

# A study on the perceptions of adolescent girls and tribal women regarding the various tribal laws governing them according to the Indian Constitution

## Objectives

1. To identify the target groups, i.e., adolescent girls in schools, colleges and villages; and employed tribal women working in the government sector
2. To personally interview the target groups regarding the various laws and rights:- land, forests and women related
3. To understand and analyze the level of awareness the target groups have regarding the same

Sample size- 37 tribal adolescent girls (including 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and Degree College girls); 18 tribal women employees working in government sector (schools, Anganwadis, ITDA, police station)

Sampling type- Stratified Random Sampling

## Activities in detail

As a part of a survey for the research study- “Perception of tribal adolescent girls and women regarding different constitutional tribal laws”, the social work intern from Rajagiri College of Social Sciences (Autonomous), Kochi and an employee of Dhaatri Resource Centre for Adivasi Women & Children travelled from Hyderabad to a village named Poolabanda in Vishakapatnam district of Andhra Pradesh on 1<sup>st</sup> April night and reached on 2<sup>nd</sup> April at 4:00 pm. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of April, the team with the help of other two staff of Dhaatri visited Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya, a government girls high school in Paderu town and personally interviewed eleven 9<sup>th</sup> class students individually regarding the land, forest and women related laws. The other questions which summed up the survey questionnaire were regarding the current rate of school-dropouts; the reasons for dropping-out; what is their opinion about receiving education; how the laws and rights go hand-in-hand with their day-to-day life etc.

The same evening the team visited Sri Krishna Puram School for girls and the Government Degree College Girls Hostel to seek permission to conduct personal interviews.

On 4<sup>th</sup> April, the team visited Sri Krishna Puram Girls High School and interviewed eleven 9<sup>th</sup> class students, followed by interviewing 4 hostel girls pursuing their 2<sup>nd</sup> year Degree, regarding the same.

On 5<sup>th</sup> April the team visited Kapparamajji and interviewed 3 adolescent girls from the village and later conducted a Focus Group Discussion with 9 women between the ages 25-70 years. The women actively participated in the discussion which was about women's rights over land, property, equal remuneration etc. Though the women instantly said they deserve the rights, they did not want to turn it into practicality and instead accepted to follow the old traditional laws governing the tribals since decades and centuries. On the contrary, the felt-need of the women to have equality in gender and not the same old male-dominant or patriarchal society in decision making and handling the finances of the family is contradicted by the traditional rules that state that the son is the future wealth of a family and only he has the right to get a share of land and property and thus, the women remain silent because they feel they will never own the right even if they question the cultural standards.

From 6<sup>th</sup> April, the team split into two and conducted personal interviews in two different places. One in KGBV school with 2 teachers; with Anganwadi and Primary school teachers in Chintada, Kummarithommu, Arlada, Salugu, Poolabanda etc. Apart from teachers, the team also interviewed an ITDA Coffee Board employee from Kummarithommu and a lady constable working in Paderu Police Station. Another FGD was conducted with 8<sup>th</sup> class students from KGBV School on 8<sup>th</sup> April. The group was not very interactive as the team had to gently persuade the girls to answer or even discuss among themselves.

After the completion of the personal interviews and focus group discussions with the target groups the team returned to Hyderabad on 11<sup>th</sup> April, Wednesday by 12:00 pm.

## Observation and Evaluation

- On a comparative basis the adolescent girls had an idea about Forest Rights Act (FRA) than the working women.
- Neither the women nor the adolescents had a proper knowledge about the tribal laws as passed by the Indian Constitution.
- The working women and the adolescents did not know about the patta passbooks and what documents should be submitted to obtain patta for their land. A handful of them answered the questions.

- The women stated they have the right to own land and property; the right to get educated and work with equal remuneration for equal work, because of factors like gender equality and woman empowerment but do not feel strong enough to fight for their rights.
- Adolescents of Sri Krishna Puram School expressed that they do not feel secure with the behaviour of a male teacher in their school. And since they do not feel comfortable to express their grief with another staff of the school, they dodge him when they see him approaching them.
- The respondents had knowledge about child marriage, the consequences related to early pregnancy, the importance of seeking education etc.
- The working women had a better knowledge of tribal girls and boys living together when they go to study in other cities or also in Paderu town. This turns out to be another reason for dropping out of school and either eloping with the boy or getting pregnant before marriage, apart from when either of the child's parent passes away or there is no one to share the workload or also homesickness while staying in the hostel.

All the above made observations are limited to the number of respondents and their opinions on various questions and not on general grounds. This was a mini-research conducted with limited time and resources that portrays only a small amount of responses which cannot be generalised to the entire tribal women community.