profitable
- Loans provided by the banks through SHGs are effectively utilised only by a few groups
- Lack of awareness and self-confidence at the result of discontinuation of education.
- Most of the TGs are not recognised in the government services beyond 'ration card' and 'voters identity card'
- Tradition of spending money on the newly found relatives, *gurubhai*, *chela*, *nathi*, *jamath etc.* relatives to strengthen the bond
- No unity among the transgenders

- Limited awareness of government schemes and programs;
- Difficulty in availing government services
- Consenting for risky sexual behaviour for more money (to spend on SRS/silicon breast)
- Insensitive government officials are found in most of the government departments except social welfare board
- More focussed on their external beauty which make them spend huge amounts of money on beauty products/ creams / lotions/ dresses
- Craze for having a feminine body make them to spend money on hormonal injections and tablets/medicines
- Eager to have fair skin
- Police harassment and abuse and advocacy has only limited impact
- Vulnerable to harassment by rowdies
- Social and community construction make them long for love and affection from males
- Attraction towards males cause them heavy loss monetarily and they are often deceived by youths in the name of love and marriage
- Easily fall in love with unknown persons through social networks such as *facebook*
- 'Glorification of nirvan' by peers make them opt for less expensive traditional surgery (*Thayamma kai*) at a younger age
- Removal of penis by traditional method is still prevalent as the government sponsored free SRS is restricted only to a few pockets of urban centres.
- Post surgery complications is high

### **Recommendations**

- Awareness/ sensitisation needs to be created among the parents of transgender children to ensure supportive family environment where such children are respected and treated equally
- Production and telecasting of short films on transgender by the state
- Positive depiction of transgender characters in the television serials and films would result in acceptance
- Sensitisation of schoolteachers from primary school level is essential, as the teacher would encounter such children in their career. Only teachers can play a major role in ensuring protective environment to transgender children and in shaping their future with required education qualifications. Education should not be disrupted at all
- Incorporate transgender sensitive curriculum in the teacher training courses.
- Involve community-based organisations also in creating the awareness among general public. Print and visual media also can play proactive role.
- Sensitisation stalls on transgender should be organised during the mass events such as Exhibitions/ Expos.
- Enabling a protective environment at home/ school/ neighbourhood would prevent migration of transgender from one place to other
- General awareness on transgenders needs to be created among the public
- SHGs should be promoted as they are successful only in few places
- Need separate reservation in public and private sector
- Sensitisation of police on transgenders should not be project based but continuous
- TGs should be issued licences to engage in sex work
- District level hospitals should have facility for SRS
- There is a lack of trained professional surgeons for performing SRS
- Sensitisation of rights and entitlements need to be strengthened among the transgenders

### **6. Transgender women in Chennai: 4<sup>th</sup> Focus Group Discussion**

## Issues faced by transgender women

**Denial by Family/ Parents:** The parents do not accept their children once they come to know about their TG status. Many parents react negatively while some react with hostility. Sometime, mothers extend their support and acceptance but they are influenced by the fathers' reaction. Fearing patriarchal dominance, they too request/ persuade/ demand/ push/ force the children to change their behaviour without understanding the underlying causes. Family support is very essential for the children to face or cope-up with any challenge or discrimination from relatives, neighbourhood, school and the society.

These factors influence the children psychologically and they are forced to repress their feelings fearing rejection from their parents, sibling and relatives.

**Identity crisis:** Children in this age group also undergo a gender identity crisis and look at this as a disorder and it is increased in the absence of professional guidance and counselling to overcome their confusion. Many children are unable to understand why their behaviour and feelings are incongruent with their assigned gender. This confusion continues until they meet anyone with similar behaviour.

Parents – are ready to accept if their offspring is born with physical deformity but would rarely accept if their children behave incongruent to their assigned sex.

**Contributing for household chores:** As mothers are sympathetic, most children assist and share in their household chores (such as cooking, cutting vegetables, fetching water, sweeping & moping and washing utensils and clothes) to get more affection and support from them. But the dominance of the father/ male relatives becomes a deterrent of mother's support.

Parents worry about the family status/ respect force the children to change their behaviour. Many parents do not understand the real cause of their children's behaviour and try to find out quick and crude solutions. Some parents use violence to correct their behaviour while others take the recourse of religious authority or black magic. A few of them attempt to 'cure' this with shock treatment with the help of medical professionals. All these issues make children feel lonely and they isolate themselves from others and their feelings for joining with similar people increase.

**Sexual abuse by relatives and family members:** Male relatives always point out about our behaviour or walking and talking style to our parents. Irritated by these, parents start rejecting or become hostile to their own children. Neither the parents nor the relatives have any understanding of the transgender children and their issues. They are deprived of enjoying their childhood. Most boys do not prefer to interact with them and as a result they are forced to play with girl children. Some relatives do not allow their male children to mingle with them lest they would also become like girl.

Many children undergo sexual abuse by the male relatives. In the absence of parental support/ acceptance, they long for the love and affection from persons who can understand their feelings and behaviour. Therefore, they become easy prey to male relatives.

**Suppressing their feminine feelings:** Disabling environment at home – prevent them from fulfilling their dream of seeing themselves in women attire or make up. Therefore, they look for opportunity to express their inner feelings. Over the period of time – their suppressed and repressed emotions make them either assert their identity within the

family or get out of these clutches by running out of their home to join those with similar features. Many children chose the second option, as they did not want to embarrass their family and relatives.

Non-acceptance by the family is the foundation of all the problems and risks faced by children between ages 10-15. Many children look out for a flock of similar people. Although they are accepted and provided emergency support wholeheartedly by their group, they are expected to contribute for meeting their basic necessities. It is very difficult to get any decent work for survival and many experience constant threat of losing their work due to their sexual identity or sexual exploitation at the work place. In that situation, majority of them are moving into sex work during the night and begging during the day. A few of them work as labour in the eateries for their survival but the lack of shelter exposes them to all vulnerabilities.

**Solution:** Ensuring acceptance from family would reduce the vulnerabilities of the children with feminine behaviour. Because, parental support and care would enable them to face any obstacles and challenges posed by the external factors (school, relatives & society).

### **Sensitisation**

- Awareness should be created among the parents and general public about the third gender.
- Parents who have male children with feminine behaviour need to be counselled at an early stage and make them understand that is not the children's fault but is it natural.
- Social Campaign through media should be made to address the stigma attached to transgenders.
- Documentary films need to be produced on problems and exploitation faced by children forced to leave the family should be telecasted.
- All modes of mass media should be involved in creating the awareness and correct understanding about TGs.
- Popular film personalities and political leaders need to be involved in creating the awareness on TGs.
- Positive projection of TGs – in the movies and serials would bring positive change among the general public.

### **Education related problems/School:**

- School is next to home, where the children in the 10-15 age group spend most of their time. Children who have hostile family environment and negatively reacting parents are unable to focus on their education. They do not have anyone either at home or in the school, with whom they can confide the bodily changes or psychological feelings
- Children with feminine characters are reluctant to open up their physical changes with their teachers – when their peers, who may be excited about bodily changes and thrilled with growing up
- Children face major problems in the school. The problems vary from bullying, teasing, verbal, physical and sexual abuse by the peers, students and teachers especially male teachers
- It is very difficult for the children with feminine characteristics to cope up with the school environment. Their feminine characteristics make them vulnerable as they are often forced to maintain the cleanliness of the classrooms.
- Most often, teachers take them to their homes for performing household chores.
- Few male teachers exploit them sexually.



- They face sexual advance by fellow classmates and a majority of them address them using degrading words.
- Teachers do not have clear understanding about TGs.
- It is very difficult for the children to continue their education with the support of jamaat or Gurus as they cannot produce any supporting document on age or last school they have attended.
- School management or class teachers are not aware of addressing the problems faced by the children with feminine characteristics due to lack of understanding or training
- School management or class teachers do not listen positively and look into the matter when the harassed children complain
- Constant bullying and sexist remarks and sexual abuse by fellow boys and teachers – force them to skip classes and later even make them discontinue or dropout from their schooling
- In case of cultural events organised at the school, they are stigmatised and forced to perform roles preferred by girls.

**Solution:**

- There has to be a professional counsellor in each block or district, who address the issues of such children and provide professional counselling
- The same counsellor can play the role of sensitising the school management and class teachers in ensuring the enabling environment for such children to continue their education like their peers.
- Curriculum on transgenders should be the part of teacher training so that teachers play a proactive role when they come across such students
- It has to be part of curriculum even in the refresher course/ lectures organised for the teachers at regular intervals
- School management and class teachers should play a positive role in enhancing the self confidence of such children, provide counselling to children’s parents to ensure continuing of education
- Textbooks should provide anatomy of transgenders as well – so that the children also acknowledge and recognise the ‘third’ gender without hesitation
- School management should not insist on supporting documents for admitting children who have moved out of their hostile home or family
- There should be a separate scholarship for such children to pursue their education until their graduation

**Issues and problems faced during 16-25 years**

- Non-acceptance of their identity by their family provokes rebellion against the family which expose them to violence
- Constant nagging from the family, relatives and society makes them look for the companionship of similar people
- Hostile family environment and non-acceptance of entertaining their legal rights make them to move out of the family and home
- Denial of their right to live in the house or property rights
- Dropping out of education
- Sudden exposure to external environment makes them vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse by anti-social elements and clients
- No job reservation for TGs. Also they face problem as their names in the birth certificates, education certificates are different from that of new name they choose. This causes confusion in whether to enrol their name for employment under women’s quota or men’s quota.
- Many of them are unskilled when they leave their home to join the group. Some of them are already exposed to performing household chores

- They have limited options for work and are exploited at the work place by lower wages and their behaviour invites teasing and sexual advances from the colleagues.
- While begging, some are insulted - 'why are you begging when you are not handicapped? But nobody comes forward to give any work.
- To meet their basic needs – they have the immediate option of entering into sex work. Depending upon the Guru they are engaged in sex work and begging to ensure the guardianship and protection of Guru. A few 'guru bhai' are exploitative who make them attend more clients during the night and force them to beg during the day
- Many times, TGs are denied rental houses or demanded exorbitant rent or slapped many conditions such as no visitors to the house.
- Sometimes they are caught between the tussles between two *jamaats* – in which both claim that the person belongs to their group
- Most of the children/ teens develop physical attraction towards the opposite sex. Most of them children try to seek the attention of opposite sex are often cheated or ditched by their male lovers
- Most of them undergo exploitation in the name of love and lovers, cheating, violence and black mailing
- Unable to cope up with rejection some attempt suicide or self-immolation
- Some of them lure the youth by pampering, spending money on them, buying gifts, giving pocket money etc. To meet these expenses they attend more number of clients. At last, they achieve nothing
- Love failure makes them take recourse in alcohol and tobacco. To meet the expenses they attend more clients and are involved in unsafe sex; in the name of taking revenge against the cheated partner, they try to get new partners and lure them with money but face the same fate again
- Some of them borrow huge amounts of money to spend on SRS and address post SRS complications/ side effects
- The SRS done at the state hospital are not perfect, many of them are not happy with follow-up services and majority of them are undergoing the side effects. Therefore, they take the services from private medical professionals by paying more money
- House owners demand huge advance from TGs and also charge more money for electricity and water usage
- Hard earned money by them is simply taken by the partner and given to others, as a result of which they borrow money with exorbitant interest to pay their house rent and to meet their expenses
- To maintain their beauty and get more feminine looks, they spend more money on hormone tablets, creams etc.
- They face constant problems from police, rowdies and clients. They undergo verbal and physical abuse
- Neighbours oppose – any congregation on important occasions such as 'Paal Ootruthal' after the SRS
- TG tenants are prevented from entertaining their guest/relatives in the house.
- Society stigmatises verbally, physically and sexually
- They lack understanding of the side effects of the beauty products. They consume any medicine without proper medical prescription or advice of medical professional or beautician
- They spend more money on hormone development tablets/ injection, which affect their skin and kidney
- Understanding their urge for looking more feminine, many unauthentic beauty products are suggested/ referred to them.
- Huge money is spent on silicon breast and laser treatment for hair removing.
- The children moving out of the family were unable to continue the education even a few *jamaat* leaders are willing to send them to the school.

- Still many TGS are deprived of ration card, Voter ID, Welfare board card, no house – for the lack of proof for residence and other supporting documents
- House/ accommodation is a major issue for TGs
- Identity cards issued by the TG Welfare board do not have any value.
- TGs should be given scholarship to pursue their education until graduation. There should be a shelter home for the children with feminine characteristics
- *Jamat* leaders and Gurus associated with NGOs and other bodies manipulate the list of beneficiaries under government schemes for transgenders
- There is a confusion among the TGs themselves in eligibility availing schemes
- There is no reliable statistics on transgenders in India.

### **Recommendations/ Demands**

- Employment reservation
- Marriage Rights
- Right to adopt children
- Gender Change Policy
- Proper counselling needs to be given those who opt for SRS about the side effects of hormone tablets/injections.
- Medical staff should be more professional in performing their duties and be sensitive to the TGs undergoing SRS. They need to do surgery with perfection.
- Community hall should be provided free for TG for organising their events
- Free housing scheme for TGs
- Pension scheme for TGs 20 and above
- Census of TGs every year

### **7. Transgender women in Villupuram**

Profile of the participant group / Aravanigal nagar area: The participants first came to Villupuram a decade ago. Twenty-one were given plots by the government at that point. The first phase of plot distribution was in 2000 when 10 people received the plots, followed again by 11 people receiving the plots in 2003. The leader of the group (Villupuram area Nayak/ Jamaat leader) Radhamma lobbied with the government, and the District Collector assisted them as well the people.

In 2013, there are approximately 110 TG without houses in Villupuram district, for whom the group continues to lobby with the collector. All the people participating in the FGD had obtained land 'patta' (title deeds) and ration cards (with their TG names). There were two *Jamaats* in the area but everyone was living communally in the houses. In the area surveyed, there were 31 houses, and 60 people living in the area. The main source of livelihood for the participants was sex work, collection/begging, theatre (dance and drama) and dance in carnivals at temples, short-term cooking/ catering services, and ceremonial/ religious functions in the community.

**On living together as a Transgender community as opposed to living within society:** The participants felt there were innumerable problems living with non-Transgender people in society.

- Many TGs struggled to pay the rent
- If 'guests' or clients came home, house owners and neighbours raised objections, so living in such an area meant that they could make their livelihood without objections.
- Transgender people living together are an advantage for safety.
- 'Beela Panthis' don't create problems as often.
- Don't prefer complete isolation from communities, but living next to them.
- They had maintained good relations with the neighbouring communities.

- Jamaat congregation is possible because of living close to each other like this.

They had started 4 Self Help Groups (SHG), the first one starting in 2002 and became fully operational in 2004. Through the SHG, they had started activities such as soap-making and phenyl. They had also managed to sell their allotted land among themselves, but this was possible only after 10 years after the 'patta' (title deeds) was given.

There are around 10 TG people who were receiving Old Age Pension in Villupuram.

### **Problems and experiences from the ages of 10-15**

The most common problem was the harassment and stigma from schoolmates. There was a lot of stigma attached to their effeminate body language and behaviour, and the activities they enjoyed such as doing the household work, wearing women's make up and clothes, and lack of acceptance by family members. The family would be embarrassed by their relatives and neighbours commenting on the same, and would want the children to behave in a more masculine way.

Some of the respondents reported a strong desire to run away and be with their own kind of people. By the age of 16, most seek solitude. Some felt that their mothers were a source of emotional support because she found it easier to accept them than others. And once she accepted them, others also follow her lead. But at times, other family members blamed the mother for spoiling the child or as the reason for these unusual developments. But there were some cases where the mother found it the hardest to accept the child.

It was also around this age that students who identified as being different were approached by other boys in hostels. With all of this sudden attention, then you felt like transforming into a complete woman. It was common for people in positions of authority such as the warden to want sexual favours or abuse the boys.

It was extremely hard for them to continue their education in such an environment where other students were harassing them. Most of all teachers were not supportive in such an environment; they feared harm or a negative influence on other students. Students would tease them outside schools as well, where the teachers had no authority. Sometimes teachers would take advantage of the situation and want sexual favours as well.

### **Solutions / Recommendations by the group**

- Teachers should be trained in being sensitive towards such students.
- Proper private counselling should be given, so that one boy is not singled out as being different, thereby marking him as "different" in front of everyone.
- Counselling must be given to the students who tease other students, not just the students experiencing harassment and discrimination.
- There should be more projects such as Pehchaan, where there is information provided by TG themselves to the students; there is a need to create awareness about these issues and inculcate sensitivity from school itself.
- Trainings should be frequent, at least once in 3 months. Counselling options for parents, as well as information within public spaces must be available.
- Media portrayal is a huge problem. Straight men wear make up and caricature Transgender people on the big screen, creating negative impression of TGs
- The opportunities for Transgender people are not economically fruitful as much as sex work or begging which brings in more money when they start living on their

own. Hence employment opportunities should bring in enough income as an incentive for transgender people to leave sex work or begging behind.

#### **Ages 16 and onwards**

- Some of the main issues around this time are that teenagers often run away from home or migrate to other cities in search of their own community, where the temptation of being able to live completely like a woman after undergoing SRS
- Most transgender people enter into romantic relationships or form attachments of this nature, within which there are a lot of domestic quarrels
- Family acceptance exists, but most often they shun them when the TGs are wearing saris
- Exposure to the outside world increases their awareness of their own community

#### **Solutions/ Recommendations to overcome these problems**

- There need to be more vocational trainings (tailoring, making sanitary napkins), which actually lead to employment. Widespread marketing and publicity initiatives needed so that companies can approach TG groups.
- Even though they have all the legal entitlements, they sometimes have conflicts with other marginalised groups or villages over things such as land allotment. This particular group has been petitioning over land that belongs to them but has been occupied by villagers in Villupuram. The government needs to take cognizance of such issues.
- There need to be cultural and awareness campaigns which are sustained, and do not stop at being a one time effort.
- Most TGs end up in a cycle of debt because of the money they owe their Jamaat leader or other TGs for the SRS. The government hospitals take a long time processing applications, and consent of family is needed, which complicates things. Hence many Transgenders end up taking private loans for the surgeries and end up in debt and with surgical complications. The government needs to decrease the waiting period (6 months to a year for an operation registration) and make the application process smoother.
- There needs to be a clear demarcation between their issues and those of MSM. Transgender people undergo a lot of stigma and suffering to reach where they are, where MSM don't undergo anything similar and live secret lives and get all the benefits too.
- There need to be reservations for TG people. Government provided options are better than private, as there is a platform for legal redressal and accountability of the government, which isn't available in private organisations.
- There needs to be more representations at the political level, so TG people should organise themselves on the basis of states, not as separate districts from a state.

#### **Age 40 and above**

- Sex work becomes difficult because by that time the body debilitates, and cannot be maintained as before. Risk of HIV/AIDS
- The health of transgender people starts suffering in other ways such as diabetes and the weight gain after SRS.
- Government needs to increase Old Age Pensions and also the sum towards the funeral expenses of individuals (at the moment it is Rs.1500).
- There are a lot of transgender people who around this age are cheated by their lovers and husbands, who leave them for biologically born females – there needs to be some sort of a legal recourse for these abandonments and cheating.

## **8. Transgender Women in Kancheepuram**

### **Problems faced from Age 10-15**

- Social stigma in the form of teasing, name-calling, spread of rumours about them and their sexuality all of which leads to them discontinuing school.
- Other parents complain to the parents of the child in question about their behaviour and their influence on other children, which further escalates the problems.
- Forcible sexual relationships with older classmates or neighbours
- Female teachers also take advantage of them at school by making them do their personal chores. Physical education teachers sexually abuse them or assault them physically or verbally when they don't perform well in classes or in sports.
- Their body language and effeminate behaviour marks them as different, and even if they try very hard, they cannot prevent themselves from being discovered.
- Their families fear social exclusion because of them.

### **Solutions/Recommendations**

- There need to be more awareness campaigns. There should be some focus at incorporating a historical perspective about Transgender people, their problems in schools through school syllabus. Movies and documentaries, which show them in a positive informational light, need to be disseminated. Religious texts like the Bible contain positive references to them so they must be used.
- Television channels such as Disney and Cartoon Network can carry advertisements with positive messages about TG.
- This should start as early as class VI and VII.
- More trainings – similar to the ones conducted for the police personnel at the moment. First teachers, and then students (who fall into the Class VI – X group) who should be trained by people from the community.
- Parents must be involved in the training and sensitisation process.
- Government must give projects to TG at the district level.
- Advocacy initiatives must address sexual abuse, and also look at the reasons why TG are migrating from TN to other cities.

### **Ages 16-25**

- During college, sexual abuse and harassment continues. Ragging is a huge problem for TGs. Classmates make fun of them by cross dressing (men dressing as women) or dancing pretending to be TGs.
- TGs enter romantic relationships, and get abandoned/cheated by their partners.
- They are also thrown out of their houses, and without any education and have to join *Jamaats*.
- College life is riddled with fear; even if they want to change it is not possible. Body language gives them away.
- House rent is increased once the owners find out that they are TG. As tenants, TGs are prone to abuse/ threats and are also asked for sexual favours by the owners.
- Because of *Jamaat*, they incur huge debts for SRS, which they have to repay by doing more sex work and begging.
- Parents try to get them married in order to change them, hence many run away from home.
- Parents also try to get them admitted to mental health institutions or undergo ECT (shock treatment).
- Family exploits them for money. They approach them when they need money, but ask the TG to hide their identity and pretend to be men. Some are asked to pay for the marriage of their siblings but are not even invited for the marriages.
- No right to property but asked to fund new construction or purchase of property.
- If TG wants to change *Jamaats*, the *Jamaat* leaders charge them huge sums.

### **Recommendations**

- Marriage rights need to be given to TG, along with property rights and adoption

rights.

- Loan sanctions for SHGs, trainings.
- Advocacy initiatives with college students.
- House problems and discrimination in rent need to be solved by allotting land for TG.
- No proper surgery procedures followed in government hospitals for SRS and silicon implants. People then end up resorting to private options, which are more expensive. Hence government hospitals need to be as good as the private ones. Government doctors do well in private clinics, but in government hospitals surgeries go wrong and use TG people as “medical experiments” and to demonstrate them as objects to medical students.
- There is a need for proper specialists who know about TG problems. Most surgeries are part of “mass surgeries” where many people are operated upon at the same time, without individual care, or proper aftercare.
- Employment opportunities are of great importance in this age.

### **Ages 26 - 40**

- Health problems increase, due to aging and
- TG Welfare Board – only an entity in name, but has offered very little contributions to the community.
- Schemes of the old government discontinued with the regime of a new political party. Inconsistency at the political level causes problem to the community.
- Name and gender certification is a problem. Most TG leave home, where their birth certificates and school certificate are, hence it becomes hard to apply for any scheme or programme or job. TG Card is not accepted as identity proof. Even to apply for a sim card, it is a problem.
- Problems during sex work – dhanda – forced to perform low paid sex work by police, and rowdies. If they caught during sex work, asked to pay a fine.
- Some sort of a Hamam (short stay) license/scheme that exists in Karnataka already needs to be brought out in Tamil Nadu too.
- Community halls for functions need to be made free by government, and some amount must be set aside for such celebration.

### **Age 40 and above**

- No support system during this period with rapidly declining health. Chelas and nathis may take care but no assurance; PLHA are more vulnerable.
- Some don't even have money or family for their funeral or last rites.
- Reintegration with parents needs to be looked at closely at this age.

## **9. Transgender Women in Madurai**

### **Experience of Discrimination and Problems from 10-19 years**

- Because of noticeable differences in behaviour and gait, there is a lot of teasing and harassment. Teachers approach them for sexual favours. Name calling on the streets is common, where they are called by animal names.
- If they are studying in a hostel, and they refuse sexual advances from monitors or wardens, they exploit them by forcing them to do physically heavy and straining tasks. They'll be sleeping in their dormitories, when they would be forced to wake up and engage in sex.
- Village folks harass and gossip about them. Studies are often discontinued because of the persistent harassment, and parents who beat them. Even children make fun of them.

