

## **Background Note**

### **Convention on Freedom for Girls**

July 15-16, 2017, Sundarayya Vignana Kendram, Hyderabad

We all know that girls are being discriminated against in the family. Her birth is seen as bad luck and a curse. She continues to do all the household chores, cook, wash utensils, wash clothes, sweep the floor, fetch water, work in the house and in the farm like a machine, subject to deadly monotony. She does not have any respite and does the same work all through her life. And at each stage of her life her discrimination gets intensified, she is exposed to greater violence and abuse; faces untold harm to her bodily integrity and is left exhausted with nothing to look forward to or hope for. This is not a matter of shock or outrage in our society. Their loss of dignity is accepted as if it was normal and would remain like this for ever and ever.

Yet the community in the districts of Ranga Reddy, Vikarabad, Suryapet and Kurnool have shown that such a reality need not be inevitable. It can be changed. Members of Child Rights Protection Forums, gram panchayats, women's groups and youth activists have questioned child marriages and stopped them. Boys who were teasing girls at bus stops and in public spaces have been reprimanded. Many of them have joined the movement in support of girls for gender equality. Truckloads of girls being trafficked for working on cotton and chilli farms are being rescued from child labour and being sent to schools. Local officials, school teachers, policemen have joined the campaign to give girls respect and support their path to education and gender equality.

Girls have been waiting just for this change in the atmosphere. Once they have come to know that they are being discussed and their well-being is a matter of public debate they have begun to assert and fight for their space as equals. They have valiantly fought against their exploitation as child labour and insisted on going to schools. Girls have started to resist child marriage and have said no with firmness, going against their parents, relatives, local opinion makers and claiming their right to education. In fact their determination to free themselves from the clutches of patriarchy and gender discrimination and courage to withstand any pressure on them has given strength to all their defenders to do more. It is so inspiring to see our girls giving a stiff resistance to entrenched power structures anchoring on a ray of hope and nothing more.

It is time that the government understands that supporting girls requires deep commitment going beyond tokenism. Confronting gender discrimination and assertion for equality is to be seen as a process of resolving power relations. It is a political act bound by 'niyat' and moral imperatives.

## **JOIN OUR PROGRAM-FREEDOM FOR GIRLS**

To celebrate the millions of mutinies of these girls and their victories;  
To respond to the call of the girls to put an end to sexual violence, physical violence;  
mental violence; insults and humiliation once and for all;  
To establish a norm against all forms of violence;  
To felicitate all those girls who fought for dignity and freedom;  
To create a new society that respects all individuals as equals without any form of  
discrimination.

**Around 300 adolescent girls from the districts of Ranga Reddy, Vikarabad, Suryapet,  
Jogulamba Gadwal, Nagarkurnool, Hyderabad in Telangana and Kurnool in Andhra  
Pradesh will be participating in the convention.**



### **M V Foundation**

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