- Even when they leave their homes and join a jamaat, they are forced to go begging or for sex work. They are promised money for SRS, so they are unable to refuse. After the SRS, there is a loss of strength and vitality. The only option that remains is sex work.
- Transgender people cannot go to public places such as theatres due to threats of harassment.
- Dangers during sex work include rape, being forced to have group sex, and threats of their identity being revealed.
- Teachers exploit them in other ways such as making them run their household chores. Or if a student gets close to a particular teacher, another teacher informs the student's parents.
- Suicidal tendencies during this age due to stigma if family or neighbours come to know of their sexuality or there is gossip about sex.
- Conflict with siblings, where siblings are embarrassed by them. Siblings' friends make fun of them, or spread gossip around.

### **Recommendations**

- Children should be educated on the differences, as the harassment starts from childhood. This should be done class five onwards. It should be part of sex education, as well as social studies where mythological stories and religious references can be used.
- A short stay home should be established for runaways.
- Awareness should be spread through movies, public service announcements, because these have a mass appeal and they are an effective medium of communicating messages to the public. Street theatre is also another method. There should be more emphasis on spreading awareness in rural areas.
- Counselling should be provided within schools for both teachers and students. Advocacy initiatives, on the lines of police trainings, should be conducted by TG for teachers.
- Educational quota should be set aside for TG.
- Measures and schemes where TG are able to continue their education from where they left off at an early age.

### **20-40 age group problems**

- Asked for sexual favours wherever they go. By house owners, random men, and police. Police and rowdies in particular solicit sex. Kidnappings and demanding ransom.
- Problems with housing such as higher rent. House owners impose several restrictions: don't clap, no men allowed in the house, don't sing, don't make any noise.
- Illiterate TG are given more money for having sex without condoms, as its easier to exploit them.
- If they contract HIV/STDs, they are socially excluded. Hence many keep their disease a secret and suffer silently.
- The welfare board is an entity only in name, they only help people known to them. Sex work and begging has continued despite the existence of such boards, so there's no respite from it.
- No scope of availing the MNREGA, entitlements such as ration cards not easily available or easily renewed. There is no response from the Employment Office despite registering there.
- Rivalry between TG groups over clients or areas of operation.
- Although there is free ART and healthcare, fear of their identity being revealed prevents them from accessing it at times.



- SRS is free in government hospitals only in Chennai, not in Madurai.
- HIV+ people need livelihood options because they cannot engage in sex work.
- No matter what advocacy or training given to the police, this has had no impact. TG are still being beaten up and forced to pay up with their earnings.
- A cycle of debt traps them with increased poverty and threats from goons, and forced evictions from houses.
- Government hospitals can have an insensitive hostile environment, where TG are asked to go stand separately.
- Problems from SRS and silicon implants.

### **Recommendations/Solutions**

- Free housing
- Long stay home for those TG who are HIV+ from the community.
- Free legal aid for transgender people.
- More initiatives at securing property rights.
- Government loan schemes for this age group.
- Attempts at reintegrating with family by providing family counselling through CBOs, NGOs, or Government programmes.
- Using the media for positive messages. Misrepresentation of TG should be prohibited.
- Proper legal recourse for transgenders in case of rape or eve teasing. The protection accorded by law for women, should also be given to Transwomen.
- Free bus pass for transgender people.
- People who go through SRS should receive a pension from the government.
- More livelihood initiatives which are home based.
- Disseminate material on transgender in police stations.

### **40 years and above**

- Old age pension is very little.
- Exclusion from community due to old age is a major problem.
- Due to ageing, health suffers greatly.
- TG cannot stand the strain of sex work or physically laborious work after undergoing SRS.
- Livelihood options are needed the most around this age, as no one is there to look after them. They also have no family.
- No financial savings to access medicine and care, and they forego nutritious food as they are not able to afford it – therefore a health card for this group specifically is needed.
- This (Madurai) group does not have identity proof, such as ration cards, hence they won't be able to avail of government schemes and subsidized food.
- Excluded by their biological family around this time, who earlier benefitted from their earnings and gifts.

### **Solutions**

- Old age home for TG specifically.
- Health card for this age group.
- OAP – a minimum of Rs. 3000 is needed.
- Some form of property rights and ration cards needed.

Exclusion from community due to old age is a major problem. They cannot withstand the strain of sex work or physically laborious work during this period due to SRS. They have very limited livelihood options around this age, as no one is there to look after them. They also have no family. They do not have financial savings to access medicine

and care, and they forego nutritious food, as they are not able to afford it. Their biological family, who earlier benefitted from their earnings and gifts, excludes them.

## **10. Transgender Women in Coimbatore**

### **Experience of discrimination and problems - 10-19 years**

- At home, family members notice the difference in body language, the way of dressing and that they play with girls constantly, and scold them.
- During school other children and teachers also notice this, no matter how hard they try to hide it. This causes developmental problems. Apart from the teasing, classmates and teachers also approach them for sexual relations. Teachers sometimes ask the students to sit with other girls.
- Children become interested in dressing up as women, make up, dance, and in the absence of proper counselling, lose interest in studies.
- There is an early onset of conditioning on how to behave: male children are expected to behave in a more masculine manner. Family complains that they cannot take their children out in the public or for family functions because of how they behave, and how that will invite social stigma. Parents hit them or punish them in order to change their behaviour. Even if parents do not say anything, neighbours notice and complain. Parental support differs from house to house, some mothers are more supportive and in others, fathers are supportive.
- Relatives of the children also take advantage of them, and there is a lot of sexual abuse. These relatives support the children on the outside, but take advantage of them because the children are vulnerable and lonely.
- Some parents even contemplate murdering their children because of the stigma within the caste system and to protect their honour.
- Sometimes sisters are supportive of them, which helps because in the absence of parental support, siblings' support is important. If that is not there, there is nowhere to go.
- There is a tendency to get involved in romantic relationships which can be exploitative as well because TG are keen on anyone who shows some sympathy or friendship.
- Some older TG advise them that they should go back, and not live this life of hardship and suffering, but people leave their homes to get emotional support and for acceptance.

### **Recommendations**

- Parents should counsel their children, and tell them about the hardships they will have to endure if they decide to become a transgender. If it is not possible to change, accept their children the way they are.
- Teachers and students need to be counselled. The counselling should start in Class VI and VII, so that these children do not experience isolation in schools.
- The government should provide some benefits for the parents of such children.
- The government needs to conduct a proper census, so they can start schemes accordingly. Transgender people assume different names in different cities, and after they have left their parental home. The government needs to take into account such multiplicity.

### **20 years to 40 years of age**

- There is a lot of emotional torture and harassment from the society and the police around this time. No provisions to ensure safety from the police.
- Suicides among transgender people because of being cheated by their partners.

- SRS causes problems which are life-long, because most often it is not done properly. Some of these problems include problems while urination, sexual dysfunction, piles, etcetra.
- Housing is a problem. TG are charged double rent because of who they are.
- Transgender identity proof is useless. Cannot be used to avail any services.
- Struggle over property rights with family.
- There is a lot of expenditure over luxurious lifestyles that TG leads.
- Alcoholism begins around this age due to depression sometimes.
- Other health problems such as diabetes.
- Continued lack of livelihood options. Even if there are job opportunities, there is sexual harassment at these workplaces.

### **Recommendations/Solutions**

- There needs to be more awareness about the problems of TG in society. This can be propagated through advertisements and documentaries, which can be showcased in cinema halls.
- More public talks and cultural festivals celebrating TG, so that the public becomes more aware.
- Age irrelevant pension schemes, similar to the one in Delhi (where someone who has been a resident of Delhi for 3 years can avail of a pension regardless of their age) should be given to TG in Tamil Nadu.
- Educational loans and schemes for those who discontinue their education early on but would like to continue it now.
- Self-employment schemes, which reduces chances of sexual harassment and abuse of power.
- The group was divided over the “Other/Third Gender” column – one person wanted to their sex to be categorized as “female”, while the others preferred “Third gender/Transgendered”.

### **Old age problems**

- They are too old to be involved in sex work or in begging. In that case majority of them are taken care of by their ‘chelas, daughters and other relatives’.
- It is shameful for the aged TG to stay in old age home
- These days, young kothis change their loyalty to their ‘guruma’ as they keep on migrating. In such a situation, a few aged TGs are left without any support mechanism. In that situation, government should provide ‘free housing’ and ‘old age pension’.

## **11. Transgender Women in Tiruvallur**

*“Government conducts a census of even animals in the wild, to see if they are well or extinct. We (transgender) don’t even feature in something of that sort. No one cares.”* A participant in focus group discussion in Tiruvallur

### **Ages group between 10-15**

#### **Problems faced:**

- The respondents reported facing harassment and teasing especially at school. Women would also tease them at times. It was common to be marked out
- School was a major site for problems, as their different body language and tendency to cross-dress was noticed easily by others and marked them as being different.
- They were very prone to sexual abuse at this age. They would also be approached by other men in the neighbourhood and in school for sex. Most of the TG would feel happy at this attention from men, and would engage in these relationships without anyone to counsel them on it.

- They would be unable to perform at sports, and hence would receive a lot of threats and taunts for it.
- Their own siblings would discriminate against them, and there would be a hostile atmosphere at home. Problems at home caused problems at school as well.

**Solutions/Recommendations:**

- Parents should be approached directly because it may backfire (especially in rural areas) and they may get defensive. Teachers should be trained and counselled in dealing with such children, so they don't isolate them on account of their behaviour.
- Sex education at an early age.
- Using various media such as advertisements, radio and movies as a mode to educate people. Caricatures of transgender people should be stopped, rather stories that have them as an integral part should be
- HIV AIDS campaign. People disassociate HIV from AIDS, so there's a need to create awareness about that.

**Ages group between 16-25**

- During this age, there is a lot of migration from Tamil Nadu to other states where there is more acceptance and opportunities for work.
- A lot of problems are faced when TG people engage in sex work – physical abuse and harassment in public.
- They leave home most of the time because of family members unable to accept them as they are, and they face the social stigma. They seek their own community because of which they join Jamaats.
- Many family members try to forcibly marry them in an attempt to “rectify” their behaviour, so this leads to many TG fleeing their homes.
- They need to earn a lot of money so that they are able to afford SRS.
- Sex work makes them vulnerable to HIV/AIDS and other infections. Health problems start at this age such as body pain and urination problem. Possibly because of SRS.
- Although there are various problems with Jamaats, they stay with them because they are unable to find a home of their own or unable to afford SRS. They need a house of their own

**Solutions/Recommendations**

- Laws and schemes should be there irrespective of political changes (e.g. party in power goes out, their schemes for TG is discontinued).
- Separate tuition/college/education loans for TG.
- Livelihood options; even such as bus conductors, driving, manual work.
- A census should be conducted so that benefits can be given to TG people age wise.
- Need to tackle hierarchy in Jamaat, as well rowdyism and threats of public shaming. Laws need to be enacted to prevent these problems.
- Too much focus on HIV prevention, need to look at other problems as well.
- Loans for self-employment, and to start SHGs.
- Family support exists for other people but not for TG, so there needs to be some social protection scheme such as an early age pension.
- Marriage laws much include TG as well, because they are cheated/scammed by people. Also TG marriages need to be registered legally as well.
- Gay marriage is acceptable abroad, hence there needs to be a law to make it legal in India.
- There are schemes for single women/destitute women where they avail of Rs. 1000. A similar scheme needs to be started for TG women.

**Age group between 26-40**

- There are several health problems at this age – TB and jaundice. Due to physical strain, they cannot take up as much sex work or begging as before, so they take more

risks (mainly unprotected sex) as well with whatever opportunities that come to them. A health card would solve these problems.

- A home for those suffering from HIV, or those who have been abandoned by their partners.
- Young TG often undergo a lot of harrassment and torture as there is no social support for them, and they are reduced to sex work or begging to fend for themselves. Government should assess their needs.
- Adoption rights needed, as well as property rights around this age become important.
- Information about various government schemes are not available; needs to be spread at the district level and through panchayats.
- No housing scheme for Tiruvallur so far – isolation, homelessness are major problems. There must be some form of community housing scheme, because without housing, there are other problems.
- Disability allowance is needed for this age.
- There needs to be equality before law. NGOs help with crises, but not so much with entitlements. There needs to be more political representation from TG.

#### **Age 40 and above**

- Health problems continue into this age group. This age group is particularly vulnerable as they need more nutrition and health supplements.
- Most of the TG around this age are alone, no one even is there to take them to hospitals.
- Bus and train passes need to be made free as well as free electricity. There are separate seats for women in public transport, this needs to be done for TG as well as they face harassment and ostracization when travelling, even from women.
- In instances of violence experienced during sex work, no recourse to treatment as there are no funds available for that. There's a long waiting list at government hospitals. All government doctors need to be sensitized as well.

## **12. Key informant interviews and FGD with TG Welfare Board representatives**

In 2007, Action Aid conducted a state level assessment of the problems and issues faced by the Transgender community in Tamil Nadu, out of which 36 case studies were for presentation at a public hearing organised under the umbrella network of Tamil Nadu Solidarity Action. This hearing was attended by around 500 community members and observed by a jury panel. All in all, the public hearing comprised people representing education, finance, social welfare, small-scale industries and women's welfare. Based on the findings from the case studies as well as the hearing, the jury recommended the setting up of a Transgender Welfare board. The state government accepted these recommendations and a TG Welfare board came into existence in 2008.

#### **Constituents of the board**

There were 8 members in the TG Welfare board each representing one district of Tamil Nadu. All of them were chosen based on their experience and contributions to the community. There was one non-TG member on the board (Hariharan), again chosen for his service and contributions to the community.

1. Noori, Chennai
2. Jeeva, Chennai
3. Priya Babu, Kanchipuram
4. Ganga, Vellore
5. Salima, Villupuram
6. Mohana, Trichy

7. Kanimozhi aka Kader, Madurai
8. Hariharan (NGO representative)

Meetings would be held once in three months, attended by the Chairperson and DSW officers. Meeting minutes would be taken down, and at the next meeting there would be a discussion on the progress made on the issues.

#### **Achievements of the Board**

- Transgender Census was started, but not completed
- Government Order (GO) passed setting aside a Grievance Day in the Collector's Office specifically for transgender community
- A GO for including an "Others" column in schools and university admission forms.
- Short stay home for Positive people – that was first started in Tambaram, but then due to inactivity shifted to Central. This was an important achievement as people who travelled to Chennai for ART treatment would not receive them immediately, but would be asked to return on another day. Hence a short stay home was an important achievement for them, and shifting it to Central (closer to Railway station) meant more people accessed it. It also served as a place where people could change their attire (female to male clothes) before they visited their parents.
- Although the Board asked for a Counsellor (in the short stay home) to be appointed, the recommendation was not met with.
- "Sitting fee" for board members increased from Rs. 75 to Rs. 1000.
- GO passed that made it that TG would not be asked for a proof of identification before they could register one ID beforehand (Ration Card).
- Lobbying successfully for land pattas.

#### **Future recommendations**

- No meeting since 2011, and no new welfare board has been constituted because there's been a change in political administration (DMK to AIIDMK). The change at the political level should not impact the board, which should be a neutral entity.
- Another public hearing needs to be held, to assess the progress made so far.
- Social security schemes need to be implemented so that TGs can access them when not employed, or when they run away from home.
- Further employment opportunities in the NGO/CBO sector – where a service scheme can be started. Small-scale industries need to be roped into these schemes.
- Many TG live in slums in Chennai – whereas in other places, the community has been able to acquire land, but not in Chennai so this is something to look into.
- Reservations for TG in private sector.
- Education loans need to be given out exclusively for TG.

#### **Limitations of the TG Welfare Board:**

- Long process from consultation to implementation.
- TG Welfare Board was under Social Welfare department, which also looks at Women, Children, Disabled etc so their needs are often clubbed with those categories. There needs to be a separate department looking at the needs of TG people exclusively.
- No direct linkage to the district level (DSW).
- Welfare board did not have the authority over budget/financial decisions. They would just be informed about the decisions by the government authorities at the meetings.
- Certain decisions are taken without proper consultation and looking into the feasibility – e.g. shifting of short stay home in Chennai
- Lack of follow up to the decisions and implementation
- The board members are not provided with the budget
- Lack of database

- Lack of coordination with other departments

### **Annex 3: Case studies**

#### **Case story 1**

My name is xxx from Madurai. I am 42 years old now. I grew up in Madurai and I have lived here all my life. I have two elder brothers and two younger sisters. They are all married and have children of their own. My mother died seven years ago. My father lives with one of my brothers. I have studied till Class 5.

I think I first became aware of my feelings around the time I was 13 years old. I think I always knew this from the time I was eight years old, but I didn't completely understand then.

My father would sell children's clothes by the roadside. I would be sent to take his lunch box to him. During such times, when I used the public toilets, I would see men engaging in homosexual acts. A boy, who was around 20, once approached me. He hugged me and I realised it felt good. The next day I felt like going again to the same place. At that time, there was no awareness about HIV/AIDS, so we didn't use protection when I had sex with the boy.

I began working at a jewellery shop, alternating between my work in the shop and visits to the bus stand. After about six months, I started dressing up neatly with a hint of make up and was approached by men. At this point, someone advised me that I should start charging people so that I could cover my expenses. My family never used to eat out as my mother always cooked at home, so I would ask my clients to take me to hotels where we would eat good food.

I wished to go to Bombay because it was very difficult to dress in a sari and grow your hair in Madurai. In those days, people would pester you if they discovered you belonged to the transgender community. They tried to pull off your sari or shove you around on the road.

I went with my community people to a place called Kamathipura in Bombay, where one person left me in a house where not only transgender people, but women (who were sex workers) also lived. In the beginning, I was free to choose my clients and I was happy there. I came home after the first three months and worked in a jewellery shop for six months. I went back to Bombay after this because my mind would keep wandering to my life in Bombay where I had made many friends and had lovers. I led a life where I could dress as I pleased in Bombay.

So I returned. But this time, things had changed. The head of that household began forcing me to have sex with all kinds of people, some of who collected garbage and cleaned bathrooms. I was not given my earnings either. My customers would be rough with me. One even bit me all over. I kept crying after these incidents so they sent me back home.

I came home and worked for a few months, but I chose to return once again. This time I told them I did not wish to continue sex work but was willing to go begging. Yet things did not change. Other transgender people living in the same house would squabble with me, saying I could not choose my customers. I was still forced to engage with all customers, some of them would be really rough. This often resulted in the condoms breaking. It came to a point where I was asked to attend to 13-14 clients in a day. I would also be woken up at night when I was fast asleep by other transgenders who



would collect money from the client, and force me to have sex. This left me very depressed me and I cried often.

So I left this house and went to another place, which had people from my community. No one forced me to engage in sex work there and I earned my livelihood by begging at shops or on the roads. Once members of my previous household spotted me at a traffic signal and they informed the head. They came to my house to beat me with sticks, which split into splinters. I must have been 27 years of age at that time. As I kept crying, they sent me home again.

This cycle of visits to Bombay and then coming back home to Madurai continued for many years. I was fed up of sex work and finally left the first household for good. I found a house where our community leaders lived. They didn't force anyone to do anything.

This was around 2003. I came back home to discover my mother was extremely unwell because her diabetes had gone out of control. At this point, the director of the Tamil Nadu AIDS Initiative (TAI)/ISM project advised me to go for an HIV test. I had contracted sexually transmitted diseases in 2002, and was taking care of it at that point. I also found out I had been diagnosed as HIV+. I was extremely distraught. I had heard about the disease before but it was not until I myself was diagnosed and underwent counselling at the clinic, did I realise what it really was.

I have been taking care of myself since then and have stopped sex work. At some point, I joined the TAI awareness project, where I found short-term employment. This eventually turned into long-term employment.

My mother died in 2006. I realised I'd nothing to lose after this. I was living independently by this time. I decided to undergo surgery.

Although my family gave me my share of the property, they gradually started excluding me. I revealed my HIV+ status to my family after my diagnosis. When I shared that I did not have diabetes, the younger of my two brothers taunted me saying, "So what if you don't have diabetes. You've contracted many other things." They excluded me because they felt if I visited their houses or stayed in touch, it was dangerous for their children.

Worse was the discrimination from my own community of transgender people. I would often hear them say in front of me: "She is positive. She has AIDS." I was romantically involved with someone at this point. Another transgender person betrayed me, by calling this person and informing him about my condition. There is competition among our community members as well.

Until a month ago, I was the Secretary of a CBO working for transgender people in Madurai. While I don't wish to name individuals, I have undergone discrimination from my own board. One of them has commented on me saying, "She has AIDS. She will die soon." I think it's very different when you are HIV+ because everyone, including your own community, excludes you.

There have been a lot of things I have faced in my lifetime. When I was 25-28, I was actively looking for sexual partners. On one such occasion, I happened to be in a secluded area that was dense with trees. A man stopped me and asked me why was I all-alone in a such a secluded spot without any money. He snatched my clothes and threw them aside.

I didn't report these incidents to the police because I didn't want to face any awkward questions. The police try to find fault with us all the time, asking us what were we doing in such a place, why did we go there and other such questions.

Being HIV+, I cannot engage in sex work and there are very limited options for employment for me. I am thinking of looking for work where I can clean houses and do other such chores. I wish there was some card or a bus pass for transgender people that allowed us free travel in public transport. In the house where I live currently, there are non-community members living in the neighbourhood who do not know that I'm HIV+. I wish there was some government home for transgender people and that we received some form of monetary incentive every month. There are places for general population, but there needs to be something which only transgender people can access.

## Case Story 2

My name is xxx and I am 32 years old. I am a transgender person from Madurai. In Madurai, I earn my livelihood by begging. As there are some problems in my house at this time, I'm staying at my friend's house. Apart from my parents, I have a younger brother, a younger sister and an elder sister. I arranged my sisters' marriages. They have never complained about me because I have fulfilled my duties. But I always feel guilt in my heart, because I was afraid of what our relatives would think or say, and if there would be some problem. Even if there were problems, I don't think they would say anything to me but I was always afraid that they would try to get me married. They keep asking me to return, so I have resolved to not care about this anymore, and am gathering the will to go back.

I realised I was a Kothi when I was 12 years old. I remember the first instance was when I was playing with my cousin brothers, spinning tops and shooting marbles. They would be able to do these activities well, but as much as I tried, I was not able to. I never understood why this happened. My father scolded me for being good only at girls' games. I went home and cried. When I told my parents that I wanted to play only with the girls, my parents beat me, and even held my hand to the fire as a punishment. I bore it all silently, and did not utter a word.

However, I enjoyed activities such as hopscotch and skipping with my cousin sisters. Since I did not know much then, I was not able to meet people like me at that time. I would visit bus stands, theatres, temple festivities, searching for people who were like me. During such a visit I met someone at a bus stand who became one of my close friends. It was Abi, who stayed two streets away from my own house. The first day we met, we travelled together on a bus and went home separately.

The next day I wished to see Abi again, but was unable to until a few days later when we met by accident. I shared about my feelings of sexual attraction towards other men, such as wanting to hold them, kiss them or lie next to them. Abi asked me if I wasn't a boy, to which I replied that I felt feminine and I wanted to wear a sari. He said he also felt the same way towards other men.

We changed our names to women's names, whereupon I became 'Archana', and my friend 'Abi'. We would go together to the Periyar bus stand, where we would meet our kind of people with whom we became friends. We also met men who would ask us to accompany them. We in turn asked them for some money. I wore make-up and threaded my eyebrows to look more attractive. Everyday we would go with someone to a park where we would talk. On the first occasion, there was a man who was much older than

us. He asked us to accompany him to a liquor shop. We said we would accompany him but would not consume alcohol. But when we entered the shop, people got angry saying that he brought children to the wine shop. So he gave us Rs.10 each and we left. While we were waiting, he came out drunk, unable to even talk. We were scared and ran away. At home, we were terrified that he might try to find us again as we had taken the money and escaped. When Abi came home the next day, my family became suspicious because he also walked and talked like a girl. They, however, left us alone and told us to get away from their sight.

I didn't know there was even a word for people like us – some people would call us many derogatory things such as ali, ponduchetti (words associated with transgender people). It was very hurtful. But I began finding my own people by observing them. It was easy to spot them, so we would approach them. Some responded positively, while others would react angrily and even threaten to beat us up. In this manner, we ended up with a circle of 9-10 friends that soon extended to 20-25 people. We would meet on Sundays and go to the racecourse. The police would come and question us, beat us up and we would repeatedly face trouble with them. They would ask us why we were standing, clapping our hands and ogling at the boys who played sports at the racecourse.

The boys who played there were mostly young men living in hostels at the peak of their lust without any outlet. But while we only stood watching the boys, they were the ones who approached us for sex and took us to their hostels. They would force us to have oral, and anal sex sometimes.

Things went on like this until I was in Class X. Then my family members started harassing me with questions about where was I going, why wasn't I coming home on time and so on. I lied to them that I was working somewhere in the evening. It would often be midnight by the time I came home, which would further lead to questions on why was I coming home so late. They told me that if this continued, I might as well leave home. I would go to the racecourse grounds and think about how my family was harassing me. I shared my problems with my friend, to which Abi replied that our people were in Bombay, Bangalore and internationally. So we decided to seek them out that day. Someone told us that we would not necessarily be allowed to do as we pleased or have the freedom we aspired for in these places. Hence, we decided to go to Coimbatore where we worked as cooks.

The people there treated us with kindness. I stayed there for five years and I became a good cook. I came back to Madurai after this, but my family wanted me to change my behaviour. My elder sister and young sister were of marriageable age, and my father had become an alcoholic. My mother cried and implored me to take care of these matters as the eldest son. At that juncture, I sat in my room and thought matters over. My brother was still young; my elder sister was going to get married soon. I resolved that whatever worries came my way; I would go to Bangalore for work. I stayed there for five years from 2000-2005. I would visit home every year dressed in pant-shirt, and on my return to Bangalore change into a sari. During this time I raised enough money by working hard, through begging and sex work and helped to get my elder sister married. After that I got my younger sister married, raising money through chit-funds and taking loans from my own community people.

Soon after, my younger sister's marriage hit a crisis over some dowry that was yet to be paid by us. I was not even able to visit home to try and resolve it. Again, I worked hard to raise the money to hand over the two sovereign jewellery that her in-laws demanded. But I began to tire of this life, doing the same things over and over again. I lost interest in sex, because I had been forced to take up sex work for my livelihood. I desired a new life

and a new start where I hoped someone would employ me knowing that I was a transgendered woman. While I resolved to stop living in such a manner where I have to engage in sex work, or go begging, I have been unable to stop. I have not been able to find good employment anywhere. If I could find something that was suitable to my level of education, and where I earned a monthly income of Rs.5000-6000, that would be enough. I could re-join my family as well.

A life is worthwhile only when you are with your parents. My parents are both very old, and they have suffered a lot in their time, so I want to be with them during their last few years. But despite this, I stay away fearing condemnation from our relatives and the society.

My family knows that I am a Kothi, that I walk like a woman, work like a woman, shape my eyebrows, don't have a moustache and have my ears pierced. But my family is not aware that I am a transgender woman, I wear saris when away from home, have sex with men, and have been earning my livelihood through sex work and begging. If they came to know of this, they would feel very sad, and wonder if they should have got me married off.

There is no one available to counsel my parents. If there were some educated people who could explain why I am this way, or about transgender people, how their psychology works and that they are born this way, my parents would understand. I feel scared of telling them the truth on my own. My mother has a heart condition, so I would prefer not to say these things. Or may be I will reveal it to them slowly, and not shock them by appearing in a sari. My own family has never isolated me. They just expect me to fulfil my responsibilities, and visit them at least once a month. They have been asking me why I have stayed away from home for two years. They tell me it is time for me to return now that I have fulfilled my duties towards my sisters. They are fine with my pierced ears and long hair now, and want me to come back home.

In fact, my parents live two streets away from this house where I live now, but they don't know that. I commute using auto rickshaws, so they have never noticed.

I've been trying very hard to get a job and I am waiting for a response from an organisation that works for human rights. They know that I am a transgender woman, and will be employing me as an office assistant. Just as there are people to answer queries or distress calls for men and women, I will respond to calls from transgender people in situations where other people might hesitate to answer them. If I get this job, I hope to slowly come out to my parents. My people do not occupy any big official posts, we need our own people in higher positions to understand our problems and be accountable to us.

Eventually I want to come clean to my parents about my gender identity, because they have started talking about my marriage. I am going to tell them I do not wish to get married because I am a transgender person. A lot of my community people, who dress in pants and shirts, have married women. I do not wish to spoil the life of someone by doing so.

### **Case Story 3**

My name is xxx. I'm 23 years old and I come from Dindigul district of Tamil Nadu. I have finished my MA Literature, and am currently pursuing Masters in Social Work.

I was born as a transgender. I became aware of my identity and my body started going through physiological changes when I was in Class VIII. Until Class VII, I mostly played, danced and talked with other girls. I think there should be counsellors in schools for children to talk about these feelings. I was not able to talk and walk like boys of my age with a more 'manly' gait, and I would hold my books against my chest the way girls did.

I studied in an all boys' school, and because of these reasons I had no friends. I fell in love with my classmate but he rejected me calling me a "eunuch". After this, I tried to commit suicide by mixing poison with buttermilk, but was saved. It was the year of my Class X public examination. I didn't know whether to concentrate on my exam or think about all these feelings. I didn't know what to do. I was frustrated with my parents and society for not accepting me the way I was.

I remember that when I was in Class XII and studying in the science stream, other boys in my school pushed me against an iron gate and my head started bleeding profusely. Every other day there would be a problem. When I went home, my mother would say that if I was facing these problems everyday I might as well discontinue school. But I wished to continue studying though I didn't have the strength necessary at that time to face these problems.

I wished to become a teacher, but was disappointed when I was turned down. I had applied for admission to the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) course in a college, but the college authorities told me not to enter the college because I was a transgender. This happened in front of my parents. They scolded me and said I was an embarrassment to them. They told me to discontinue my studies as I had two younger siblings. At this stage, my behaviour was extremely feminine even though dressed in men's clothes.

It was not until I came across an article written by another transgender person in Kumudam magazine that I felt more hopeful and confident. Then I came across festivals and carnivals on television at times, and I began to notice there were other people like me.

I don't remember a single day when I sat at my desk in school. I always sat on the floor because I wasn't considered an equal. The boys would pinch me, or touch me and call me inappropriate names. They called me awful names, such as 'pondu', 'pondugachetti', 'kandu', 'baedi' among other things. I got beaten up ever so often. I complained to the teachers only to be asked to leave school, so I stopped saying anything. Instead, I studied well and soon secured admission in a college for BA Literature.

At one point I decided to discontinue my studies, run away from home, and transform into a transgender person and live with my kind of people. So I found out the house of someone like me through papers and other people. But soon after seeing the atrocities being committed in that house, such as sex work, or begging, I decided to leave. The people in that house said I had to undergo castration, where they would use hot oil for the process before severing my genital organ. I decided to go back home and live with my parents.

In college, there was a lot of ragging. I realised this was one of the reasons why transgender people did not attend school or college. I would cry every night at the humiliation I faced. It was a college for men. I was chased around the college grounds and beaten with broken chairs. One day a Psychology teacher asked me why I went to study despite the constant ragging and said I should instead be working in a red light area. He then sent me out of his class. This incident haunts me to this day.

My parents continued to dissuade me from attending college. They said it was better for me to work in our farm rather than face these troubles everyday. But I tried to convince them that I would study hard and become a teacher. But when they were not around, I cried by myself.

Around two years ago, I decided to stop hiding my identity and start dressing how I wanted. I was tired of hiding and wearing women's clothes only when my family was not around. I confided in my mother about this. I told her that she knew how I was, and that if I went away, I would have to engage in sex work. I did not want to get married but wanted to live with my family. Now I wear a sari at home. But when relatives visit us, they either lock me up or make me wear men's clothes and tie my hair in a bun. I am instructed not to talk to anyone and just sit in a corner. I would feel sad about this, but since I wanted to be near my family, I accepted it.

Now, I go to 60 colleges and universities as a guest lecturer to talk as part of the Red Ribbon awareness campaigns. Through this I got introduced to many other academic places and people. I spread awareness about my community of transgender people. I speak about why they behave in a certain way, beg and do other such things. The students, both men and women, would look at me with amusement because of my identity. But I have learnt to talk about issues in a way that they can empathise with me.

I registered my name in the employment office after finishing Class X and then again after finishing Class XII. I continued to do this after every qualification I received – my university degrees as well as my computer training (HTML, DTP, Oracle, MS Office). However, I have not received any response so far. The Tamil Nadu Public Service Commission (TNPC) has a 'male' and a 'female' option only, as does the online application. There is no option for a category of transgender or even 'Others' though there have been other changes. I appeared for the Village Administration Officer (VAO) exam, but because I had not registered at the Gazette office, I had applied as 'Male'. I had gone dressed as a man with my hair up. But all the cameras, staff, and supervisors turned towards me. The media assembled around me and asked how and why did I transform. If there is no protection for us in a government body, how can we be assured this does not happen in private organisations? If we cannot register the education we have acquired, then what is the use of having acquired it? Every time we go they say they have not received a Government Order (GO).

We have a welfare card from the Transgender Welfare Board, but though it is an identity proof given by the government, it is rejected when we submit it for a SIM card application.

I have faced many problems even in the private sector organisations I have worked in. I worked in Kodaikanal and taught English and Tamil to students of Classes 8 and 9. The school correspondent called me to his room to take "special classes" from him alone at night. After I refused to go twice, he announced in the morning assembly before the entire school that the management had hired a transgender person, who was now asked to leave. When I questioned him later, he said if I stayed in school, it would influence children in the school to become like me. I worked in peace for just 15 days before I left the job.

A few years ago, I joined another college as a guest lecturer. As I went to teach dress in men's clothes, it was very difficult for me to go to use the men's toilets or sit and talk with them. The staff members ganged up on me and were hostile. They told me to quit my job because I was a "eunuch".

There is no safety in other spaces either. I went to a well-known private hospital for a consultation for my sex-change surgery. The attending doctor, a physiotherapist, asked me to show my private parts. Then he asked me to return the next day and said he would help me get the surgery on the condition that I performed oral sex on him.

#### **Case Story 4**

My name is xxx. I am currently working on awareness programmes in universities and colleges, and in rural areas. I have also appeared on live radio programmes raising awareness on HIV.

My dad passed away and my mother lives with me. I have two brothers and a sister, who live in Thanjavur, my native place.

I have been living in Madurai since the past three years. It is like a village where I am well respected. When there are any functions such as ear piercing, baby showers or marriages, I am invited to offer my blessings.

I discovered at the age of seven that I felt different from other children. My body was that of a boy but my heart was of a girl. But I could not share these feelings with either my parents or schoolteachers. I used to sing and dance as a child and get scolded by my family members. Some people teased me as I behaved like a girl. I felt confused but I could not ask anyone anything – neither my mother nor my schoolteachers. I was reprimanded and asked to play with other boys my age, to walk and behave like other boys, to learn to ride a cycle but I wasn't interested in those things. But I liked talking to girls, and often found myself drawing 'kolam' in the house, or putting 'mehendi' (tasks traditionally associated with girls).

I met someone like me when I was in Class 5 and I was 10 years old. He was my classmate and joined the school in Class 5. He shared my feelings. My father died after I completed Class 8. I was admitted to a hostel because my family started struggling after his death.

In hostel, other boys tortured me mentally and physically after observing my body language. They would switch off the lights, and sleep next to me or touch me. They would write my name on the board and write that I was a "eunuch" or wake me up and take off my sheets in the wee hours of the morning. I couldn't talk to anyone. I had no friends. I was afraid that if I approached the teachers, they would talk about my problem publicly. I complained to the headmaster, who said I should change my behaviour to prevent such incidents, as it was my behaviour that provoked the boys.

After that, I came to Madurai. I went to college where I met other people, but my behaviour remained the same. I didn't meet anyone like myself again until I was 21 years old. I made some friends with women, and they supported me when I was teased. After finishing my studies, I returned home but my family was not supportive. My grandmother and other relatives said it was not possible to get me married because of the way I was. They called me awful names.

I decided to run away from home but after coming to Madurai, there was no way to eat or live. I went to a friend's house but his family turned me away. I continued to live the way I was and grew my hair. I met my Guru and other transgender people at the Madurai Junction. Then I became a domestic help and started working in the house of a Brahmin family for three years. After that I rented a house with two other transgender people, and started a small catering service.

The harassment continued on the roads, when we would go to cinema theatres and when we travelled in public transport. I was not able to find regular employment, which is why I decided to get into sex work when I was about 28 years old. I did not like standing at the bus stands or such places. I remember crying the first day. All kinds of people came, drunken people, mentally ill people, people who did not pay up. The police also came suddenly and beat us up. Eventually I got used to it.

At other places of employment, people harassed us and teased us. But in sex work, it is give and take. I give my body, and the client gives me money. But there were problems there too. At times one client approached me and I would find four others waiting in the room he took me to. Sometimes they would drop me off in the middle of nowhere. Things have changed now, but earlier I trusted people easily and got cheated.

On Diwali eve in 2008, my friends and I stayed back in Madurai to celebrate. As we were cooking at the catering service one afternoon, around 10 policemen came into the office and asked us to accompany them to the police station. When we asked them what was the matter, they said they had to make a brief enquiry. There was about 10-11 of us. We found out at the station that a case was filed against us.

I found out only in court through my lawyer that they had charged us under Section 377. In the police station lock-up, they hit us with sticks. They did not ask us anything about our lives or what we do. They simply said that there were complaints about us. We were treated like animals. We sat in the lock up until 11pm without food. When our lawyer came to the police station, the police asked him why he was supporting us and said he should leave us alone. We had no idea what we had been charged with; it could be anything, even murder. I paid for the lawyers' fee by pawning my jewels. The process of going to court for summons started. I was the main accused as it was my house where the reported incidents had taken place. I took the initiative to organise witnesses. The judge was not interested in our case, and we often waited for hours before being summoned.

I still shudder to think what would have happened if the false witnesses who came to the court to testify against us were believed. These witnesses messed up in their testimony by citing the wrong place where the events took place. One of them said we were with other men when they saw us. Another said that we were just sitting in our house. The lawyer told us to seek compensation but I let it be, as I want to live my life in peace.

### **Case Story 5**

I am an MSM, which means men who have sex with men. Even though I look like a man, I have feelings of a woman. My whole behaviour, way of dressing and everything is like a woman. That is what I am as an MSM. When I was studying in Class 5, I realised this feminine feeling in me. My activities, voice, the way I walk, is different. Even when I was in school my teacher used to say the way I called him was in a feminine voice. Now I realise that I was behaving like a woman in the past too. I thought I was the only person like this. There were cases of forced sex. People who had sexual urges used me. During my school days, there were some seniors who had failed their examinations and ended up studying in the same standard as me. They forced me to carry out sexual activities. I was forced to get addicted to sex.

The first time I had sex was a pleasurable experience. But the second, third, fourth and more times, it was forced. They forced me to have oral sex. In fact, the first person I had sex with forced me to have sex with his friends.



Those people were my seniors at the tuition centre I attended. When I was studying in Class 5, they were studying in Class 9. So I was unable to do anything. I didn't know what my likes and dislikes were. I was too young to realise my likes and dislikes. I do not know what is good and what is bad. They used to take me to street corners, dark places and bushy areas to have oral sex and anal sex. When they forced me to perform oral sex on them, I disliked it. I used to wonder how they could ask me to take their penis in my mouth, with which I eat. I initially felt something was wrong then I slowly became addicted to it.

I realised they could not motivate a 'normal' person to do this. They identified the feminine behaviour in me and they chose me. In the Jamaat system, chelas and nathis (guru) share a lot over phone saying that these things happen even now.

In the schools when we had programmes, functions or cultural activities in the play ground they use to take me to the bathroom and force me to perform oral sex on them until they reached their peak. Once they ejaculated, they would push me away. Everyone has sexual feelings and it should be done only with consent. If it is done without the consent, it is harassment. They dominate us and see us as vulnerable as we are feminine.

When I was in Class 12, my class teacher chose me as the class leader (monitor). My role was to put attendance, file leave letters and maintain silence in the class in the absence of a teacher. I used to lead the group during march-past. I thought that I was chosen as the class monitor because I was soft and silent in nature. I thought it as my advantage.

On one day, when I went to the staff room to update details of absentees and the status of the class, my teacher told me to enter the marks into the computer. He said my classmates had not performed well and had scored poorly. There was no one else in the classroom at that time. When I was entering the marks into the computer, he came near me, took my hand in his and made touch his penis. I was not interested in all this. I have suffered a lot.

During my half yearly vacations, I decided to discontinue from school. At that time I was suffering from chickenpox. My classmates and others in school thought I was being irregular because I was ill. However, my brothers knew I was having other problems. They were worried and as they knew I was a good student, they enquired about me of my friends. One friend told them about the torture I was going through. Then they went to school and complained to the principal and asked him to tell the teacher to resign. That teacher was about to get a government job and that was prevented, so I was happy. My father was posted at a high level and he threatened to have the school shut down if they did not take action against the teacher. After that I went regularly to school and completed my Class 12 and joined a diploma course.

While doing the diploma course, I suffered in a different way. Our college bus would come all the way from Tuticorin and hence would reach only by 9.30 in the morning. The other buses would come soon since these colleges were much closer. Whenever I got down from the bus, or stood in queue or walked, people used to rag me by passing comments and singing songs.

During sports hours, we were asked to play kabaddi (a game involving a lot of physical contact between team members). I used to feel shy and uncomfortable to play with the boys. I told the sports in-charge that I was not interested in the game, but he did not understand my problem. Hence I was forced to play. The boys would push me down and lie on top of me.

During examinations, most students were given a few minutes extra to complete their papers. But my paper would be snatched from me 5 minutes before the deadline. Despite all this discrimination, I finished my diploma course.

I have faced torture on several occasions. I liked a school friend, but he blackmailed me into having anal and oral sex with him. Though I cooperated and told him we could do it whenever we went for sports, he used to meet me on Saturdays and Sundays to have sex.

I started sharing everything frankly with my family members, as I was unable to bear it in my heart. Because of this, one of my cousins beat up a friend. There were two such incidents when I informed my family being unable to face the torture for sex. They were protective. My cousin knows everything about me. I share everything with him because he understands me.

When I was in Class 12, my close friends informed my family that I was getting addicted to sex and that other students for sexual encounters were using me. My family heard about these things from different people and restricted my movement. They stopped sending me alone for my tuitions. I was dropped and picked up by our car. After Class 12, they got me enrolled into college, but as a day scholar and not as a boarder in the hostel.

My family doesn't know that I have a partner with whom I have sex. But I wonder how my brothers don't know that I have sex? I am a homosexual. I am sure they know that I have sex but they don't ask me about it. My family wants to see me as a son even though I feel like a woman. They feel I am like this because of my associations with people and not because of how I was born.

My family feels lets me do whatever I want but they do not want me to go for surgery, wear a 'sari', grow my hair or pierce my ears and nose. Despite that I have pierced my ears twice. I also got my nose pierced and used to wear a ring but gave that up because I developed an infection. My family keeps saying that I look like a 'eunuch' and forces me to cut my hair in 'attack style (also known as crew-cut, where the hair is cut very close to the scalp). My family says I should wear only T-shirts, socks and trousers like men.

What they say depresses me. I feel that a poor family accepts it if their son becomes like this, but a 'respectable' family cannot bear if their son becomes like this. People say the family must have committed a lot of sins because of which their son became like this. I don't want to degrade my own family even though I like dressing up in a 'sari'. So I wear a 'sari' during the Villupuram Koothandavar festival and live like a woman for a day.

My mother bore me for ten months and her blood is in this. I wish they do not tell me anything. So, at times, I admit that I am a transgender person. I get angry and call myself a 'eunuch' and that I have the feelings of a woman. I say that I can only love a man and never a woman. I tell them that I don't want a marriage or a funeral. This is how I speak at home. I feel I need freedom to go and be with my community without my family's intervention. I want them to respect my privacy and not question me about what I do. I threaten them that if they interfere, I will go to Mumbai and get a sex change surgery. This is the only reason that the pressure on me has come down.

I am not allowed to bring my community people home. Men are allowed. In fact, my college mates and friends can come home and even stay over. But even if they behave in a slightly different manner, my family identifies them and tell them to get out.

## Case Story 6

I am a transgender person and a sex worker. I am 20 years old. My heart feels like a woman's and I am not married. But I live separately from my parents. I live at my grandmother's house. I have a person who is like a life partner to me. I have a relationship with him but he does not live with me. He is married and has a family but we meet regularly. My partner is 28 years old. He doesn't know I do sex work. Now I study and do sex work part time. I study with the money that I earn from sex work. I do not have a voter ID and my name is there in my family's ration card. I go for an HIV test once in three months because I live by doing sex work, and I do not want my partner and clients to suffer because of me. I do not want to spread diseases. So far my test results are not HIV positive, but every time when I go for a test I am afraid till I get the result.

I felt that I am a woman when I was studying in Class 6 and was almost 12 years old. Now when I go to the market, people's behaviour towards me depends on their character. Some people give products for lesser price, some people understand our hearts, people who understand us behave properly. Some people ill-treat us because they don't understand our hearts. At the vegetable market people started ill-treating me when I purchased tickets in the bus because I look like an Aravani (transgender). Even if I go in pants and shirt, the way I speak and my activities will expose me. Nowadays, everyone knows how a boy behaves, how a girl behaves and how an Aravani behaves. People easily find out from my talk, my style of walking and behaving. How much ever we try to hide the fact, it gets exposed easily.

have a brother. I used to keep fighting with him all the time at home. He did not like me because I am like this. So when I was studying in Class 12, he fought with me and with my mother's support chased me away from home. I left home and they avoided me. After that I wanted to go for surgery during my holidays after examination. My grandmother has always been affectionate towards me. I grew up with her. When I was briefly at my aunt's place, she visited me there and asked me to cut my hair as I was growing it long at that time. She also urged me to study. I had many thoughts running through my head. I did not know any Aravanis then. I was afraid of home and so I cut my hair and started doing degree course. I now live with my grandmother, who was living alone. My parents visit my grandmother's place. They talk to me but I don't like it as they have avoided me earlier. I don't like them anymore.

The public treats us badly because they don't have improved understanding about the transgender community. With regard to family, because you are born a boy, the neighbours and others pass comments, asking why is your son talking like a girl and walking like a girl. For this reason, our parents avoid us. My brother told me that he would kill me because I was born like this. My brother and father have beaten me. So I tried to change the way I talk, the way I walk but it's not possible.

I realised that even if you are born male or female, you have to support yourself. Parents will be with you for only a short while. Then we have to take care of our own lives. So if he's a man, he will marry a woman, if she's a woman, she will go with a man. As an Aravani, in our life we have to get a role model.

When I share my status as an Aravani I feel proud, but I suffer from within. It would have been better if we were recognised in the beginning itself. We should have been categorised in any one gender from the beginning itself. We should have been recognised as an Aravani from the beginning itself so that we could have been spared some suffering.

My mother is a housewife. My father has two wives. My mother is the second wife. My mother used to take part in villupattu (a folk art form) and she was a poet. My father liked her and got married to her. My brother and father are partners in a flower business. My mother loans money for interest even while staying at home. My younger brother is studying in Class 8. My brother got married but his first wife is not able to give birth so he is going to divorce her. But even before the divorce he has married another girl and she is pregnant. My family feels very bad about me being an Aravani. They are sad. They feel they gave birth to a son and had lots of plans for me.

I used to dance at home. I never liked to have a moustache. I didn't grow it from the beginning. My talk and walk were the same from beginning, so they didn't notice anything different in the beginning. Only if something happens newly will they find out. The first thing that I changed was threading my eyebrows. From that they found out, (started wondering) why is he like this? My brother found out about my eyebrows. I was eating at that time. He shouted, fought with me and threw away my plate. Then I started growing my hair, wearing earrings, using lipstick and hairpins to tie up my hair. So I was excluded. I was asked why I am like this now while I was okay in the beginning.

My father is not a strong person. He scolds me in a gentle way. But my brother and mother created problems for me. My mother is slowly recognising me now. But my brother creates problems for me even now. He says everyone is asking us why you behave like this. He blames my mother for allowing me to dance, took photos during my childhood and treated me as a girl. He says that is why I behave like this. People at home say that if this was recognised in childhood and if I had been beaten up, then I would not have become an Aravani. My brother says his friends tease him because of me.

I don't like doing sex work. Is this life worth living by doing sex work, by being afraid and insecure that they may kill me after using me for sex? I feel I can get a job after completing studies, may be a government job. I am studying with that aim only. I want to do my MSc after completing my BSc.

In college everybody sits near me and talks to me. The staff also speaks with me. In the first year, when they started mocking me, I told them that I was also a human being like them. I told them I could not change my behaviour and I cried. Nobody behaves badly with me now. Nobody shuns me either. I am very fortunate to get such staff in my college life and in my school life. If they had not been like that, then the whole class could have ragged me. I was spared, as they were considerate towards me.

### **Case Story 7**

My name is xxx and I am a tailor. Every week the agents come and collect finished products. I stitch well. It gives me a good income. My experience is that people do not respect Aravanis. But they start respecting us only when we acquire life skills. We cannot continue to be in sex work and keep earning by clapping hands. We have to change. We have to change our style of life. Now my family is very supportive. I am much happier now. I was in Bangalore with my friends and I had a lot of money. But I was not happy. I am with my family now. I am very happy. In Bangalore, I used to be scared all the time. Now I am leading a normal life.

Now I am not part of the Jamaat. Jamaat is more like slavery. There is no intimacy there. I stayed with my friends. Normal life is best. We have to live in a family. In Jamaat, we are asked to do things, which we are not comfortable with. Domination is very much there.

When I was studying in Class 7, I started to feel very shy. I felt shy to interact with boys. I secretly began to admire them. I started to feel that there was a change in my behaviour and dressing pattern. I began to know that I am different. I knew that other boys did not like me. I was different from them. I used to wonder as why I was different from them. I was scared. I did not know what to do. I was not able to share this with anyone. I was wondering why god made me like this. I used to be very upset. I did not know what to do or whom to share this with. I did not have any one to console me. As days went by, I came to know that there are many others who are like me. So I knew that I could also change in a similar manner. When I was in Class 9, I had to face a lot of torture from the boys. They used to tease me about my behaviour. They became very abusive. They used to scold me. My classmates avoided me. They did not include me during playtime. So I was psychologically disturbed. I was unable to concentrate on my studies.

I read about the life of Aravanis in a newspaper. I became very happy when I read about them. I felt that they would be able to understand me. I felt that I could share my feeling with them. I began to look out for them. I did this alone. I did not take any one's help. One day as I was walking, I met an individual who was similar in nature. I approached her. I initiated the conversation. I realised that our feelings were identical. I was so happy. We became friends. She introduced me to her friends. Thus all of us became friends. This was when I was in Class 10.

I had the desire to wear 'sari' and also wanted to use makeup. I attended functions with them and danced. I visited their houses. I visited them often. I used to feel very happy. I was very happy to dress up. I felt that I was not abnormal. There were many others who are like me. I felt that they would understand me and I began to spend my time with them.

I finished Class 10 and joined ITI. I studied for two months in ITI and later discontinued as I was forced to face torture of the boys. They teased me. I faced verbal abuse. It was unbearable. They touched me and used to hug me forcefully. They use to pull me. They were very vulgar. I was helpless.

My family noticed that I was different. They said that my dressing pattern and behaviour was strange. They wanted me to behave like a boy. I said 'this is me. I cannot change'. My brother and father wanted me to behave like a boy. They said that they felt humiliated when others commented about me. They wanted to know why I wore earrings and lipstick. Thus my brother and father began to torture me. I used to wonder what was wrong. Was it wrong to behave in this manner? I was just expressing what I felt within me. My mother asked me to behave like a boy. I was warned that I could continue to stay with them only if I behaved like a boy. She scolded me. She fought with me. One day they forced the door open and found me dressed in a 'sari'. I was beaten. My mother loved me a lot. So I stayed at home. I tried to grow my hair three to four times. But they forced me to cut my hair. Then my mother said I could continue to stay only if I behaved as a boy. As I was unable to behave in that manner she asked to join my own group of people. I felt very humiliated. So I went and joined my friends. My parents did not want to face humiliation from their relatives. So I was asked to leave. I did not understand what to do. I asked my mother if I was not her child. I asked them if I was causing them any problem.

I cried a lot and later left for Bangalore. But I kept in touch with my parents over phone. I kept talking to them, trying to make them understand. Slowly they began to understand my position. I stayed in Bangalore for two years. I underwent surgery and then I returned. They thought I was working and had a good job in another city. When I returned home, I was asked to stay within four walls. I was not encouraged to go out. My parents understood that I had the chances of taking the wrong path if I lived outside.

They felt I would be good if I stayed at home. Even if you become an Aravani (transgender) you can be good. If you do not associate yourself with many men and if you do not roam about, parents do not have any problem in accommodating you. Parents do understand us. For the past five years I have been living with my parents. It is a great effort from their side. I have many friends in Bangalore and Mumbai. They have ample money, they are beautiful but they are not happy. Their family does not accept them. They still cry.

I underwent surgery in Bangalore when I was 21 years old. I used to clap hands, went for begging and I took up sex work. I had a strong desire to undergo surgery. So with great difficulty I earned money. But I was not happy with the mode of earning. I was in a Jamat in Bangalore where 15 of us stayed together. I did not know what to do. I was in a new place. They dressed me up in a 'sari' and asked me to earn money by clapping hands. I cried. It was embarrassing for me. But I had a strong desire to undergo surgery. I was not happy. It was hell. I had to adjust to all this. I wanted to earn money for the operation. What ever I earned I had to give to the Guru (leader of the Jamaat). Even if I earned Rs.500, I gave it. I was supposed to give up all the money I earned in a year. Only then would they help us in undergoing the surgery.

When I came back from Bangalore I was not accepted by my family. My relatives and neighbours were confused about my gender. They saw me as a humiliation. It took me long time to make them understand. I spoke to them slowly and made them understand. I had to put in a lot of effort. I explained to them about Aravanis. I told them that we are not abnormal and it is not a fault. No one has the right to discriminate against them. Discrimination would only worsen the psychological status of Aravanis. Educated people were in a better position to understand this. I targeted the women in my area. I was the laughing stock. So I asked them the reason for their amusement. I used to stop them and asked them the reason for their laughter. I used to question them about the mistake committed by me. With my efforts they began to understand me.

In the beginning, my family members were angry. They were upset. They hated me. They were upset with me as I failed to adhere to them. They felt I was born a boy and I had spoiled my life. They were worried about my future. They were worried about who would support me. I used to visit them often. I continued to visit for a year. I explained to them that I needed them. Though I have changed to a transgender I was not happy without them. I cried a lot. Then they accepted me.

Now I live in my own house. It is my parents' house. But I have a share in it and my parents gave me my share.

It is difficult to seek employment in the private sector or to work under someone. It may lead to sexual torture. They will tease and abuse us. We can work only in places where they understand us. People in the NGOs will understand us. They are similar to us. We can apply for loans through banks. We can have petty shops. In Coimbatore they do catering. So we can work together. We should lead a decent life. We should be independent. We should not be sex workers and we should not clap hands. If we decide on this, it is good. We should earn a decent living. When people take up sex work and clapping they do earn. So they do not want to seek different employment. They want to earn in an easy manner. That way, we cannot be part of society. Money is important for us.

When I go to hospitals for treatment the doctors and nurses never come near me. They keep a distance. So I smile at them and try to befriend them. Then I explain to them that we are also human beings. I had a tumour in the lip. I got it operated in the hospital.

When we stand in a queue for women, they avoid us. They tease us and at times mock us and talk about us among themselves. I used to get angry. I shouted at them, asked how they differentiate me from them.

**Case 8 is was taken from a published journal interview, (Transgender and caste lived experience - Transphobia as a form of Brahminism: An Interview of Living Smile Vidya; January 26, 2013 - <http://sanhati.com/excerpted/6051/>; By Kaveri Karthik and Gee Suleiman)**

### Case Story 9

I am 27 years old. I belong to the Thevar caste. I am a woman involved in sex work. My association is mostly with transgender friends. My clients are those who seek for transgender, female and lesbian sexual needs. I cater to all these three categories. I do it as my full time work. I have completed Class 10 and I am not married. I was in love with my uncle and I wanted to marry him. I had a sexual relationship with him. However, he rejected me and got married to my aunt's daughter.

I asked him why he left me. He said he did not like me. He left me after living with me for a week. In general, men are like this. They are interested in pleasure, which can be got in five minutes. Now he knows I am a sex worker. My family also knows that I am a sex worker. They asked me to leave this profession but I do not listen to them. I have two brothers, who are married and live separately but I live with my mother.

In the beginning, I used to face problems from my family. They used to scold me and beat me. Once I was wounded so badly when my brothers beat me that I had to be admitted in the hospital and had to get stitches. But now I do not face problems. They understand me. Now they take money from me.

I felt my relatives were isolating me. So I shifted to this place and I brought my mother with me. We live in a rented house. I do not like to make friends with other female sex workers, but I like to befriend Kothis (receiving partner in a homosexual relationship) and transgenders. So I closely associate with them. In general, I do not like women.

At times the clients leave me without paying after a sexual act. But now I am very careful. Once a client approached me over telephone and I met him on the outskirts of this city in the bushes. When I reached the place, there were two of them. Then three of them came in. Then five of them joined. Then another seven joined in. There were about 25 men. They said they would let me go only if I had sex with all of them. This incident took place 6 months ago. I was not able to manage but they did not let me go. I was forced to satisfy them. I cried a lot. They took away my mobile phone and dress. So I was not able to contact any one. All of them used condoms and I did not bleed. But they did not pay me. When I asked for money I got beaten by one of them. Later they gave back my dress and dropped me near my place in a vehicle. After returning from there, my transgender friend scolded me asking why I went there alone.

The person who had beaten me died in an accident a few weeks later. Soon after that the other clients came in search of me to pay me. I think they were afraid of punishment from God. But I did curse them for all the pain I went through. I did not want to tell anyone about the pain. I cursed them; saying they would not lead a happy life. I refused to take any money from them.

Once a transgender and myself had to manage 40 clients. We got caught in such a situation. But I do not want to share it. It was a very bad experience. I do not want to talk about it.

Many people think that I am a Kothi or a transgender. As I am always with kothis, they think I am also a kothi. I go to shops to collect money from them. I go for sex work only when I have clients. On alternate days I go to collect (begging) money from shops and on trains. I earn almost the same amount that I used to get from sex work and begging. What we get from one client we can get it in one day's collection from a shop or a train. But sex work is difficult. Clapping hands (like the transgenders traditionally do while begging) is fun. If I go as a transgender, they give me money. On many days, I live in the Jamaat too. I can speak the language they speak. But I do not give money to the Jamaat. On some days, I go begging alone. They (shops and people in the train) treat me as a transgender. Some times they chase me away. But I fight with them. I shout at them. I am worse than a kothi. They know that I am a big fighter. I expect respect from everyone.

When my grandmother passed away all the Aravanis (transgenders) were very supportive. They cried a lot. Aravanis from many districts came to console me. They never isolate me. I tell my biological family members that these people are my family. Even if they (biological family) isolate me, my transgender family will never isolate me.

I do not have any permanent partner. I just want them to come, spend time, pay and leave me. I do not like this concept of having a husband. The same clients keep coming back. They have my number. I just give it to one client and they spread the number. Now I accept clients in lodges and I do not go to open places. Also, I collect money before the act so that they do not leave without paying me. I need not pay the lodge. The client handles this. I get tested for HIV every three months. I insist on using condoms, but I still have to clear my doubts about my health status. I have female clients too. For me both male and female clients are same. My female clients pay for me and take care of all the expenses too. Female clients do not come to lodges, but we go to their houses. Most of them are rich. I do not have any partner relationship with female clients. Now I get more female clients.

At times I feel that I am a woman who gets transformed into a man as I started associating with Aravanis and female clients and therefore I feel much more comfortable while associating with Aravanis. Now I behave like an Aravani and not as a woman.

### **Case Story 10**

My name is xxx. I am a transgender person and I am 28 years old. When I was young, I always felt that I was a girl. So, all my activities were those of a woman's. My parents and my brother could not understand my feelings. They beat and tortured me and drove me away from home. In such a situation, I didn't have any option and there was no place to go. So, I joined another transgender person and we went to seek alms and got into sex work. When I started doing sex work, there used to be a lot of irritation and most of the clients didn't like that. So, I wanted to undergo surgery.

During that time, the Tamil Nadu Government had announced free sex reassignment surgery (SRS) through the Transgender Welfare Board. This made me happy. Having heard this, I went to a government hospital with lots of dreams and passion. There, the doctors recommended many tests. I completed all the tests facing a great deal of discriminatory attitudes. The psychiatrist was asking too many unnecessary questions and trying to change us. After all this, I went to get admitted in the hospital.

The chief doctor said, "Your surgery will be done tomorrow". These words gave immense happiness to me. With this happiness, I went to the operation theatre. The



surgery went on for more than five hours. Slowly, the effect of the anaesthesia reduced and I started feeling the pain. The operated organ doesn't look like a female organ. It looked like something else and I couldn't explain clearly. The pain was unbearable and I began to scream.

A nurse came up to me and said: "You underwent this surgery because you wanted it. Then, why do you shout like this?" These words inflicted unbearable pain on me. This was worse than the pain I was going through after the surgery. Then, he gave me a tablet and left. The next two days passed with more pain and suffering. On the third day, the doctor asked me to see him in order to dress the operated place. I asked the ward boy for a wheel chair, but he demanded Rs. 50 for it.

I agreed and went with him. After dressing me up, they threw me back in the bed in an inhuman manner, which aggravated my suffering and caused further pain. He got Rs.50 from me and left. Fifteen days passed on like this in the hospital. When I went back home after the treatment, I felt a sense of irritation while passing urine.

I initially thought that it hurt because there was a wound inside. But added to this, I was not able to pass urine at all. Even after consuming water and tender coconut, the urine didn't come at all. Since there was heavy abdominal pain, I felt like tearing my stomach with a knife and taking it out. Whenever I sat to pass urine, it pained a lot. I went to the hospital again. The doctor asked me to undergo another surgery.

I couldn't bear this pain even once. Do I need to die for this once again? I was scared. Then, I realised that I need to undergo this surgery again. I underwent the second surgery after three months. Even then, what is most disturbing is that, I am still unable to pass urine properly.

### **Case Story 11**

My name is xxx. I was born in a village in the southern part of Tamil Nadu. I belong to a poor family and I am the sixth son in my family. I have been effeminate since childhood. I belong to the backward class. I could not continue my studies after Class 7 due to my family situation. I was engaged in cooking, agriculture-based work and the work that I got to earn my livelihood. Even though I look like a man to others, my inner self felt like a woman. At a young age itself, I used to have sex with some men. My family got to know about my sexuality at some point and discriminated against me. Consequently, my family disowned me. No one was there to support me except the people from my community.

During winters, my lips dried up because of the dryness in the air and I visited a government hospital in my locality to treat my wounded lips. I went to see the doctor. When I went there, an attendant informed the doctor that I am an MSM (Men who have Sex with Men) and they should not treat me.

Having heard that, the doctor asked whether I would always have oral sex with men? He also asked the number of men with whom I would have sex every day? He also asked that how could I suck men's genital organ orally through the mouth with which you eat? He also asked me, "Didn't you feel ashamed to do that?" He verbally abused me. I argued with him saying that the lips were wounded due to the weather and not because of having oral sex.

The doctor said that there were no medicines for this. He also said that I was suffering from HIV/AIDS. I said I couldn't eat and requested him to give either medicines or an

ointment. Later, the doctor referred me to the department that deals with sexually transmitted infections (STIs). I had wounds only on my lips. But the doctor there asked me to show my genital organ. Then, he forced me to bend down and show my private parts. An STI test was done. After four days, I got the report from the STI department, which revealed that it's not a sexually transmitted infection. Having undergone such verbal and sexual harassment, I still didn't get treated for my ailment.

### Case Story 12

I don't like my biological mother. I like my adopted mother. I have been through a lot and I have cried a lot. I expected love from my biological mother but unfortunately I didn't get it. I got love and affection from my adopted mother. More than my biological mother, I showed love and affection towards my adopted mother.

It is because of my adopted mother's efforts that I completed my diploma. She bought a dress for me for Pongal festival. I celebrated Pongal with my family. The day after Pongal is known as Mattu Pongal. Our community celebrates Pongal in a grand manner. We belong to the Konar caste. We hail from the Yadava community. We sell milk. So, my mother asked me to visit her to celebrate Mattu Pongal. I took a scooter and went. On reaching, I saw that my mother had applied 'mehendi' on her hair. So she asked me to buy some coriander leaves to prepare mutton. During the Pongal festivities, competitions were in full swing and it was crowded. I went to the market to buy coriander leaves. In the market, I met my friend, who is a Transgender. I asked her what she had bought for me. She said she would give me money to buy a dress. I said I don't need money and only wanted a dress. She told me that she was tired after traveling by train. She said that she would not be able to go for shopping as she was sick. She asked me to wear the dress and show it her. So I went with my friend Nithya. We went shopping for about an hour and came back. While we were shopping, my brother's friend saw me and told my mother that I had gone with a transgender in my Scooty. He told her that he had seen us.

On learning about this, they asked me what I was doing with transgenders. We belong to a good family and caste. If we walk in front of these people they should be afraid of us. We were like lions. I told them angrily "I am not a lion. I am a lioness. I am a girl. Whoever you may call a transgender, I, too, am one.. So it will hurt me." While we were arguing, he slapped and pushed me against the wall. My nose began to bleed. They hit my friend Nitya, who is a transgender, and was standing beside me. They had beaten her severely and took her away threatening to kill her. My family members took me away from there. I was crying in my house and asking why they were beating my people. It is sinful. Even after seven births, we will be born like this only. My father kept beating me and asked what was I doing with 'eunuchs'. He offered me alcoholic drinks. But I refused to drink. He said, "You are my son. You can drink, smoke or if you want to rape any girl, you may do that. I will not say anything. But you should not become a transgender or an MSM." I was in my house. Meanwhile, my brother returned home. He had a knife with bloodstains on it. His dhoti, the shirt that he was wearing, everything was full of blood.

I asked him what he had done to my friend. She was my classmate, a close and dear friend. She was Nithya. He said he had killed that boy, Nithya. By now, she might have died. "I will go to jail and come back within two days," said my brother. Upon hearing about Nithya, I started hitting my head and crying. I asked, "Why have you killed my close friend?" I cursed them; saying only transgenders will be born to them. "You will not lead a good life." He told me that I was his life and I was his darling. He will sacrifice his life for me. But, I should not become a transgender. Otherwise he will kill her whole

family. An hour later, a police vehicle reached our house. My father winked his eyes and said to the sub inspector, "I will bring my son to police station sir, you go sir."

Next day, I went to the police station. I told them that I was a transgender and that there was no respect for Aravanis in this society. The incident occurred a day before and the police till now had not interrogated them. The sub inspector said they would be arrested the next day itself. After one and a half days, we went to the station. My adopted mother told the sub inspector that she would go to the collector's office to complain. The sub inspector said it was not easy to meet the collector of the district. My parents came there and I fell at my mother's feet urging her to help. My father slapped me and took me into the car in front of the sub inspector. The case was settled with an advocate thereafter. I came to know that the blood that was smeared on my brother's clothes was because of a head injury and that my friend was alive.

My mother told me that I should not talk to her hereafter, and there should be no relation between us. Even if I go to Bombay for surgery, she will not bother. The decision was left upon me. She told me that she would not be responsible for the surgery and anything that happens in future. She asked me not to come to her house thereafter.

### **Case Story 13**

My name is xxx. I'm a transgender person and my native place is Virudhunagar district. I was born in a Muslim household.

I became aware of my feelings as a transgender from my childhood days, right around the time when I was 13-14 years old. I did not share these feelings with anyone in the house. At that time, I wasn't aware of any sexual attraction towards men. However, since childhood, everyone in my village knew that I was effeminate, as I would only do household work. I studied only till Class 3. Right from childhood, my family struggled economically, and I was sent to work.

No one in the house asked me why I behaved this way. My father would do odd jobs in different places so it was my mother who took care of my siblings and me most of the time. Hence, no one in my house at the age told me that I should study or work in any particular manner. Since I was left to my own, I grew up this way. So when I met my folks in carnivals and such events, I desired to transform myself completely into a transgender. They wore saris, looked like women and when I asked them about their whereabouts, they said they were from Mumbai. There were many among the community living in different cities and towns. They invited me to join them after giving me their address. When I told them I didn't know how to come, they said I could join them when they were leaving and informed me of the dates. From a very young age, I had saved up money by doing odd jobs and manual labour. So I took money I had saved up and left with them after a week. This was 15 years ago, when the train fare to Mumbai was just Rs.250.

The person who accompanied me to Mumbai took me to a house where she was the 'Ayaah', the head of the household. There were about six to seven transgenders in the house, all much older than me. The head housed us, fed us, and would send us for rounds of begging every morning. I was made to understand that this was the means of livelihood for transgenders, and that's how they put food on their plate. I did this for two years because I had come a long way. I was keen to grow my hair longer, to wear a sari, to live my life as a woman. Until then I used to wear lungis and shirts. They asked me if I desired to wear a sari. When I expressed my keenness, they told me I would have to stay and work with them. Soon my ears and nose were pierced. I didn't go for the surgery

immediately but was given a sari to wear. I wasn't familiar with Mumbai during that time and two people would accompany me when I used to go out for begging. They looked after me throughout the time, right from teaching me what was right and what was wrong and how one should behave with others. For the first four months, I did not understand the local language but soon after, I picked up Hindi by listening to other people. I was 17-18 years old when I underwent the (sex change) surgery. After my surgery, I did not wish to live there anymore because there was a lot of work which was often very laborious such as cooking, washing, cleaning, which I did not enjoy and which would tire me out. We would not keep any money for ourselves, and handed over everything to our gurus who gave us money just for travel when we went for begging. We did not have off-days except on feast days or carnivals, so it amounted to a lot of pressure and hard work with each day starting at 4am.

During this period, I had no contact with my family. When I came to Chennai, I planned to rent a house for myself. So when I got off at Central Station, I called some transgenders with whom I had made friends when I was in Mumbai. During those times, cell phones were not available. I called them from a regular public phone booth and they came and picked me up in an auto. I stayed with them in the first house for six months.

During my stay in Mumbai, I had never engaged in sex work as everyone in the house would just go for begging. If people wished to engage in sex work, it was up to them. So when I went to Chennai, I resumed begging. Soon I moved into a house with a friend near Loyola College in Nugalambakkam. This friend of mine died of ill health after two years.

After my friend's demise, I stopped begging and started sex work, as the shops that previously used to provide me with money did not prove to be resourceful anymore. I thought of going to the places that my deceased friend had frequented for sex work. So I would go out dressed up and with make-up around 9 pm and would solicit clients and go with them to a lodge or their rooms. At times, policemen would come and beat me up, and ask me to leave. Rowdies would also come in an inebriated, state and harass me.

During my stay in Mumbai and the first few years in Chennai, I had completely forgotten my family. But one morning, my sister's son spotted me when I was on my way somewhere. Even though I was clad in a sari, he recognized me. After approaching me to find out if it was really me, he took my contact details and went back to his family. After this incident, my elder sister, who was living near Dindigul, initiated contact with me and visited me accompanied by my uncle. They soon started visiting me regularly. They needed money as they were not well off. They somehow found out that I was involved in sex work. But I was not aware of their true intentions at that time, and lent them money around four to five times, wanting to help them. I did not ask for repayment. It was only much later that I found out that they had not even informed my parents or my other siblings that they had re-established contact with me. My sister and her husband borrowed around one lakh from me for their daughters' wedding, which they said they would repay within a week but there was no sign of the money. I had borrowed this money as a loan from someone I knew so I went with two of my friends to ask for the money back. But my sister and her family turned me away saying they did not even know me and I shouldn't be shaming them in such a manner. It was only after I made a police complaint, that I was able to recover some money. It was only half of what I had lent them.

I was extremely hurt by this betrayal on being used by my own family only for money. I couldn't eat or do anything for a week. My own community people supported me around this time, and told me to forget this. During that time, I had some Rs.6000-7000 in hand,

so I decided to go home and see my parents. Only my mother was in the house at the time of my visit but she turned my friend and me away after insulting us. I returned to Chennai with my friend, completely dejected and hurt.

I did not feel like staying in Chennai anymore as earning a livelihood was becoming increasingly difficult. Police raids had increased, and they would hit us whenever they came across us. They wouldn't ask us what was the issue or what were we doing. It didn't matter to them if we were out for sex work, or if we went to a shop for begging. They would just come and beat us if they found us on the streets after 7pm. Once I was standing outside a hospital because I was unwell. They came and beat me. Once I, along with several other transgenders went and filed a complaint, but they did not register it. The disturbing nature of these developments made me stop sex work completely.

I returned to Madurai a year ago, and started begging once again. When I moved into a new neighbourhood, I was not aware that my other sister happened to live in the same area. She approached me a few times, but I kept avoiding her, not wanting to re-establish any ties with them.

My sister then informed my father who came to see me. He continued to visit me regularly, and accepted me for who I was, saying if it was my fate, then let it be what it was. After the rest of my family discovered that my father was in constant touch with me, they isolated him and started torturing him as well. They would not give him any food, or talk to him, because he associated with me, a transgender. I would give him some money every month. He expressed a desire to have a house of our own, as he was being ill-treated and isolated in his own home by my brothers and mother. So I gave him the money I had saved up (about Rs.1.5 lakh and jewellery that was kept in the bank) for the last couple of years for the construction of a new house in our village.

Soon he finished constructing the house in my village. But, we could not go live in that house. The first day I took my belongings in a lorry, many of the villagers gathered there and started insulting me. They started saying things like, "Why is this thing alive? Why doesn't she die?" My father was not around at that time and unable to bear this humiliation; I decided to go back to Madurai without waiting for my father.

So I have been living in this current house in Madurai for the past one year since the incident happened. I decided to go back to my village once more to visit my father. My family members – my elder brothers, sister and their in-laws – decided to kill me that time. They felt I was a source of shame for them in our religion/caste. My father was staying in the new house. I had visited him some times, but the villagers and my family members disapproved of this in general. Soon, a village meeting was convened, wherein my father stated that his son wished to be this way, and he should be left alone. The village headman refused to help us, and said we should go to a police station instead.

So on this particular day, my father had asked me to be present during the meeting. When I came, he had gone to pray. I was in the house when my siblings arrived. They ganged up against me, tore my sari and beat me as they chased me through the streets after hitting me on my head. I began to bleed profusely. My friend was in my house at that moment but she couldn't help me as she was also pushed to the ground. No one in the neighbourhood came to my aid; they stood and watched silently. My friend managed to call the auto driver who had dropped us. Just about then, my father returned after offering Friday prayers and my family descended upon him as well. They, including my mother, began hitting him saying that he had asked a transgender to come and stay in the house and that both of us (me and my father) should die. We managed to escape and went to a police station to file a complaint that they tried to kill me. The people at the

station did not take our complaint seriously. The sub-inspector at the station asked us to get out, saying this was an internal property issue and we should sort it out among ourselves.

We approached the office of the superintendent of police in the next day. An investigation was ordered, and we were referred to the deputy superintendent of police. When he visited our village, my family went into hiding. I don't know who informed them about the visit but no one was to be found that day. So the DSP said that we should settle the matter in court.

My family asked me to visit them at night under the pretext of settling my share of property with the related documents. I knew they did not wish to accept me into the family, but trusted them thinking that; perhaps, they wanted to put the matter to rest. I was with my father in the new house and was waiting for my family, when my neighbours took pity on me and informed my father and me that they plot to kill me. I left the house immediately and have not returned since. My father continues to stay there, and comes to visit me when he needs money for his medical needs. I am unable to go back to the house or stay with my father, as I fear for my life.

I do not care whether they give me my share of the property or not. I want to take some action against them for their attempt to murder me and for the humiliation that I have suffered. The police officers in our place did not take us seriously even though this problem has been going on for the past six months. I am facing a lot of financial problems at present, as I invested everything I had in the house. A good part of my earnings through begging goes in taking care of my father's medical expenses and the rent for the house where I'm currently staying. I have left sex work, and hope to get a job even though I have not studied much. I would like to stay with my father and take care of him. He is old, stay alone, and my family still continues to isolate him. I hope I am able to do something soon.

#### **Case Story 14**

My name is xxx 30 years old, and I am from Madurai. I have been working in a medical shop since the last five years. Everyone at my workplace is aware that I'm a Kothi. My family has also come around to the idea because I've been living this life for six years. They are fine with me as long as I hide this behaviour when I'm living at home.

I have studied up to Class XII. After that, I went to Bangalore through some friends of mine. After two years of staying and working there, I had the operation according to the usual customs and I continued to stay with them. I would go in the mornings to collect money/begging, and at night for sex work. But it was mostly the former, and I gave my household gurus (i.e. Jamaat) whatever I earned. I didn't keep any money for myself. We would be assigned specific areas so one Transgender would not go to another Transgender person's area. We were required to bring home a certain amount of money, and our Gurus knew what were the approximate collections in each area so there was not much scope of keeping any money for ourselves. As they paid for our rent and food, we were not allowed to keep any money for ourselves or send any earnings to our family. So if we earned more than what we expected from a particularly high yielding collection area, we'd keep the remaining money for ourselves without telling them. They would also pay for our surgical operations. I knew that they put so much pressure on us, so that they can control our lives.

In Tamil Nadu, there's a fair amount of equality. But in other areas, there's a lot of hierarchy. So when the elders are around, the younger ones will have to sit on the floor

or at their feet. If they ask us to bring something, be it water, tea, tender coconut, we have to obey them without any questions. They will not pay us, so we have to make do with our own funds. If you disobey them, you will be kicked and beaten up. This is the reason why many of our people keep moving to different Jamaats.

Since we desire to wear women's clothes, wear make up and live that kind of a life with these freedoms, we are forced to go to these Jamaat households and live by their rules because our own families don't accept us in a similar way. If you manage to leave this line of work and life, sometime they come looking for you. In fact, I have faced something like that as well.

I enjoyed going for collections, but did not like the idea of going for sex work. Even after I protested they kept insisting (after the surgery), saying that since I looked like a woman now, I would bring in more money. I am a Christian by faith, so I was not comfortable with the idea of sex work from the beginning. It was one of the reasons I resisted getting the surgery in the beginning because I knew it also meant becoming subservient to the people in my Jamaat.

For everyone who goes through the surgery, there is a celebration/ceremony held after the 40<sup>th</sup> day. That's when the wounds have healed considerably. But in my case, they held the ceremony on the 16<sup>th</sup> day itself. After 10 days, I was sent to another Jamaat in Madurai as was part of a custom of sending the 'daughter' away. During this stay in Madurai, I visited my family who did not want anything to do with me, and was still angry with me because I had run away. My elder brother's marriage had been arranged at that point in time, and they feared that if anyone saw me, they would think that my brother was also a Kothi like me. They said I could join the family if I stopped wearing women's clothes and started acting like a man. I refused and went back to Bangalore. Up until this point, my work had been to go for collections. Then the torture started. They started putting a lot of pressure on me, saying that now I cannot avoid going for 'dhanda' (sex work). The head of the household, my 'Naani', brought another Kothi to advise me. Facing this kind of pressure, I asked for some more time. I left the house on the pretext of going for collections one day and left Bangalore without informing them.

One of my best friends was a Muslim auto driver. He knew me well, and I often shared my problems with him. He helped me leave Bangalore, and brought me back home. On his return, my Jamaat people caught hold of him and interrogated him on my whereabouts. They suspected that since we were friends, he had a role to play in my escape. They beat him up so much that his face had swollen. Around 4-5 well-built, strong Kothis forced him to get into a car, and came looking for me in Madurai. They were well connected to the police as well as rowdies and knew people who were lawyers. They even have a separate doctor, in cases where they had get someone treated on the sly so they had nothing to fear. If the Jamaat people faced any problems, this group would be there constantly to provide protection to them.

The auto driver had dropped me at a friend's house but on the day the group came looking for me, I had gone to visit another friend. I was sleeping when they finally found where I was. This must have been in the wee hours of the morning and it was a small house so I could not even escape easily. My guru in Tamil Nadu, who was also present there, gestured to me that when I came downstairs that I should make a run for it. The Tamil Nadu guru had been summoned by the group who now accused me of running away after stealing money and jewels from them.

So I came down from the stairs and left the house the rowdies chased me. Since I was wearing a churidaar, I could run easily but they came from the other side and caught me.

I fell on the road, and bruised my elbows, hips and knees. They grabbed me and pushed me inside a car, and took me to the house of someone well respected in our community, where they held a 'panchayat'. They said they had invested a lot of money on me, and accused me of stealing from them. My Tamil Nadu guru came to my aid, and said she will take care of me, and whatever was the amount that was needed to be given to them, would be settled in time. The group from Bangalore wanted a signed record of the payment, which amounted to lakhs. My guru refused to sign any paper.

I had not stolen any money. I had just left with whatever I had collected that morning from my usual rounds of begging. I protested in the meeting, but they did not consider any of this. They simply said that 'dhanda' was a very normal way of making money for Kothis. Another suggestion made at the meeting was that I should go back with the group, and pay back the same amount of money by working for them again. But I had no intention of returning with them. So I went outside pretending to just stand, and made my escape for the second time.

I got into an auto, and the driver who saw my condition asked me if I had any money with me. My face was tear stained, and my clothes were dirty and torn from the scuffle in the morning. It was only after I gave him the money, he drove me out of that place and left me at the town hall. After that I did not know where to go anymore. I called my sister, who said I could return after cutting off my hair. This is how I ended up back with my family. They asked me to change back into men's clothes. Not having many options or anywhere to go to, I cut off my hair, and started a new job at the medical shop.

There aren't many freedoms being part of a Jamaat. You have to be subservient to them, and no matter what you do, they tend to find fault with you all the time. One benefit is that if you belong to a Jamaat, then when you travel outside, you are received warmly as part of a family when they find out that you are from this or that particular Jamaat. The name of your guru brings you respect as well. I miss the Jamaat only a little at times, but life would not be easy if I were a part of that system. You are not allowed to live life the way you want.

My family advised me to file a verbal police complaint against the Bangalore group, stating that I was a boy and I had only wished to dress and behave like a woman, but they had forcibly taken me to Bangalore and forced me to undergo the surgery after drugging me. The police assured me that they'd protect me if anything were to happen. I called my friends and informed them about the complaint I'd made, knowing that word would get around to the Bangalore Kothis in no time.

Since then there has been no problem. I've leading this life for five or six years now. But I have faced so many problems. When I was a transgender woman in sari, they (Jamaat) harassed me. Now that I'm wearing men's clothes, I'm facing problems here as well. When I meet other Kothis, I laugh and converse with them like a Kothi would. Customers, who ask me why my face and my mannerisms are different, notice this behaviour. No matter how much I try, some people realize I'm a Kothi. Sometimes they laugh at me. Sometimes they will linger on in the shop, asking me the prices of different products, just so that they can observe me further or talk to me. I wouldn't recognize these people on the streets, but because they have seen me once or twice and noticed I'm different, they approach me and talk to me. I make small talk and try to get away.

It goes against my nature to live like this. If you cut off a woman's hair and make her dress in a man's clothes, she doesn't become a man that way. Even if she tries, she can talk and behave like a man for an hour, a week, but not for a lifetime.



### Case Story 15

My name is xxx. I'm 22 years old. My mother is mentally ill and my father is an alcoholic so my sister is taking care of my mother. In 2010, in order to make more money, I tried my hand at chit funds, and helped people in my locality get loans. I would get commission out of the interest from the money. I'm still repaying the loan and have been involved in things I cannot even speak of.

The problem started two years back when out of greed I decided to invest in seven chit funds in my name to help broker loans for people in my locality. I thought I could become very wealthy all at once. But all the people cheated me, and ran away. What's more is that the moneylenders, who would talk to me with respect, now know I have been repaying the loan by doing sex work. Now they see me as any other transgender person involved in such sex work.

I started sex work in the last two years. Earlier I was against it, as I was well off, using these chit funds and working in houses. I would do all kinds of domestic work – cleaning, cooking, and drawing 'kolams'. People preferred me as I behaved in a very trustworthy manner and I would behave like a woman. I was happy earlier, and now I am suffering since making that gamble.

At first I lent Rs.1 lakh, which the borrower returned within the stipulated date. Then through me, five more people borrowed money. These were all people with families from the same area, but did not know each other. At first they were reluctant to repay, and in the last six months, all of them have gone missing leaving me with this huge debt.

I had already settled the loan of Rs.3 lakhs. It has now come to the situation where I need to be able to earn at least Rs.5000 everyday. I somehow manage to earn Rs.2000 rupees through skill and determination. But there are days I just cannot do it. The day before yesterday I was unwell after the police beat me badly so I didn't go for work in the evenings. On some days rowdies create problems. And the policemen beat us up whenever they find us, so I have to take care some of them by enticing them. They don't do anything to the people who approach me for sex, but insist that I am the one who's doing something wrong! They shout at us and ask us to get lost, saying that if we get murdered, then the higher officials will blame them. Some of them give us a little of money. Some of them use us and don't pay up.

I would start at 11pm and continue into the wee hours of the morning. If I am unable to earn much by 1 AM, I have to hang around till 6 AM or 7 AM. I'm currently travelling from Theni to Madurai to do this, because I'm staying in our community people's house there, where I pay a rent of Rs.100 each day.

There are a lot of transgender people who go with customers for free, and this robs me of potential clients. They are those who are in men's clothes and attract much less attention than someone like me. They can go to lodges and houses but someone like me with pierced ears and make up will raise eyebrows, and will not be allowed everywhere. There's a problem of this sort as well but what is one supposed to do?

All kinds of people approach us as customers. Rowdies who are rough with me, people who smoke ganja or drink a lot, those who hold me at knife point and forcibly have anal sex with me. At that moment, I fear for my life and hesitate to ask for money. The only thing I can think of at that moment is that the man is holding a knife ... and I'd be scared if he stabs me, or slashes my face, and there's no way to predict what will be the consequences if I protest. During one instance, I was taken behind the bushes of this

hospital where I had to have sex with eight men. When I left, there were only two men...and once we reached the spot, there were all these men drinking. I always use condoms, but a few of them refused and even hit me. The very idea of doing anything without condoms disgusted me and I started crying. They hit me even more. Then one of them took pity on me and asked the other guy to stop hitting me. Only two of them paid me any money after they were all finished. The two hundred rupees, which I earned, were just enough to cover the payment for my auto back.

I'm a transgender person so I can't even find regular employment. Even if I'm walking on the road, minding my own business, I get pulled over and harassed by miscreants. Even the households where I used to work before have come to know about what I have been doing to pay back my loans. The boys in my locality have spread the information that I hang around railway stations seeking clients – now who is going to employ me anymore? I can repay the money somehow, but how can I earn the respect of people again?

My sister, who's married with a child, and is pregnant again, calls me and cries that so and so friend of hers talk about me now. She asks me to come back, but then I don't have a choice. Even my house will be confiscated if I am unable to pay back the money. I would like to start a business but am unable to arrange any money to invest in any kind of a business. I have also thought of begging in shops, but am not used to doing this – I don't know how to communicate in the language of transgender people. Even though I have been a Kothi all my life I am now reduced to doing sex work - this kind of a life is very new for me.

I haven't been tested since the last one year but I don't have the courage anymore. What if they say that I have HIV/AIDS? Where will I go? If something happens, I hope it kills me. Most days I am thinking of how to get the work done and leave, because I can't negotiate with these people - if they refuse to use condoms, I can't do anything about it. I don't think there are many options – there is a lot of competition among transgender people too, no one really comes to others' aid because they are fending for themselves. Today I have to ask people for money and for food as well, -I feel very ashamed to do it. I used to feed people around me, now I'm forced to ask others for money.

### **Case Story 16**

My name is xxx and I am 30 years old. I am staying in a small hut in Putlur village, Thiruvallur district that is located in the sub-urban area near Chennai. Presently, I earn my living by begging in express trains.

During my childhood, I lived with my family in the Redhills area and my family members consist of my father, mother, one elder brother and one younger brother. My father led the family with earnings from a small petty business and my mother earned some money through housemaid work in the near by houses. We belong to the Padayachi Caste, which comes under Most Backward Class (MBC). We as a family were below poverty line and my mother fed us by getting food from the near by houses where she work as maid.

During my school days, senior schoolmates have harassed me and had sex with me. I didn't have any sexual arousal during that time, but I faced sexual harassment when I was 10 years old.

After one year, I started to feel and identify myself as women. Then I started to work in near by houses and used to do all the household works in my own house. My brother

asked me about my sexual identity and slowly my neighbourhood people and schoolmates started teasing me. Due to the continuous mockery, my concentration in studies got affected and I failed in my 9<sup>th</sup> standard.

I stopped going to school and started working in the wholesale rice shop and mechanic workshop. I have faced harassment, violence, sexual abuse and discrimination in the workplace also. I was highly depressed and started to think about ending my life. At this juncture, a change in my life happened after sharing my life story with a Transgender friend. I started to gain confidence but this didn't last too long, as my parents insisted that I stop talking with the Transgender friend. Even though there was strong resistance from my family to stop my relationship with the transgender friend, I continued to strengthen the relationship with my transgender friend. Because of her transgender status and my being her friend, they chased out from the house.

My bitter life began after I was thrown out from my house and came to the street. During that time, my transgender friend took me and linked me to the local Jamaat. I started to enjoy my feminineness in the Jamaat, but I have to give Rs.150 daily to my Guru for continuing my life in Jamaat. To earn this money, I started to do sex work and begging. I started earning and saving money.

I have saved some money through begging and sex work. Through this money I went to Kadapa for SRS surgery. After becoming a Transgender, I have started facing violence through police, RPF, clients and goondas. I am struggling to live my life in this stigma filled environment and society.

As a transgender, I don't have family support, government support, education, decent workplace or livelihood. Currently, I live amid struggles.

### **Case Story 17**

My name is xxx and I am 35 years old. I hail from Ramanathapuram but I have been living in Villupuram for a long time. I have two elder brothers, two younger brothers, and one elder sister. I had not been home for 15 years, and it is only because of some recent changes that I have become close to my family.

I have studied till Class 11. I realised I was not like other boys of my age when I was around 11 years old. I continued feeling this way until I was 15, feeling I was different, and that I was in another category. I would do household work at home, such as fetching water, cleaning, washing utensils, cooking, despite my sisters being there. I would even sit with girls, delousing their hair! I liked to play with girls, never with boys, and with toys meant for girls. My father's friend once commented loudly on my behaviour, saying that I walk and talk like a girl. As I grew older, inspired by my sister-in-law, I began wearing kaajal and bindis at school too. Whatever I did, using make up, dressing differently, was appreciated by women and feared or teased by men.

I was 13 years old when my aunt's son initiated sexual relations with me. I enjoyed it, and we continued our relationship. We were caught twice, but continued despite warnings from my parents. My cousin was 20 years old, but I was the one who was scolded and thrashed repeatedly by my brothers and my parents. My friend Selvi consoled me and advised me to start behaving in a more manly way. But I thought to myself "I am what I am. I'm doing well. Why does everyone ask me to behave like a boy?" After this I began interacting with other men, as my relatives or friends introduced me to them.

My friend showed me a newspaper report about transgender people near Madras (Chennai) participating in a carnival. This was the first time I realised that I was not alone, and there were people like me.

At around the same time a transgender person from Mumbai came to my village. This person immediately recognized me as a community member and asked me if I was an Aravani (transgender) as well. She offered to transform me into a woman so that I could stop living like a man. She invited me to Dindigul.

My father was a well-known man, who cared for his prestige and reputation. Word about my sexual liaisons began to get around and people started talking about it. At school as well, other boys who came to know about my inclinations and sexuality humiliated me. They went as far as insulting my elder brothers. I feared humiliation for my father and family. In fact someone at school asked why I wasn't already living with other Aravanis. I decided to take some money (around Rs.300) from home and leave.

The transgender person had left me an address in Dindigul. But when I reached Dindigul, I found myself in the house of another transgender person. I stayed in that house for a week. They took care of my food and other expenses. Among the six residents in the house, I must have been the youngest and often did the housework, such as helping in the farm or doing other chores.

I would feel sad that I had to leave my home and school. When I was still living at home, I would often go to stay at the houses of other people (like friends, acquaintances) but after coming to the house with other transgender people, I felt like part of a family and finally experienced the true joy of becoming a woman.

The others in the house informed me that I needed to start begging (at traffic signals), and must earn my way in order to be able to pay for the sex reassignment surgery (SRS). I felt overjoyed at the thought of finally turning into a woman, not scared or worried at the idea of undergoing the surgery.

At one point, I decided to go to Mumbai, as my biological family was still in Tamil Nadu and they might come to know about my new life. It was also well known that transgender people living in Mumbai were doing well, especially economically.

I went with two transgender friends to Mumbai, and found myself in a new house. We earned our livelihoods by begging. Within a month of my joining the household, two people who had arrived after me already underwent SRS. Now I had to compete with the others for the surgery because if there were more people for collection, I had to split my areas of collection with these people and I was left with little for the surgery.

The surgery cost about a lakh, and I underwent the operation 8 months after I moved to Mumbai. After the SRS, the household head asked me to repay the money.

I was able to pay back the amount within a year. As I knew about sexually transmitted diseases at this time, I was not keen on starting sex work. I began to have a regular partner around this time. This man approached me when I was going for my usual round of collections. I must have been around 19 years of age and he was around 22. He sold flowers at the railway station for a living. His brother had married a transgender woman, and his own family had come to know about this after 6 months, but did not mind the relationship as it brought in income from the daughter-in-law's earnings from sex work. As my partner did not earn much, I began to support him with my own earnings – I would buy him gifts and pay for many of his and his family's expenses.

My Guru didn't know this at first. But another transgender saw me with my partner, and asked me if I had informed my Guru about this recent turn of events. This transgender threatened me with dire consequences, such as being humiliated by my own Guru who would eventually find out. I was told that they would shave my head and make me sit on a buffalo and parade me around town. My Guru's sister also threatened me similarly. I believed them and thought it would be best to leave Mumbai.

I discussed this with my partner, and his sister assured me that she would send him to me within 10 days. I believed her and left the city with a dear friend of mine, and headed for Tiruvannamalai in Tamil Nadu. She took me to another transgender in Villupuram district and we stayed there. Problems began when men would visit the house, and I realised that unlike Mumbai, sex work was very common in Tamil Nadu. By that time condoms were being used, and an NGO had visited us providing us with information and demonstrating safe sex methods. I decided to start sex work as well and went to this transgender called Vanitha, who kept a brothel only for transgenders who were into sex work.

In the beginning I would be paid as little as Rs.20 for the work. But I found a stable partner through my liaisons there. He was a painter. We got married after six months of courtship. His family created problems but I didn't leave because he stayed supportive throughout. I was the breadwinner in our marriage, and our relationship lasted four years. I helped him get his sister married by loaning them Rs.4.5 lakh. All the money came from my earnings through sex work, and he didn't seem bothered by that. However, soon after that his marriage was fixed. His parents requested me to let him marry saying they needed a male heir, and I consented because of that reason. After this I left him.

I soon came to know that they were using me for my money alone. After his marriage to the other woman, he approached me for money. I didn't have the money with me at that point, upon which he went back to his other wife and told her to never speak to me again (I used to communicate with his wife often and we were on good terms). He also instructed his family members to break off all ties with me. I learnt all of this when his younger brother, who was very fond of me, came to see me.

I decided to sever all contacts with them. I realised I had been used. During the time when we were married, he'd just take my earnings, leaving me with just enough for food. Whatever money he took from, he would save that towards his sister's marriage.

I am still in a fix whether to speak to them again. My other Aravani friends would scold me for trying to keep a stable partner. But now I'm with a new partner who is an auto driver. But now I do things for my own family, not for him or his family.

I have tried to stop sex work twice in the past. On one occasion, I was in an NGO where I was earning well (Rs.6000 a month). But once I left the job and re-established contact with my parents, expenses went up, so I was forced to return to sex work.

#### **Case 18.**

My name is xxx. I was born and brought up in Saidapet, Chennai. I am 35 years old. My parents are no more and I have two younger brothers. My father used to work for an ITI company as a clerk and my mother was a homemaker. We have a house of our own at Saidapet.

Since my early childhood, I was interested in dressing up like a girl and liked the company of girls. When I say early years, I remember this almost from when I was in Class 5. I used to ask my father to buy me anklets, ticka (Bindis), bangles, and even remember the day he bought me lipsticks. So my father was encouraging me to be the way I wanted to be in those years.

As I was a child, he was happy to fulfil my demands. Up to Class 5, I studied in a co-ed school and I always moved around with my cousin sister. I used to study, dress up, play and sit with girls in the same bench, dance with them at school functions, etc. I enjoyed those days. Meanwhile everyone came to know about my interest in dressing up like a girl. After Class 5, I had to join a school for boys. I felt very bad to leave the company of friends to be with the boys. Till then, I used to be so free with the girls that I hung around with them. But suddenly, the circle changed to boys. I continued to dress up like girls. At school, they noticed my interest in dressing up and girlish tendencies. So if there were any programmes in school, I was the only one who liked to dress up and perform girls' roles. I loved to dance and wanted to learn, but my mother never supported my interest. My father had no objection. I became famous in school because I danced to a film song called Azhaghi Malar and later I was known as "Azaghi Malar Hari Kumar" after the song's name. My original name was Hari Kumar and now my name is Anu.

In the boys' school I became different because of my way of dressing. I used to wear undergarments like young girls and do up my eyes with glitters, apply facial, etc. Boys started teasing me and kissing me, watching me walk and talk. They also started to take advantage of me by pulling my cheeks.

It was when I was studying in Class 8 that my neighbour asked me if I could give him company in his house as his mother was not well and was admitted to the hospital. He had failed in Class 10 and was preparing to re-appear for the examination. Since I knew him, I was happy to be with him. Gradually, he started having sex with me, but it was not forced. I did not resist but I cannot say I enjoyed at that time. But I liked him. This was the first time I had such an experience. In school, the older boys started harassing me. I was even afraid to use the school toilet and used to control myself the whole day. But the seniors always found some time and pretext to exploit me. Sometimes I would suddenly find myself locked in a classroom and a group of seniors would abuse me. I did not like it at all. If they did not find me alone, they would snatch my books and call me to odd places like the terrace to have sex with me.

My mathematics teacher also took advantage of me. I was not good in the subject and would take longer than others to solve problems. One day he sent all the students away from class. When I submitted my copy, he did not even look at it. Instead, he forced me to have sex in the classroom itself. But he did not repeat it and after that incident, he behaved normally with me. Harassment from my seniors continued till I finished Class 12 and joined college.

Back home, my father started realising that my fascination to dress up like a girl was not just a childish game. He started advising me to change the way I used to dress and behave like a boy. This was when I was in Class 9 and I had a tussle with my father about it. At that time, my father realised he too was responsible for encouraging me. He had supported all my interests when I was young and later, it became too difficult for me to change. So gradually, he accepted the fact, but my mother did not.

My father wanted all of us to study well and so I was able to complete my graduation. I enrolled for an MA course. During my first year in MA, my mother took ill and died. It was 2004. I had to quit studies to take care of the house and my younger brothers. Since

I was able to take care of them they were able to study. One brother completed his BSC and the other completed his engineering degree. Our father died in 2011.

My neighbours knew about me because the way I behaved came naturally to me. Meanwhile, I also found friends among transgenders and I used to move around with them.

I got my sex change operation done in a hospital in Cadapa with the support of my transgender friends and I came back home after that. This was not done with my father's permission and he did not support it. My brothers were not happy about my being a transgender and my interactions with my community. I do not go to any of the family functions even if I am invited as they see me differently and I do not want it. They are all aware of my Identity. When my younger brother got married, he started objecting to my presence in the house but my father stood by me and asked him to look for a house if he did not want me around. I used to cook, wash the clothes and clean the house. I felt bad about my brother's attitude towards me. For some reasons, we never got along well. He was also against me being given a share in the property. But my father and my youngest brother were very supportive and so I am able to stay on in my house.

I left home on only one occasion for the operation and for a short while, but it did not workout. I have visited many places, but never stayed anywhere to earn a living.

I take up any consultancies and usually earn my living doing jobs. I do not engage in commercial sex. If at all I engage in sex, it is out of my choice so I have not really faced any problem as a transgender. Unlike some of my friends, I did not have to leave home and beg to support myself.

After my operation, I started having a regular partner. Everyone in my family knows about him. He is younger to me and is not educated. But I like him and he is very fond of me. He is very possessive. Due to this, I get into trouble with him. In fact, I support him, as he does not have any regular employment. If he finds me talking to anyone, he starts taking an extra interest in me and becomes upset and beats me. But I cannot live without him. Once, such an incident had a disastrous consequence. He saw me talking to one of my friends and got so drunk that while I was sleeping, he came and beat me so badly that I was forced to file a case against him. But later on I changed my mind and withdrew the case because I loved him much.

I am interested in completing my studies. I would like to do LLB in the coming years. I like to spend money on make-up items, dress, and travel a lot but I want to stay in Chennai.

### **Case Story 19**

I am Kirthana. I was born in 1970 in Madurai. I belong to the Scheduled Caste. My father was an employee of the state electricity board. He is no more. My mother is a homemaker. I have one brother and two sisters and I am the youngest in the family. All of us studied up to Class 10. My brother completed his higher secondary education. After that, he set up an electrical shop. All my siblings are married and settled.

I was a very timid person and liked being in the company of girls. I also liked to do household work. When I was about 12 years old, I felt a strong urge to identify with girls and wanting to be like them and with them. The family recognized my tendencies and accepted me, but did not approve of my becoming a transgender or my association with transgenders. They told me not to talk to others and not to step out of the house.

This turned out to be disadvantageous for me in my later years. When I was studying, my family members used to make me do all household chores as my eldest sister was married and my second sister had started working. They did not treat me well and used to call me names because of my behaviour.

I used to study in a boys' school. There was a girls' school nearby. At school, my teachers identified me as an MSM from my behaviour and sometimes isolated me from the rest of the boys and told me to join the girls for games. Some of my classmates, who were rowdy, used to ridicule me and demand sex with me. My first sexual encounter happened when I was in Class 6.

My brother came to know that I was an MSM when his friend had sex with me on one occasion and told our father about it. My father scolded me and warned me to refrain from it. But I continued to face pressure from seniors, urging me to have sex with them, even though I was not interested. They called me names like 'Potta', 'Uoors', 'Kokrako' (words used to ridicule transgenders). As far as studies were concerned, I was good in some subjects like Mathematics and Tamil, but I did not attend school regularly as I had to do household work when my mother and sisters were not at home. My mother used to visit her village often. So I failed my Class 10 examinations and I had to reappear to get through. After completing my Class 10, I joined typewriting classes, English lower and higher. I also specialised in electronic typing too. I worked as a telephone operator in a shop in New Avadi Road for two years before leaving home.

At home, I faced harassment and restrictions because of my identity and lack of freedom, which forced me to leave home at the age of 17. My family members used to call me names like 'potta' and instructed me on how to dress and whom to interact with. All the household chores were forced upon me, contributing to my frustration. This was why I decided to leave.

I used to see transgenders at different places and wished to be like them. I knew some of them whom I had interacted with while travelling in trains or buses. That is how I got to know Priya, a transgender who lived in Kannagi Nagar. When I left home, I asked her if I could stay with her and she took me in. While living with her I did not indulge in sex work. I was still working in an office. I stayed with her for around five years. When Priya got a partner, she wanted to have more space and asked me to join Muthamma Jamaat in Saidapet. There were more than 50 members with her and I was forced to do commercial sex. In the mornings, I used to go to beg in different places and in the afternoon, I had to go for sex work. My earnings amounted to Rs.5000 a day on an average including what I got by begging. I stayed with Muthamma for four years. She used to give me Rs 1000 a week for my personal expenses and Rs.1000 for buying clothes. Being there for five years, I realised that I had put in long hours of work, there was no unity among the members and I had no personal savings despite all the work I did. I had a face-off with Muthamma and left the place. It was during those days that I got infected with HIV, having different types of customers. I tested positive in 1998. Since then, I started living on my own.

Few years ago, I adopted a boy. He studies in a hostel in Kanchipuram. I pay his fees and provide him whatever he needs whenever I can.

I have faced a lot of harassment for being a transgender. People on the road used to throw stone at me and call me names. People at shops beat me up for begging at their place.



The news that I was HIV positive spread very fast among my community members. If one person gets to know, she informs ten others in turn. That is the speed at which news spreads. I faced severe discrimination from my community members. They abused me when they saw me begging. 'Boochinee. Vaarathe. Ninne, motte odachiduve. Dandha panniyal mande odaibe (You are an insect – reference to being HIV positive – Don't come here. If you stand here, we will shave your head. If you engage in sex work, we will break your head)'. I had no energy to do any work and I resorted to begging.

The owner of the house where I lived did not provide me water and took extra money from me because I was a transgender. When he came to know that I was positive, he threw me out of the house and refused to pay me my deposit. With the help of some of my friends and neighbours I was able to reclaim it from him with much difficulty. I had changed house after house and now it is difficult to get one. So far, I have moved at least four times.

Once I had a fall and had to visit the government medical college hospital. I told the doctor that I was HIV positive. On hearing that he refused to attend to me and did not give me any treatment. I had to consult a doctor in a private clinic. Most of the time, I consult private doctors, except for my regular treatment, for which I go to the government hospital.

Till date, my own family members do not want to accept me. They are ready to welcome me home if I am ready to dress up and behave like a man. The main issues I face is that my family does not accept me and secondly, the public avoids me.

I have faced discrimination from my own community. They isolated me because I am positive. This hurts me a lot.

I adopted my son when he was a baby. Now, he has grown up and is studying in Class 9 in a hostel in Kanchipuram. Someone brainwashed him saying that I am a transgender and make a lot of money. He is now demanding property from me. When I do not have a house of my own how can I give him a share? He does not respect me when I go to visit him. This causes me great concern. I feel like I nursed a snake that is ready to attack me. I came to know about welfare schemes from the government only recently and have not been able to access any of them so far.

I think it would be good if the government can support transgenders with job opportunities and provide houses. If the public can accept us, we will be able to get houses for rent to live in just like others. Above all our, families should accept us as we are.

### **Case Story 20**

I am xxx, aged 28. I live in K.K. Nagar, Chennai. My parents earn their income from daily wages. My father works as a mason and mother as a maid. My family lives along with other close relatives in the same area. I have one sister, who is three years younger to me.

I studied in a government school in the neighbourhood. I started feeling physical changes within me when I was 11 or 12 years old. I preferred to help my mother with household chores. I enjoyed wearing girls' dresses. I started walking and speaking like girl. In the absence of my parents at home, I loved putting make up, doing my eyebrows and decorating my short hair with flowers. I even tried wearing my mother's 'sari'.

My mother noticed this first and she asked me what was wrong. Initially I denied everything, but later I admitted that I felt like a woman. Hearing that, my mother shouted at me and threatened to inform my father so that he could ensure that I behaved like a boy. I pleaded with her and explained that I was not acting like a girl but that the feminine feeling was within me. I told her that if I behaved like a boy, I would actually be acting. My mother was shocked.

I went to school along with other boys and girls in my neighbourhood. Observing my behaviour, my friends started teasing me. Boys teased me a lot and they started making fun of any boy who would speak to me. This resulted in me becoming closer to the girls. Girls are always nice and good. They never made any fun of me and allowed me to be part of their group when they played games.

My urge for dressing like women has grown over time. Fortunately, one day I met a transgender passing by me on the street. I was so happy to realise I was not the only one boy in this world to feel like a girl. Some neighbours said they lived close to our locality. I wanted to meet and talk to that transgender but could not. The next day, I made the pretext of going to school and started looking for her. Luckily, I found her on the neighbouring street. To my surprise, I found more such people in the house. I became so happy to see all of them were dressed in saris. I introduced myself. They were very happy to see me and asked me to visit them when I was free.

I started going to their place often by skipping school. I used to fulfil my wish of wearing dresses for girls when I was in their house. After interacting with them, I felt confident that I was not the only such person in the world and that there were many more like me who are women trapped in male bodies. I came to know that they often went to Mumbai, where thousands of such people live without being disturbed by their families, relatives and society. I continued to visit them without any problems for three to four years.

However, my uncle came to know me that I was missing school and spending time with transgenders in their house. It became a big issue at home and my uncle beat me up severely and injured me with burning hot piece of wood. I visited them the very next day and told them how hostile my family was. I showed them my scars. They sympathised with me and said they would speak to my parents. The head of the group, came home in my father's absence and explained about transgenders. She tried to explain to my mother that my feminine behaviour was not my choice, but was something I was born with. She told her that we are also creations of God. After listening to her, my mother cried a lot and pleaded with me not to behave like a girl in front of my father and other male relatives. I promised to do so even though I did not like that idea.

In between, I dropped out of school and worked as helper in a leather garment factory for two to three years and supported my parents. I was paid Rs.1200 a month as salary. Whenever I had leave or time, I visited the transgenders.

Gradually, my desire to declare myself as an 'Aravani (transgender)' grew stronger. At the same time, I did not want to hurt the feelings and status of my family. Therefore I decided to move to Mumbai. I discussed this with my guru. She gave me a contact and sent someone to accompany me to Mumbai. I stayed in Mumbai for 10 days. I did not like it as I was being forced to get into sex work. Language was another big problem. Everyday, I had to cater to more than 10 clients. So I escaped from there and reached Chennai. I met my guru and explained to her what was happening in Mumbai. She took me to my house and explained things to my mother. She requested her to treat me well and understand my situation.

Initially, my father was against me and he used to scold me a lot. All my male relatives used to instigate him to punish me. But later he too started understanding my situation. My parents let me live as I wanted, but requested me not to wear women's clothes when I was at home. I accepted. Now, my father addresses me as if he is addressing his daughter saying 'vaa ma' or 'po ma'. My sister got married at the age of 16. My brother-in-law knows about my identity.

As I mentioned earlier, after I started living with my friends, I survived on begging and sex work. It is nearly 8 years now. I do sex work at night and beg in the morning. I earn around Rs.500-600 a day. I go to T. Nagar, Vadapalani and Chetpet for begging. On an average, I earn Rs.12000-15000 a month. I pay around Rs.2500 towards rent and spend Rs.2500 towards food.

I have worked in a leather factory and a garment factory. I can also make jewellery boxes. But who will give us a job? I have applied for the Transgender Welfare Board Card but I could not collect it on time. I have a voter ID card and a ration card. They are all in my house. I am a member of a community-based organisation (Swam), from where I avail of all regular medical check-ups. I do not face any issue in availing of the medical services and regular check-ups.

I know my regular partner since my school days. He used to protect me whenever others bullied or teased me. Earlier we were just friends, later, we became close to each other. He is married and has two children but every fortnight he visits me and spends time with me. We used to go to the beach and to see films.

For the past 5 years, I have been living in rented house along with my friends. Every weekend or fortnight I visit my parents. Whenever I visit them, I give my mother Rs.2000-2500.

There are some regular issues we face as transgenders. Bullying and teasing are the common issues that we face from society and clients. It has become a part of life. Sometimes, the police harass us. On such occasions, we inform our 'guru' who helps us sort it out.

My main concern is getting minimum respect from society. We do not put any burden on society. We are very happy. There are considerable changes in the attitude of women in society. But the men are yet to change their attitude. They should treat us like a human being.

### **Case Story 21**

My name is xxx. I am 32 years old and am born and brought up in Chennai. I was staying with my parents in the Kilpauk Garden area till the age of 8. Later, my father got transferred to Perumbur and so the rest of my life was spent in and around Perumbur. I have one elder brother and a younger sister. My father worked for BSNL and we stayed in the staff quarters. I studied in Jamalia Muslim School till Class 10. On completion of Class 10, I went to Sham ITI College at Egmore to complete my graduation.

I always preferred to be with my sister from my childhood. I played, prayed and moved around with her wherever she went. We used to play games like cooking wherein I always took the role of mother. While going to school, I used to carry books the way girls carry them, holding the mat on my hip and walking with a sway like girls (demonstrates).

My mother was suffering from breast cancer for a long while and I used to help her in the household work and was happy to do it. When I was in Class 7, I strongly felt the urge to be like a girl and was drawn to some of the boys. I used to ask the boys for lift to school. I knew I was falling in love. But some of the boys recognized my tendencies and started calling me 'ompathu' (derogatory term used for transgenders means '9'). I felt shy when they used to tease me and tried not to face them. I was afraid, even to go to the toilet. But gradually I became free and started interacting with the boys. One day my teacher saw me with other boys in the classroom hugging and kissing them. I requested him not to inform my father but he did and my father beat me up. That way, everybody at home came to know about me and they were not happy about it and they warned me not to behave like that. Thereafter I did not want to go to school and used to take the bag and go to RPC ground nearby and spend my days there, not wanting to meet the teacher. Towards the end of the year, I went back to school and wrote my exams. The following year, the teacher got transferred. At school I used to feel lonely sometimes and one of the boys became friendly with me and gradually fell in love with me. From then on we moved together everywhere. He came to my house everyday and stayed with me and took me back to school very often. This friendship lasted even after school days.

Next to our house, a man lived with his wife. When she went to have a child, he called me over to his place to be with him. I liked him and his company. Then gradually he initiated me into oral sex and then anal. I was not aware what was happening to me. Gradually I started liking it. This was the first time. Later, when a teacher showed interest in me, I realised what his intention was, but I did not reciprocate.

Being a Muslim school, every Friday we had a holiday and we used to go to watch a movie in Vasathi Theatre because they showed blue films there. This excited us more as we would see it and even try out the stunts in the theatre hall.

On completion of Class 10, I got admission for ITI in Egmore. While going to college I used to see a group of boys sitting near the railway track and recognized them as having interests similar to mine. I got introduced to them and we became a group of friends. So we used to come early from college and spend time together. We also used to have sex with some of them for an extra income. One of my brother's friends had sex with me one day and my brother came to know about it and told my mother. She was very upset and asked me to stay away from those people. Actually I used to be afraid of the transgenders earlier and used to avoid them because I was not fully aware of their lives.

One day while on my way to the college, a staff member from an NGO met me in the train. He told me about the kind of work they do and about other people like me. He invited me to visit their office but I did not go at that time.

After completion of my ITI, I began working in a refrigerator repairing shop near Perumbur. But the shop did not have enough work. I had already started using make up in those days, even while going to the shop. The shopkeeper fell in love with me. His wife used to bring food for us. When she went for her delivery, I took his wife's place. I started cooking and keeping house for him in her absence and took food for him everyday. Upon her return his wife realised that she had lost her place in her own house. She ensured that I was thrown out of the shop. That was the end of one phase of my life and I became jobless. Since I did not have any income and needed money I was forced to do sex work on railway tracks.

Those days my desire to dress up like a woman became more intense and I wanted to wear a 'sari'. In 1998-99, I started wearing sari. I used to leave home in pant shirt and return in pant shirt. I did both sex work and begging for my living and my family started

questioning my way of life. At that time a Jamaat friend invited me to her place. I was advised to stay with them and work from there. We were three of us - the Guru, the mother-in-law and I became her Dhooth Beti (adopted daughter). So we became a family. I stayed with her for one year. I did begging and most of my earning was given to her.

When my brother got to know of it, he informed my mother and they beat me up and asked to stop it. They threatened me, saying if word got around, it would become difficult for my sister to get an alliance for marriage. My mother said, 'your sister's future will be spoilt if you continue'.

This was about the same time that one of the contact persons from the NGO saw me and called me to their office. There I met a Jamaat Guru from Mumbai and she wanted to take me to Mumbai. I took the chance and went with her. But I never realised that she had taken me to sell me. She sold me for Rs.7000 to another Jamaat leader and they adopted me. The Jamaat leader used me during the nights and the remaining time I was forced into commercial sex work. I earned money for them. I was working day and night and it was too much for me. So I returned to Chennai.

In my absence my parents had started enquiring about me at the NGO. By the time I returned, my mother was hysterical. She told me that I could do anything I wanted in Chennai but when I went home, I should be wearing pant and shirt. I went back to my Guru and continued to wear sari for my business and went home in pant and shirt.

My guru agreed to support me for my sex change operation if I worked with her. So I worked for two years and got myself operated in Kadapa. When I got back after ten days, the mother-in-law at the Jamaat started cursing me saying I was not able to earn any money for them. So I started begging even before the wound healed. But the wound got infected because of lack of proper medication and rest.

Then came the 'milk ceremony' a traditional function, which is done 40 days after the operation. I was staying at Kannikapurm those days. My guru again supported me with money for the function after I promised to work for her and pay back the loan.

The function took place on Feb 14, 2003. I had invited all transgenders, MSM, several NGO staff and friends. It was a grand celebration with lot of food and drinks. During the function there was some argument among the transgenders, which led to a kind of fight. But it got settled and everyone went home. The next morning the police were at my door for an enquiry because there was a death in the neighbouring building. They took all those who had participated in the function to the police station and kept us in the lock-up for three days. It became a big issue and the news was all over the newspapers. There were transgenders and MSM who were not open till then and their identity became public because their parents had to come to the station. There were also some HIV positive members among them. My parents too had to come and they were ashamed of me and were afraid that the marriages of my brother and sister would be stalled. The MSM started cursing me as their identity became public and it was a great problem for them. Because of this, they isolated me from then on.

Since I had invited people from different organizations/NGOs, the other staff members went to the police station and took up the issue. We were around 80 people in the custody and so the representatives came and staged a dharna to protest. High court advocate and person from the NGO took up the case and in three days we were released.

The case took about two months to be sorted. While in the lock-up, the police did not spare us. They wanted to have sex with us. One of them asked me “Is it possible to penetrate? How do you get breasts?” These were very painful times for me. The police released me after three days but my movements were restricted.

The people staying around the place were very angry with us. The transgenders staying in the area were thrown out of the houses without notice and so the transgenders were angry with me. On the 25<sup>th</sup> day, we were called back to court and our lawyers proved that we were not guilty. Someone else had committed the murder and placed the body near the venue of the function. So it was easy for the murderers to put the blame on us. I still had to repay money to my guru for the expenses for the function. The expenses amounted to around Rs.2 lakh. So I left Chennai and went to Bangalore to work there for three years.

All my earnings were given to my Guru and I was not happy. So, I decided to return home. I cut my hair and started wearing pant and shirt as per my mother’s request. Meanwhile my father expired and I had to support my mother to help get my sister married. I stayed on like that till both my brother and sister got married. Since the marriages were over, once again I started wearing sari and remained at home with my mother till she died.

After my mother’s death I continued to stay in my own house like a servant with my sister. She made me to do all the work at home like washing clothes, cleaning and cooking. They wanted to take away the property. My parents had a lot of expectation from me and wanted me to be a policeman because in my younger days I was the one who was managing home. My parents found me very efficient. My brother took up the BSNL job of my father after his death and I was left with nothing.

We had mortgaged our house to a bank to access a loan of Rs.4.5 lakhs. With this I bought a basement-constructed house plot for me. But in a short while the bank officer approached me and informed me that the house plot I bought was on a loan and I had to repay the amount. This was a shock to me. Upon enquiring, I found out that the plot owner and the bank employee had an underhand dealing to cheat me. Since I had paid all the money during the registration and there was no mention of any loan I refused to pay. They used all methods they could to get me out of that place. They used to send goondas (hoodlums) at night to threaten me.

I met the Chennai corporation counsellor and cooperation officer but it was of no use. I also approached an NGO advocate. He too turned out to be on the other side. I continued to knock on many doors to get support without giving up. There was a scheme, known as ‘Puthu veedu maadi veedu akkanam (scheme advocating vertical expansion)’. The government wanted to finish the scheme quickly and so I decided to construct the pending house. My house was selected under this. Knowing that I would not budge they agreed to build the house for me. They gave the work to a contractor who was prolonging the work. I got the help of my friends to make him finish the work faster and to ensure that they complete the work I just stayed on the pavement opposite my house for almost three months. I got the house in shape but not completed. I had to invest more money to complete it. After all the trouble I went through, now I own this house.

After my mother’s death, I could not go back to the transgenders because of my past experience and because they had isolated me. The jamaat too did not want me back because of the problems that originated in my milk ceremony. At night, hoodlums continue to trouble me by banging on my door. My sister has accepted me to some extent but she does not call me for any family functions. Nor do I go.

The police and advocates do not support me unless they find me attractive and want to have sex. I have built a floor above the ground floor and give the ground floor room on rent. This fetches me around Rs.4000 a month. I still do sex work for the additional income. After having faced so much in life, today I have the confidence to face the future. I would like to put up a biryani or fish shop and run it for sustenance and regular income.

## Case Story 22

My name is xxx and I was born in Tuticorin. We belong to SC (Devar) caste. My father died when I was one year old. He was a private van driver and I really do not know how he died. I was told that he fell into water and drowned. So my mother left Tuticorin and took me to her own house in Madurai. I grew up in a joint family. My mother started working in a school as a helper. I am the only child. My mother has a sister who has five children, two daughters and three sons. The boys were younger to me and the girls were older.

I remember when I was around six years old, I started liking to dress up and putting on make up like a girl. I was so fascinated to see my aunty do her make up that I used to hide and watch her. She was an educated person unlike my other family members and seemed to recognize my tendencies. She used to comment about me saying, 'Why does he walk and talk like girls?' And used to ask me, 'Why do you behave like a girl?' I used to feel bad with such comments and used to hide under the bed to avoid such comments from other family members.

I started my schooling when I was six years old and was regular at school. I used to steal make up items from my aunty and apply it on my way to school. The desire to be like a girl gradually grew in me. When I was 13, I started to encounter problems. My teacher identified me and beat me up and my finger got fractured. It was very painful but what was worse was that I could not share it with anyone else at home. I told them that since I had not done my homework well, the teacher punished me and they believed me. Meanwhile, the others in the class and school started calling me names such as 'Pottai', 'Uoose', 'Ombadu' (derogatory terms associated with transgenders) to insult me for dressing up like girls. Such incidents became common in school. I made friends with a boy in the class whom I liked. While in Class 9, I had my first sexual interaction with my friend. But I did not expect my teacher to use me for his pleasure. We used to have tuitions after school hours and he used to purposely hold me back till the others went away and then have sex with me in the classroom.

One day when we (my friend and me) were alone in the classroom and were lying together embracing each other, others noticed us. They informed the teacher, and the teacher in turn informed the headmaster. We were both beaten and made to kneel outside the classroom with books on our head. At the end of the day, the teacher warned me again. He asked me to bring my parents to school if I wanted to continue my studies. Till then my mother was not aware of anything. The news reached home before me and my mother was furious at me. She shouted at me saying, 'When you are boy, why do you behave like a girl?' She beat me up and set a hot spoon on my leg. Her frustration was not over with this and she tried to hang herself but luckily her life was saved. That brought an end to my school life. I was not allowed to go out of the house for a while.

Then I started to go for work with my uncle who was a contractor. I learnt painting and worked with him for three years. My mother strictly monitored my life and continuously stopped me from washing my clothes, cleaning the house and washing the dishes – tasks that I liked. I loved to dance but I held back my desires because of my fear of my mother.

In 1996, my uncle and his family shifted to Chennai. I too went along with them. In Chennai, my dreams got wing. I felt like dancing like a peacock, singing like a cuckoo and running like a deer. My uncle rented a house in Saidapet area and I continued to stay with him. After about two months I saw one man in the same street whom I identified as someone like me. He worked in a house like a maid. That was what made me identify him. He was doing all the jobs of a girl like washing, cleaning and doing rangoli in front of the house. Interactions with him cleared my doubts. He introduced me to other friends in the area and also got the information about the existence of Jamaat.

As planned, one day he took me to the Jamaat to show me the place. I saw the Guru and was so surprised to see her. Guru looked and behaved like a real girl, and the way she dressed up was amazing. I admired her because of her beautiful dress, nose ring, earrings, finger rings, bangles and anklets that made her look so attractive. Then and there I took a decision to be one of them. I started visiting the place, interacting with some of them and gradually became very friendly. In 2002, I left my uncle's place to go and live with Jamaat.

Only when I started living with the community did I realise about the life there. There was no work, and if I did not work, life became difficult. They started asking me how much I was contributing? This made me to look for a job and led me to begging and then to commercial sex work. I was able to earn up to Rs.1000 a day. I could only keep Rs.100 with me. I had to give the remaining to the community. While begging, I encountered a lot of insult and discrimination because people do not respect transgenders. They also pass comments. This continued till 2005.

In 2005 I decided to move out of Jamaat and started to live alone so that I could earn and save some amount. Being in the Jamaat I could not do that. I continued begging and sex work. I also found a partner but it was fateful. He did not have a proper job and always came to me for money and sex. He would land up in house in the middle of the night just to have sex and leave me. If I refused either money or sex he used to beat me. Since I wanted to have someone, I held on to him. Finally I heard that he got married and he stopped coming to me and I too did not go after him. I realised no one can be trusted.

I did have painful encounters in my work. Once I was standing outside the Koyambedu bus stand and it was around 1 am. One man on a motorcycle approached me and negotiated the rate. He initially refused, but finally agreed to pay me Rs.300. He took me away to a place behind the bus stand where there were four others with him. They brutally used me and left me to die there. I was helpless. The following day, my friends found me lying there and got me admitted to the government hospital. I was there for 20 days.

Yet another incident happened two years ago. One 'panthi' took me to have sex and after that he beat me up with an iron rod and broke my leg. 'See' (shows the scars). I had to stay in bed for 60 days with my leg in plaster. The police do not spare us either. The minute any robbery of money, mobile, etc. is reported, they try to come and harass my friends and me.

The owner of the house where I live charges a lump sum as electricity bill and expects me to treat him every day to food or alcohol. If I refuse, he threatened to throw me out of the house. That's how I have managed to live in the current place for the past five years. I earn about Rs.300 on an average day and just manage to live my life. Though I wanted to save up and buy a house of my own, I have not succeeded. Nor do I have any identity



card except the transgender ID card. This I got with the support of an organisation called SWANS near my place.

I have only one desire - to live peacefully without any debts till the end of my life. I don't have any big ambitions. I would have liked to study further but it was not possible because I do not have any certificates and cannot go back to school to collect it as I find it uncomfortable. I am afraid someone will recognize me there and I don't want it that way.

### **Case Story 23**

I am from the Peranmalai Kallar community, which is a dominant cast built around a strong masculine identity. In fact, we consider ourselves the most masculine community of Tamil Nadu as we trace our genealogy to the warrior class. Since the British Raj, we have been considered a de-notified community across Tamil Nadu.

I felt more than inclined in my childhood to participate in any activity, both social and cultural that helped me express my feminine nature. When I was 12 years old, I participated in a cultural event where I cross-dressed and gave a remarkable dance performance during a village celebration. My uncle (who was supposed to become my father-in-law as per my community's traditions) commented that he should have come to my family to seek a girl and not a boy. This angered my father to such an extent that he beat me up badly. He then disowned me and firmly gave me a bottle of pesticide commanding me to kill myself before he returned from the farm. I followed his instructions and almost died if not for the intervention of my mother who found me dying and rushed me to the hospital. I survived and then started my journey.

When I was seeking refuge in Theni, I met Needhi, who was the same age as me. His family also disowned him and he too was from the Kallar community. I later understood that he was even related to me distantly. We left Theni and went to Kozhikode (in Kerala) as he knew someone there. We were harassed a lot in Kerala. We heard that Mumbai was a safe place as there were many like us there. In Mumbai, we were forced to offer ourselves as sex workers. Violated and with nowhere to go, I returned to Theni. I was 19 years old then. In Theni, we rented a place to stay. Three years later, Needhi committed suicide. This left me broken. It was then that I was found by Mr John Dalton, the founder of Arogyagam, an organisation working with the marginalised in Theni. He took me into his fold and nurtured me into a person who started a journey of healing. Seeing how the lepers, dalits, adivasis and other marginalised groups had collectivised and progressed in life, I was challenged to reach out to the others in Theni who may be going through a similar situation that I went through. This was the genesis of SARA (Social Action and Rehabilitation Association).

Over the years, SARA grew into a community-based organisation with a membership of 700+. We were most accepted among the dalit communities, our mothers and sisters. Our fathers, brothers and community groups who were higher up the caste hierarchy excluded us. Within SARA, we have members from the dominant castes as well as Dalit communities. In fact, have 37 members from my own casts group, the Kallar community, who have similar stories. SARA has now become a space that provides for mutual support and interaction between transgenders from Dalit and dominant caste backgrounds that is taboo in the general community.

We counsel them and ask if they are willing to make efforts towards being reintegrated with their families. This gives us opportunities to dialogue with families that belong to various castes. We tell them that effeminate expressions are not limited by caste. We

show them how our members are from diverse caste backgrounds. This is a great opportunity to show by example that we are not in any way limited by the caste into which we are born. We have been able to see parents accepting this and move towards accepting their children who have alternate sexual identities. Being from a dominant caste, my first refuge was provided by a family from the Dalit community who offered me their house for rent. Challenged by this generosity, I have since gone back to my village and constructed the Om Shakti temple. I am today its guru. Because of this I have been able to invite dalits into the temple and initiate them into a period of fasting. During this time we together go to the Kallar families, do poojas and even eat with them. This was otherwise never possible in Theni.

Today we continue mobilizing the transgender community and communities from other marginalized backgrounds and seek to be a voice for them.

#### **Case Story 24**

Three months ago, an incident took place. I, along with my friends, used to meet near a water tank in the evenings. We would not eat without meeting each other every evening. On this particular day, we decided to play hopscotch (nondi). While playing, we noticed that one man, who looked like a drug user, was watching us. He had a boy along with him. He was watching our. My gurubai said her leg was aching and sat on the steps of the water tank. Soon, I too took a break to drink water.

When I returned, I saw the boy talking to my gurubai and the elder person shouting at him saying 'why are you talking to these nines (derogatory term used for transgenders)?' Then the boy replied 'Uncle, if these people are transgenders, then one day we can take them and put in their mouth (referring to a sexual act).' At that time, I got angry. I told him, 'I may dance like a nine, but you cannot walk on the road. Yes, we are nines but we live with respect. Yes we are pottai (another derogatory term used for transgenders), but we don't lead different lives i.e., one in the day and one at night. We are born like this in this birth, but we don't have to be abused as dogs.' I was so angry. In the meantime, the boy started attacking my gurubai. He took a big wooden stick and struck her.

While screaming and fighting, she got disrobed. When she tried to retie her sari, he hit her again and started chasing her. I was crying wistfully and we all started running. Both of them have wooden sticks and started chasing the four of us. My other friends escaped. My gurubai was beaten up severely. My heart wouldn't let me leave her side because she was also my relative. I could not leave her. I called out to her and urged her to escape, but she couldn't tie her sari. Wearing nothing but her torn blouse, she had to escape climbing one compound wall after another. Everyone on the road was watching her. People who had stopped at traffic signals were also staring at her.

She was praying desperately not knowing what to cover her naked body with. I immediately ran to her, removed my dress and gave it to her.

I took her to the local police station and lodged a complaint. Finally all my friends came to the police station and explained to the sub-inspector what had happened. The sub-inspector used to be my client so I preferred to go to his police station. The person had wronged us because he was intoxicated. The police caught them and beat them up in our presence. They were almost stripped naked and made to fall at our feet.

I want to tell you that such things keep happening. Here the police took a decision in our favour but in many cases, if the rowdies are influential people, the police further beat and harass us, despite the fact that we approached them for justice.

### Case Story 25

I grew up in Melur as the youngest of eight children. We were 3 boys and 5 girls. My father died very early in my childhood. We were a family that would go hungry even when our father was around. When he died, we were in a very difficult situation. It was my eldest brother who supported our family with the daily wages that he earned as a head load worker. We would never have more than 2 meals in a day. In the nights, we would wait with hungry stomachs for my brother to come after he finishes his work, which often would be very late... even mid night. My behaviour even early in childhood was effeminate and this was further reinforced as I was the youngest child in my family and I was very attached to my mother. My mother used to weave mats and I used to help her out in this by putting the thread into the spindle. I also used to help her in carrying water to our home, washing clothes, cooking, taking grains to the mill for milling and other household work. I used to enjoy doing these but my brothers used to tease me and even scold me for doing 'sissy' things.

The situations at home forced me to seek work as a domestic help with a well to do *Chettiyar* family in our village. The deal was that the family would give me three meals a day for doing all the domestic work for them. It was here that I experienced my first homosexual encounter. I was then thirteen years old. The son of my employer, who was elder to me, started making sexual advances and I obliged, as I also felt attracted to him. This went on for three years. After this I went to Madurai in search of work and found some odd jobs in teashops and hotels. It was here that I was introduced to paid sex work. One day when I was going to Alanganallur to see my grand mother, I saw a group of boys like me... Kotis, and joined them for sex work. I was eighteen years then. Soliciting customers in the streets of Madurai had its good times and bad. During this time I had an emotional fling with young man who was a driver. But he got married and left me abruptly. This group of us used to have casual sex with men as well as offer it at a price. But we could not negotiate for much.

When I was 27 years, some of us went to Mumbai as we heard that we could earn better there and there was a better sense of protection that was offered by Guru's. My Guru was a very good person. She was particular that none of us go for sex work. It was sufficient that we brought back just the income from begging. We were 4 of us who were her *chellas* who lived together in Kaat Kupal. In the year 2005, my Guru died of AIDS. Two of the *chellas* also subsequently dies of AIDS. That year was a very difficult year for me. It was during this time that I also underwent my SRS in a hospital in Kadappa. It cost me Rs.5000. But I had to undergo two additional operations as the first one did not hold up and I had difficulty controlling my urine flow.

At 30, I came back to Chennai. From then I used to alternate between being in Chennai and Mumbai as I was attracted to both the cities. When I felt my peace was being disturbed I would immediately move to the other city. During all this time I was always in touch with my mother and siblings who never disowned me because of what I choose to be and do. I sometimes just go and spend long stretches of time with my mother in Melur.

These days I don't do commercial sex work, as I don't find it interesting. Many young men, especially the unmarried ones, make very unreasonable demands and get very violent when I don't fulfil them. I was also once forcefully pushed into a vehicle when five of us were just walking near the Chennai Airport. The other four escaped, but I was

dragged in and raped by 5 men. I did not protest, as I knew that I might be badly harmed if I did it. They took me to a near by bush and raped me one after the other. I lost all my interest for sex work after these incidences. So now I earn my keep through working as a washerwoman, a cook at a nearby hotel. I even sometimes make and deliver food for bachelors. I look forward to just settle down. I just look forward each time about going back and being with my mother. May be run a small shop so that I can get some income to feed my mother and myself. I have a lot of strength to bear a lot of hardship. I can just go on.

### Case Story 26

I was born as the fourth child to my father Ammavaasai and Erusammal in this very same place 44 years ago. I have one elder sister, two elder brothers and one younger sister. We all are a very close-knit family. Though we grew up on the pavements opposite the Pookadai Police Station, where we continue being, we never lacked any love or acceptance from our parents. My father was a daily wage coolie worker and my mother used to string flowers for a livelihood. From the time I was a boy, I used to like dressing like a girl and helping my elder sister and my mother in the house hold chores. My parents never dissuaded me from acting like a girl or doing things like washing clothes and vessels. They accepted me as I was. It was some time when I was 13 or so that I started getting sexually active. Elder boys in the area would approach me to do oral sex. We used to go to dark dingy corners of the road around the Parrys area and satisfy ourselves. I never thought any of these were forced. In fact I used to enjoy satisfying the sexual urges of my friends and other elder boys around Parrys.

However once, a few of my friends had gone together to the Island Grounds for an exhibition. We were playing around near a wall with thick undergrowth when a middle-aged army man intruded, caught hold of me and raped me even while my friends fled away hearing his threats. This was the first and only time I felt I was raped. It was bad experience as I felt very helpless and I could not do anything against the man who violated me. My parents slowly understood my gay tendencies. They however never dissuaded me from this. They themselves were people I deeply trusted as they accepted me as I was. In fact they always did their best to protect me, they stood by me and supported me.

When I was 19 years old, I left to Mumbai one day with three of my friends without informing my parents. I informed them of my decision only after I reached Mumbai. We were in touch with some of the TG women in our area. By this time I was sure that I wanted to live a life of a Transgender woman. We caught a train and reached Jain Koliwada that was near Machi market. We found a Guru there and we started a new life with our new identities. We were 10 of us who were *chellas* to our guru. During this time we used to go for sex work and begging. It was our choice that we did this. There was no coercion by the guru. We understood that if we did not do that we could not survive as a community. We were also linked to other similar families and this gave us a great sense of protection in the otherwise hostile environment. I continued this life for almost 18 years. All along I always thought about my family in Parrys, Madras, and I was in touch with them. I would visit them once in a while. They were always accepting of my choices and me. During my time in Mumbai, I have seen a lot. I watched my three other friends with whom I came to Mumbai die. Nirosha died 10 years earlier of AIDS. Kumudha was murdered and Kumar committed suicide. I also realised that I had contracted HIV. I wanted to go back to my family. I left Mumbai 18 years after I first reached there. Since I have been with my family. I had no problem coming back home. My family celebrated my return.

Coming back to Chennai helped me find my husband. I was admitted to the government hospital and was recovering from STD when I first met Muthu. He propositioned me and we used to meet now and then. He had four children. He was quite fed up with his marriage. His family was in Villipuram. He wanted to come to Chennai and live with me. This he soon did. He would visit his family in between but he lived his life from then on with me. He found in me the affection and love that he desired. We were very happy together. His family came to know about our relationship. His wife understood that he was happier with me and so did not bother us too much though initially she was quite upset. I would ensure that he send some money regularly to his wife and children. About a year back, he was going to see his family when he tripped off the bus and got run over by the vehicle and was taken to the Hospital. Even during this time, I was the family for him. He died soon after. Today is his first death anniversary and that is why you see all the lights and decorations around. We are celebrating his life. His wife is not doing anything... but I am. I was his family. Despite this I have ensured that his wife and children receive all the compensation that is due to him. They are the ones with a lot of need. They deserve it more.

I continue to live on the streets; but I have my own little space here. I even have my own PDS card, Welfare Board card, Voter ID and the *Aravani* Card. The owner of Malik Medicals, Venkatesh has been gracious to lend us his shop address for these purposes. All of us siblings live together here with our families. I am 44 years now. Being born and brought up as a pavement dweller on the streets really did not affect me negatively. I think I have enjoyed my life and have had the best of blessings. Looking back, it was the acceptance that I enjoyed with my family that secured my life.

### **Case Story 27**

My name is xxx and I am 47 years old. I have studied till Class 12 and I have attended a training course in information technology. I am originally from Virudhunagar district of Tamil Nadu, but I have been living in Coimbatore for the last 14 years. I have one brother and five sisters. I am the eldest in the family. My father worked in the telegram office and my mother would do odd jobs. Things were difficult from the beginning because my father had an extramarital affair, and had another home to manage.

When I was in Class 4, I performed oral sex on a classmate of mine for money. I did it for the extra money, and not because I was sexually attracted to him, or knew what I was doing. He gossiped about me, and soon everyone came to know. I was soon isolated in my class, and sent to sit on the last bench where the older boys would often exploit me further.

As far as my memory goes, I remember that things really started when I was in Class 4. I would hesitate to play with the boys, but would prefer to play girls' games with the girls. I would even fetch water the way women do. Everyone was aware that I was not like other boys.

In school, things began to change rapidly. There was a rich boy who was an MSM (men who has sex with men). He had many boyfriends as he could afford to shower them with gifts. I felt envious that he had boyfriends and I didn't have anyone to love me back. I continued to have sex with my classmates but yearned for love and affection. Despite all this heartache, I continued to study well, and finished my schooling. At home, my father cursed me and would thrash me because I wasn't earning like a male member of the family, which was something I was supposed to do.

Around the time when I was in Class 10, a butcher, who was in my village, took me when I was standing aimlessly outside a cinema hall. He must have been around 20 years old and was very good looking so I eagerly accompanied him, unaware of what exactly he wanted. I thought I could boast in the village later on that I had been with him, or use his name for protection. He took me to a place where there were six other men drinking and waiting. They forced me to have sex with all of them. I pleaded them to leave me alone as they were all huge adult men and it would be painful. But they didn't listen to me, and forced sex on me. They beat me when I refused, and at one moment, they used the butcher's knife on me. When they finally let me go, I went home bleeding much to the horror of my family. I told them I had fallen down and injured myself.

My mother knew about this life of mine and she warned me to be careful about contracting diseases.

I have suffered a lot by not being able to be a part of my own family. I paid for my sister's marriage, but my sister's in-laws did not let me visit her. I didn't even attend her marriage. I have done a lot for my sister's and brother's children, who are grown up now. But none of them bother about my whereabouts.

Even my mother would say that she was ashamed of me. She asked me to leave and go elsewhere, but to keep sending her money. I wanted to stay with her, but she was insistent that I go away.

Once I ran away with a boy I had met one night. Till date, I don't know if this is true, but he said he overheard my brother and mother planning to poison me. We went to Coimbatore. He promised to take care of me. I stayed with him and worked in a fabric mill. Around this time, there was an accident in the mill. The mill owners made me sign papers, which I couldn't read. They cheated me of my compensation as the papers had said that I bore the entire responsibility of the accident on myself.

My partner soon left me after the first year for another woman, because of the stigma. I continued to work at the mill for another two years. I would continue to approach other workers for sex, and soon I was fired from my job because of this.

I met someone from my own community who asked me to go along with them. Without hesitating even for a moment, I went with them to Kariappati. They performed a ritual when we arrived and I wore a sari. I was adopted as a child. I stayed with them mostly, and would visit my family over weekends. I would go for collections, where if I earned Rs 100, they would give me Rs.10 to go home. My guru said she would allow me to go for 'nirvana (sex change surgery)' soon, and once she spotted me roaming the streets, she started sending me out for sex work as well.

I have been harassed several times during sex work. Have been to a Police Station too, when I was caught in a raid at a lodge, which was also a brothel. This incident happened in Sivakasi when I was in Class XII. The owner of the lodge came and bailed me out.

The next time was ten years ago in Coimbatore, when two of my clients disappeared after soliciting my services and promising me with Rs.100. Out of nowhere the police appeared, and started thrashing me. They locked me up, and this time no one came to rescue me. But even within the station, I was trying to entice the other detainees.

I was diagnosed as HIV+ five years ago. I was not using protection before that, but ever since my diagnosis, I always make sure to do so. Elders in my community advised me to use condoms several times but panthis did not want to use it or it would break. So I stopped using condoms. I had undergone the tests twice before my diagnosis, and the results came in clear. This further boosted my confidence, and I continued being

reckless. Then I was forced to undergo another test in a Community-Based organisation office's, and I found out I had contracted the virus. I believe I may have contracted it when I was doing sex work in Erode bypass, where most of my clients were lorry drivers. These days I have around 10 clients in a day. I'm ageing and because of my ill health, I can do no more than that. I make about Rs 300 a day from begging, and sometimes people give me as little as Rs 2 or Rs 5 saying that now transgender people get pensions.

My community people feel sorry in front of me, and speak ill of me behind my back. There is a lot of competition for clients, so sometimes they would inform the client about my HIV status. Even the people who administer the ART and the counsellor talk to me in a discriminatory manner.

I have been getting my Oral Anti-Platelet (OAP) medicines for a while now. I live alone in a rented house, where I bring in clients. I get them only after midnight, and keep the lights off in the house, so as to not arouse any suspicions of my landlord or neighbours. I've been doing home-based sex work for almost a decade now. I like men around the ages of 18-25, because they are fresh and passionate. Others drink or do drugs, and force themselves upon me. Till date, I have never stolen anything from a client.

There is a lot of harassment and non-payment from clients. One client was a married man with children. When I refused to have sex without payment, he came back at night with a knife. I managed to push him away. Later he came back to seek forgiveness, saying that we, Aravanis, were people of god, and he should have not tried to kill me. On another occasion, a client who would treat me well lost his cell phone when we were having sex. He must have dropped it somewhere, but he suspected me of stealing it. He beat me up, but I kept insisting I had nothing to do with it. He said he would give me money in return for his phone. Finally, he retraced his steps and found it in the adjoining neighbourhood.

I do not usually wear a sari at home due to fear of eviction. The house owner is already a little suspicious, so I usually go to secluded places to change or to the local CBO office. I prefer staying by myself, as if I stay within the community, they demand that I share my earnings with them or buy alcohol for them.

I do have the bus pass meant for HIV+ people, but I never use it out of fear of discrimination. The card clearly says "HIV positive" which immediately marks me out to the bus conductor. I have been getting my OAP for a while now but there needs to be a home for people like me, where nutritious food is served and medicines (apart from anti-retroviral therapy drugs) are provided for free.

### **Case Story 28**

My name is xxx. I'm from Erode. My parents live in Erode as well. I have an elder brother and a sister who are now married.

I didn't know when I began feeling this way. My mother would often dress me up as a girl in my childhood. She would make me wear make-up for various Thiruvillas (festivals), and I would dance at these festivals. I must have taken a liking to feminine things around that time. As I was young, and young boys would often be dressed as girls and would dance at cultural programs, it didn't bother my family much then. So I knew I was a girl on the inside, but I did not know that I was transgender as well.

When I was 10 years old, I danced at a school function. Four college boys who were in the audience were under the impression that I was a girl and took away my clothes when I was changing after the dance programme. While I was searching desperately for my clothes, they kidnapped me, and drove me to a nearby lake in their Maruti Omni vehicle.

After they reached the spot, I begged them to let go of me, telling them that I was not a girl. Despite discovering that I was a boy dressed a girl they beat me. They asked me to perform oral sex on them. Until then, I had never had any sexual relations with anyone in my life. I did not even know what or how to do anything. I was terrified. They raped me anally and orally, and I began screaming each time as they really hurt me. As they forced themselves on me, I bruised my palm as it repeatedly grazed the ground and my skin peeled off. I don't know at what point I lost consciousness.

I woke up the next day at some point in the morning. I could hear a lot of commotion around me, but I did not know what was happening. I think I was at the spot with my kidnappers until late afternoon. They kicked me on my chest again, and repeatedly raped me. I wanted to just go home.

At some point, villagers including my parents had gathered around me. I believe my friends had informed them the day before, and they had been searching for me. When my mother saw me, she began to cry. She tore off a part of her sari, and covered my body. I had been bitten all over, and there were open wounds on my buttocks.

The villagers rounded up the boys before they could escape, and thrashed them. It came to light that these boys had been keeping an eye on me for the past two years, and they had been planning this for a long time.

I could not even walk. An ambulance was called, and an FIR was registered at the police station. The parents of the boys were summoned and were also beaten up by the villagers.

I was bedridden for an entire month. I could not walk. I could not even go to the bathroom.

Before I knew, my name and details of what had happened to me came out in the papers. The media had descended upon our house, but I refused to speak to them. I couldn't bear the thought of anyone else coming to know what happened to me, or facing the social stigma. There were court hearings scheduled, but I did not attend them for fear of exposing myself to the public eye. Hence we did not even get any compensation.

A year passed this way. I slowly recovered. Everyone came to know about what had happened to me. It was inevitable. When I lay in bed, I felt like my entire life was over. I wondered if I had behaved like a proper boy, whether this would have happened to me. Seeing my photo in the paper depressed me to no end and I tried to commit suicide. I ingested gunpowder, but my friend discovered me and had me admitted to the government hospital.

I stopped studying after Class 8 because in the last three years I face persistent name-calling and sexual harassment. Even girls in my class would tease me.

I realised that I had started feeling sexually attracted to men. I would wear my sister's clothes and dance in them as before, but feel more effeminate. I began soliciting sex from random men this time onwards, and word got around about my activities. After that my parents took me to several temples to cure me.



My mom once saw me having sex with someone in our house when I was 17 years old. After that my parents scolded and threatened me with dire consequences. I told them I couldn't stop myself and that I wanted to be a transgender.

All the Aravanis I met warned me that this would be a tough life, but I wanted that life more than anything else. My guru spoke to my parents saying that I could live like a transgender and make my living by dancing, instead of sex work, but my parents wouldn't accept it. My uncle thrashed me and my parents chased me out of my own house.

I finally fled to Bangalore, where I worked as a vehicle cleaner at the tollbooth. Aravanis would come to the booth, and take me to functions and marriages. This larger community of people adopted me as their own. I heard that my sister was pregnant a few months ago, and I wanted to visit her. But when I returned home, my parents asked me to get out, and never come home again. I've not had any contact with my family since then.

These days I make my living through begging and sex work. I get around Rs 500 - 1000 from begging everyday, while I make the same from sex work. I usually conduct sex work in lodges. It's a risky business, and often some clients don't pay up. Sometimes pickpockets steal my things and money and accost me.

There are a lot of problems from the police or from rowdies when I go to work. But sometimes the police harass me even when I am minding my own business and not even doing sex work. A month ago the police beat me up because they saw me on the streets at 2 AM. They took me away to the police station and made me press the legs and arms of the sub inspector (SI) at the station. They played music and made me dance to it. I wasn't given any food or water, and the SI forced me to have oral sex with him. When initially I refused, he tore off my wig and stripped me. I must have been in the station till 10pm, when finally my guru came and rescued me.

Even within Aravanis, there are some issues, because they compete intensely amongst themselves. They do black magic behind my back especially when I get new customers. I have no savings as of now, because some of my community people constantly force me to buy them food or booze. I am not part of a Jamaat because I am afraid I'll be forced to pay them from my earnings. In fact just before this interview, I got kicked out of my rented house and now have to look for a place to live.

### Case Story 29

My name is xxx. I am 26 years old. I was initially called Shastidaran. I have one younger sister. My parents were agricultural labourers. As my parents were poor, my sister and I were brought up by my *periappa* (father's elder brother) and *periamma* (his wife) as they were relatively well off. They had only one son and they treated us as their own children.

I started feeling something different in me when I was about 11 or 12 years old. I spoke, walked and behaved like girls. My friends noticed this. They started teasing me by calling me '*pottai*' and '*kosaa*' (derogatory terms used for effeminate boys and sometimes for transgenders). At home, I started doing all household chores.

My *periamma* noticed my behaviour but she did not say anything. She became upset when my *periappa* heard about my behaviour from my neighbours. He shouted at her

and sent me warnings through her telling me to change my behaviour. She tried her best to persuade me to change my behaviour. One day I cried and told her that the problem was not with my behaviour. I told her I was created by god like that and pleaded her to accept me as I was.

I could sense that my *periamma* was able to convince my *periappa* step by step. I got actively involved in performing household chores and learned to cook as well. It was easy for me to cook for the five of us. I did not mind going to the public well and fetching water from there. My schoolmates and classmates made fun of me for doing the household chores but I did not mind. My *periamma* and my brother (cousin) liked my cooking. Later my *periappa* also started liking my cooking.

I continued to go school despite all the bullying and teasing from my peer but I did not complain to my parents or to my class teacher. My teachers would have punished the bullies but that would not solve the problems, therefore I kept quiet.

When none of the elders were at home I would dress up like a girl. I would apply talcum powder on my face, use kohl to line my eyes and darken my eyebrows and sometimes wear my *periamma's* blouse and in-skirt. I would then look into the mirror and enjoy seeing myself like this.

When I was in 14 years old, I had seen a few '*aravanis* (transgenders)' at the bus stand going to the 'Koovagam (a festival specially held where Aravanis dress up and celebrate their identity)' festival but never dared to talk to them. I had read news clippings on the 'koovagam' festival. I strongly felt that as long as I was with my family, I could not become a full-fledged aravani so I wanted to move out of the house at the earliest. I wanted to become a woman at any cost. I started talking to them and visiting them clandestinely. They spoke a lot about Mumbai and told me that they often visited the city. After hearing that, I too wanted to visit Mumbai and started pressurising them to take me along. In the beginning they were afraid of backlash from my family members. I assured them that I would not tell anyone at home that they had taken me to Mumbai.

I went on a brief visit for four days. I met many people like me. They took care of my food and accommodation. I was worried about my parents and so I returned home on my own. My parents and relatives were very upset. They scolded me. I told them I had gone to Madras. To my surprise they believed me. I resumed school.

At the age of 15, when I was studying in Class 10, I boldly made up my mind to visit Mumbai along with a group of Aravanis. I had taken Rs 500 from the house and left for Mumbai. Once I reached there, I got involved in sex work and begging. I spent 10 days there. With the money that I had taken, I pierced my ears and nose and bought women's clothes. I decided to return home with my new identity. I reached home late at night so that others could not see me.

My family was shocked when they saw me in *pavadai* (half-saree), wearing ear rings and nose studs. My parents were also present as they had come to my *periappa's* place to discuss about me. My mother cried while my father and *periappa* tried to beat me. I told them very stubbornly that if they did not accept me the way I was, I would leave the house immediately.

There was a lot of chaos and our neighbours woke up because of the noise. Later everyone calmed down. None of them slept. I decided to leave the house. Around 5am the next day, I got ready to leave. My *periamma* approached me and pleaded me to stay,

assuring me that she would convince the men folk. My mother also joined her. So I decided to stay back at home.

I spent the first few days completely inside the house. Then I started going out. My neighbours looked at me in a different way. After a few weeks, the women in my neighbourhood started talking to me and everything became normal. There was no discrimination or stigma practised by my neighbours and I was considered one among them. I stopped going to school then.

Time moved fast. My urge to transform myself into a woman remained intact. The urge was becoming stronger. I was just waiting for the right time. At the age of 18, I moved out of home and joined the community. I did not tell anyone. I reached the nearby town of Viluppuram where there an *aravani* was supporting people like me. I came to know from a newspaper that she was from my village.

She welcomed me and gave a place to stay. She adopted me. There were some others like me who had left home. I spent the first two days with her while the others used to go begging. I told her that I wanted go for '*nirvan* (sex change surgery)' at the earliest. She told me that she would take me to the doctor after a few months and advised me to save money for that. I wanted to contribute for these expenses. Therefore I too joined with the others. I used go begging in the morning and did sex work later in the day. I earned Rs 200 – Rs 300 a day by begging and around Rs 500 through sex work. I gave my guru all the money that I earned.

After 3-4 months, she took me to private doctor from the neighbouring Dindugul district for surgery. The doctor charged around Rs 10, 000. My *guru* took care of me after my surgery. Soon I had problem urinating. It was extremely painful. I was taken once again to the same doctor. This time, he charged me Rs 30, 000. My guru mobilised the operation charges by borrowing form a moneylender. The debt multiplied a lot. Only recently did I repay the money fully.

After the operation, I called my parents and informed them about the surgery. I told them not to worry about me and not search for me either. Once in a while I call them but never give my contact details. Hearing that I had undergone surgery my *periappa* and my father told me not to visit our village but requested me to call them once in a while. I agreed.

Later, my cousin brother somehow found out where I lived and came to meet me. He told me that the date for my sister's marriage had been fixed and asked me to attend the marriage. I refused to avoid unnecessary trouble for my family. The next week, he brought my sister and my *periamma* to meet me. They cried looking at my new 'avatar'.

My sister insisted that I should attend the marriage. Somehow, the news about me reached the bridegroom's family. Fortunately, they wanted to meet me in person and invited me for the marriage. I was so happy to hear that they were ready to accept me. I attended the marriage and helped my father by sharing some of the expenses. I met all my relatives. It was a totally new experience for me.

Since then, I started visiting them regularly. Sometimes I would take my peers too. Now my family members accept me fully and wholeheartedly.

I do not have my own house and I currently live in my Guru's house. I have applied for a free house under an appropriate government scheme. I earn my livelihood by begging, dancing and sex work. In addition, I work as cook as I prepare very good chicken biryani.

I perform dances at temple festivals and in case of deaths as per custom. I charge Rs 5000 per performance.

Out of my earning, I spend around Rs 4000 on food and Rs 2000 for cosmetics and beautification such as visiting a parlour, getting my hair straightened and other such things.

In the mornings, we set out from our homes to nearby towns for begging around 9 am and return home by 3 or 4 pm. We usually eat at home. We often commute by share auto. Our main leisure activities are reading dailies and listening to music.

I occasionally drink. I still have some loan to repay but I am confident of paying off soon. There is no issue of discrimination in my neighbourhood. There are 31 houses in which around 70 aravanis live happily.

Most of my community members experience what is called 'love failure'. I was cheated by three of my lovers. We knew that no one would dare to marry us. We also do not expect or demand. We let the man be with their family and children and at the same time, share their love and affection with us also. I had a long-standing relationship with an auto driver. He used to fetch me whenever I wanted to go to the nearby town and drive me back home. In the beginning we were friends but later turned out to be lovers.

He was the one who proposed to me. I too liked him. We enjoyed for nearly three years. All my neighbours knew him. However, there was pressure from his family for his marriage. He refused to give in. Finally, I only persuaded him to marry the girl his parents had arranged for him. I borrowed money and spent on his marriage. I gifted him a Hero Honda splendour motorcycle worth Rs 60,000. After marriage, he gradually moved away from me. After the delivery of his first child, he stopped visiting me. I was totally disappointed. I had spent a lot of money on him. But what can I do?

To cope with this let-down, I started consuming alcohol. I even thought of committing suicide. Men are selfish. They exploit us for their lust and need. At last they throw us like shit.

After the first failure, I decided not to have an affair anymore. But I could not control myself beyond six months. That is the problem with 'aravanis'. They prefer to have boy friends or partners at any cost although they know that their love will not last long.

This time I fell in love with a married man. He is the father of two children. We had an affair without the knowledge of his wife, hoping that he would be able to convince his wife to accept me in future. I told him clearly that I would not disturb his family but be his second wife. He agreed to everything. I supported him on many occasions when he was in need of money. But all of a sudden his wife found out our relationship and came to my residence with her male relatives.

They beat me and scolded me in public. He too reached the spot and tried his best to protect me from them but could not succeed. His wife threatened to act against me if I pursued him further. Since then, there is no contact between us.

The lifestyle of our community members is different from others. Most of us spend whatever we earn on food and alcohol. A majority of us borrow money when we go for surgery and some attend many clients. We also accept unsafe sex in order to earn money faster so that we can go for our surgery. Those who borrow money from loan sharks are trapped for many years.

### Case Story 30

I am xxx and I am 25 years of age. While I am originally from Madurai, I have been residing in Coimbatore for the last three years. I have studied in a regular school till Class X, and have pursued BA (in Tamil) at Alagappa University through a correspondence course.

I have an elder sister and an elder brother. Both my parents are alive and well. I must have been in Class 6, when my body language and behaviour began to change. I knew I was different, in the sense that I enjoyed doing household work, wearing my sister's clothes and dancing to the songs that came on TV.

I enjoyed participating in dance programmes at school, especially performing solo and dancing to Hindi songs. I even took a month's training in dance and I was often asked to participate because of my effeminacy. I would dress up in a choli skirt, put on a wig, wear earrings that could be clipped to my ears, and began feeling like a girl. The more compliments I received, the more I thought to myself that I was already a girl inside. I felt that if I were to only transform into a woman on the outside, nothing else would make me happier.

In Class 7 I was pinched and teased so much that at least I stopped going to school. My parents scolded me. I finally gave in when I heard that my headmaster had scolded the students for bullying me. However, even after my return, they would call me names and use vulgar words against me.

The next year when I was in Class 8, a new teacher started taking classes for Social Science. During class, when I was reading a lesson he asked me in front of everyone if I was a girl. All my class mates started laughing and I was extremely embarrassed. There were special (extra curricular) classes after school till 4 pm. One day I was asked to stay back by this teacher after class and help in setting the classroom in order after the students had left. After I closed the doors, windows, and organised the classroom, the teacher asked me to go to the staff room with my notebooks. He asked my classmate who had also stayed back to leave. I was hesitant, but went with the teacher. After we entered the staff room, he asked me to perform oral sex on him. When I refused, he tried to assure me that no one else would come to know. I left hurriedly. The next day I shared this with my close friend, who said I was imagining things.

The next week I refused to go to the special class by myself, and asked my friend to stay back. The teacher told him to leave. After my friend left, to my utter horror, the teacher unzipped his pants and took out his genital organ again asking me to perform oral sex on him. I screamed for my friend, who came running and saw what was happening. He then threatened to complain about the teacher, and the teacher tried to explain that he was only trying to dissuade me from such things. But we left immediately.

After that the teacher would single me out in class. He would also tell me to "go sit with the girls", or falsely accuse me of not finishing my homework properly.

Even in Class 9, this same teacher continued teaching and it became unbearable. Soon after, I discontinued school. My friend informed our class teacher about the way this teacher was behaving with me and told her why I was not keen on going to school. She came home to counsel me. She assured me that if such an incident happened again, she would help me complain to the authorities.

While all of this was happening in school, this was drawing my family's attention to all the problems around me. They continued to scold and beat me. Once when I was sleeping, I heard both my parents discussing how to poison me. I still don't know if they knew I was awake and were pretending to discuss it so that I would change my behaviour, or if they were really planning to kill me. At some point, my sister joined them. After listening to what they were planning, I tried to talk them out of it by saying that I was still a child and behaving this way unknowingly. My sister blamed my parents for this, saying that as a child I was dressed in girls' clothes, with makeup. She said this was the reason why I was the way I was.

I wasn't doing any of this intentionally. This was how I was. No one would talk to me on the streets either. Other parents forbade their children from talking to me, thinking I might corrupt them. I used to stay alone at home most of the time. I used to wear my sister's clothes and dance while watching TV.

I ran away from home two days after overhearing my parents talk about poisoning me. I knew an older transgender in town and she gave me the number of another TG in Bombay. I decided to go to Bombay using the Rs700 I had stolen from my family. In Bombay, the other TG was waiting for me at the station. She took me home, gave me women's clothes to wear and helped me pierce my nose. I was sent to beg the next day. I cried at having to beg for a living, but the other TG told me that this was our way of life. If I refused, they said they would take back my clothes and send me home.

Gradually I got used to this way of living and started begging alone. As I became a new person I began to forget about home. I was happy this way for the next five years. As I was good looking, I made money easily. I finally decided to go home. My transgender family gave me some money, new clothes, as well as a mobile phone.

I went back to Madurai sporting shoulder length long hair. The first thing I wanted to do was to see my sister. I went home at midnight, and my dad opened the door. He was unable to recognise me. My mother came to the door and screamed as she recognised me immediately. They started wailing in front of me, and my sister came and stood speechless. I went inside the house, and locked myself in a room.

My mother opened the room, and a few relatives who had been informed barged inside and started beating me up. There were five of my cousins who beat me mercilessly. I started bleeding from wounds in my lip and eyebrow. I still carry those scars. They hit me with an iron rod and broke a bone in my leg. They rummaged through my belongings, threw out my money, saying it was dirty and they didn't want it. I was thrown out of my own house in my nightgown.

I hailed an auto rickshaw, took my clothes and left. The auto driver knew me, and offered to drop me where Aravanis in Madurai lived. I went and stayed with them for two months.

Following someone's advice that it was easier to make money in Bangalore, I went there. In Bangalore, my community initiated me into sex work. After one and a half years of joining the Jamaat, I managed to work hard and saved up about 10 sovereigns worth of jewellery and Rs 50,000 in cash. There used to be constant problems with rowdies there, who wouldn't pay up, who used drugs, who forced us to have sex without condoms, and so on. After my Bangalore stint, I came back to Madurai and underwent nirwana (SRS). I also came into contact with my siblings, and met both my sister and my brother.

I was the one who paid for my sister's marriage with my savings, but I wasn't invited to the wedding due to their fear of stigma. After this my family gradually accepted me as I was. Now I get a part of my father's pension and will get whatever portion of his property that is due to me.

I got married a year ago. My husband is an interior decorator, and we met through a mutual friend. Our courtship lasted for six months, after which we decided to get married in a temple and in the registrar's office. He treats me well and knows about my past. I have stopped sex work and begging as my husband takes care of me now. He does not mind that I will not be able to bear him a child, and my in-laws have also accepted me. Currently, I am searching for a good job.

### **Case Story 31**

My name is xxx and I was born in 1941. I was six years old when I was admitted to school. I studied till only Class 5 because my father died around that time.

I used to dress up like a girl and put flowers in my hair when I felt like it. My neighbours used to harass and tease me. While my mother used to encourage my behaviour, the male members of my family argued against it.

I must have been 12 years old when I accompanied my mother to Salem to a relative's house because my mother had nowhere else to go. We were treated well and my mother started running a grocery store.

I began working in a shop where my monthly wage was just Rs 8. Every time I would go to work, I would wear kajal, flowers in my hair, tight shirts and skirts. I began feeling attracted to men around the age of 13, but I kept these feelings to myself.

Soon, I found employment in a house where I cooked for 10 people for the monthly wage of Rs 50. I would behave like a girl and no one objected. One day I spotted a vendor selling groundnuts who looked like a transgender but I was too shy to approach her. She beckoned me and asked me if I was a transgender. When I said yes, she asked me to accompany her to Salem where there were more of our community members. The next day we went to Salem where there were around 15 transgenders sitting together in a room; some in men's clothes and some in women's clothes. All of them exclaimed that I was too young, but despite this, they called the Jamaat guru who performed a ritual. I was scared by all the commotion and attention, but they asked me to be brave and to choose my "mother". I randomly selected someone from the gathering. She turned out to be a dancer from Dindigul.

They gave me Rs 1.50 and named me Shanti. They dressed me up in a sari and tied my hair in two plaits. After this, I stayed with them and went for dance events at the weekly gathering. I must have been 16 at the time and used to earn Rs 3 a day.

My mother came looking for me (after receiving a letter from me) and started crying after she saw me. Others tried to console my mother, but she said she would accept me only if I changed. She said I could return home only if I come back in a man's attire. My nose was already pierced, and I refused to cut my hair or change my get-up.

But I returned to Erode with her and we started a petty shop. I went for odd jobs and continued dancing at different events. The teasing and harassment never stopped, especially by women. They would laugh at me, and say that I was a man dressed in a woman's clothes. When I was dancing at a festival in Tiruvannamalai, one of the

transgenders there saw me dance and asked me if I would go with her to Bombay. I informed my mother and left with the other Aravanis (transgenders).

I was introduced to other Aravanis in Bombay. They gave us new clothes and travel expenses. I started begging. I would have to give all my money to my Guru. One day I was taken to a brothel, but I did not like it and refused to work there. Soon I went back home to Erode as my mother was not well.

Soon boys started noticing me and approached me for sex. I had a partner, but his friend threatened me and told me to give up my partner and join him instead. Then I met another man when I was around 25 years of age. He said he would look after me. But his friends convinced him to marry another woman. He abandoned me because I was unable to give him an heir. I was heartbroken after this, and went back to Bombay. Upon my return, I got to know that he was married and had a child, but he still tried to take advantage of me. However this time, I rejected his advances.

I have never engaged in sex work in all these years and earned my livelihood only through dancing. I adopted and sheltered many children, and looked after them with my own earnings.

These days', cultural festivals are not held as before. Earlier, we would always be invited to cultural events where we would perform "Karakattam (a dance form)". I started training my daughters (community members) in dance, and I would earn some money from the bookings for the shows.

There is more awareness and there are more opportunities today. In those days, we had to fend for ourselves. In fact, I danced till the age of 51, after which I could not dance anymore. I had a steady partner in those days. He was killed by his rival when I must have been around 40. I was disillusioned after that, and have not had a partner ever since.

Today I lead a community-based organisation (CBO), which has five self-help groups that are engaged in catering services, dancing at cultural festivals and selling clothes among other things. My CBO also runs the Pehachaan project in Erode since the last 1.5 years.

The concept of savings or having bank accounts was also absent in those days, but the vices and needs were less. Nowadays, transgenders fight among themselves. We were revered and praised in those days, and people would eagerly come to see our dances and performances. But now the respect has gone down because of the rampant sex work and fighting. There are also more diseases because of that. The younger transgenders do not respect their elders. They are disobedient and want to rush through everything. Things have changed rapidly within the community.