**Input to OHCHR study pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 47/8**

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1. **Measures to ensure the elimination of harmful practices amounting to human rights violations related to accusations of witchcraft and ritual attacks**
   1. What measures have been put in place, including legal and policy ones, to ensure the elimination of harmful practices amounting to human rights violations related to accusations of witchcraft and ritual attacks, as well as stigmatization?

In few states of India, a special law against the witchcraft is enacted. But many times, every case of witchcraft accusation is not getting reported/registered because of various reasons. Many times the police are not in favour of registering the case under special law meant for witchcraft case.

* 1. What measures have been undertaken to ensure that no one is deprived of the right to life, liberty or security of person because of religion or belief, and that no one is subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, or arbitrary arrest or detention on the account of accusations of witchcraft and ritual attacks?

If the cases are brought to the notice of activists, then guidance and assistance is given to file a complaint in police station.

* 1. What measures have been put in place to ensure equal access to justice, including effective remedy, as well as psychosocial support, rehabilitation and reintegration of survivors?

The concerned were given a psychological support by the activists (though they are not the counsellor, officially) and recommended to a professional counsellor/psychiatrist.

1. **Accountability**
   1. What measures have been put in place to bring to justice all perpetrators of human rights violations related to accusations of witchcraft and ritual attacks in compliance with applicable international law?

In India, as per my knowledge, attention to international law is not at all given.

* 1. Are there comprehensive accountability frameworks that go beyond criminal justice and courts?

As per my knowledge such frameworks supported by Government is not in existence in India.

* 1. What measures have been put in place to ensure the full, effective and meaningful participation of victims, persons in vulnerable situations, including women, children, persons with disabilities, older persons and persons with albinism, as well as traditional and religious leaders, and faith-based actors in all stages of decision-making processes regarding elaboration and implementation of accountability measures at all levels?

Few organizations are trying to help/assist the victims.

1. **Effective protection of all persons, particularly persons in vulnerable situations, including women, children, persons with disabilities, older persons and persons with albinism**
   1. What kind of measures have been put in place to prevent widespread discrimination, stigma, social exclusion and forced displacement experienced as a result of witchcraft accusations and ritual attacks?

To assist the victim. To listen to their grievances. To guide to reach to police station. To publicise the incidence through newspaper/ electronic media so that people of all societal strata should come to know about the incidence and to develop pressure on police and other governmental investigation agencies. To give temporarily psychological relief by counselling and if required recommending/taking the victim to a psychiatrist doctor/counsellor.

In small/large gatherings/meetings of people/students, the incidences are put forth and discussed to create awareness of the witchcraft issue.

* 1. What kind of measures, including safe shelters, psychosocial support and rehabilitation services, have been undertaken to ensure effective protection of victims of human rights violations rooted in harmful practices related to accusations of witchcraft and ritual attacks?

There is rarely availability of safe shelters to these witchcraft victims. But psychological support temporarily is given by activists and if proper treatment is required then they are referred to medicinal practitioner.

* 1. What kind of initiatives have been organized, focusing on, *inter alia*, gender equality, education, health, housing, livelihood, women’s autonomy and decision-making, community mobilization and awareness raising, to prevent human rights violations rooted in harmful practices related to accusations of witchcraft and ritual attacks, particularly against persons in vulnerable situations, including women, children, persons with disabilities, older persons and persons with albinism?

Publicise the incidence through newspaper/ electronic media so that people of all societal strata should come to know about such incidences.

Developing pressure on police and other governmental investigation agencies. Many times the police are not in favour of registering the case under special law meant for witchcraft case in such situations requesting/guiding police to file the case under special law.

Giving temporarily psychological relief by counselling and if required recommending/taking the victim to a psychiatrist doctor.

* 1. Have you analysed human rights violations rooted in harmful practices related to accusations of witchcraft and ritual attacks, including key drivers, aggravating factors, such as unequal access to resources, poverty and socio-economic situations, climate change, humanitarian settings? If yes, what were the key findings?

Many times, it is observed that a single woman in a family / widow having owned farm land is accused of the witchcraft. So, if a blame is made (generally by the one who is interested in grabbing that land) that ‘she is a witch’ then all villagers boycott her and then she finds difficult to live there.

At certain times because of unusual death of a person in that village, or more deaths or deaths of animals or unhappy incidences, the fingers were raised towards that ‘witch’ stating that all such unpleasant incidences are because of ‘witch’ only and then the public may carry naked parade of witch, beaten by stones or wooden sticks till dead.

Superstition is also an important key factor in such incidences.

1. **Data collection**
   1. Have you collected disaggregated data, based on gender, age, disability, ethnicity, religion etc. about human rights violations and abuses rooted in harmful practices related to accusations of witchcraft and ritual attacks, as well as stigmatization? How such data is collected? Please share available disaggregated data on the phenomenon.

Such data is not collected by us. But few cases are reported by government agencies like National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB). Some times it is separately shown by NCRB whereas some times it is not shown separately.

1. **Challenges and opportunities**
   1. What have been the key challenges to prevent and address human rights violations and abuses rooted in harmful practices related to accusations of witchcraft and ritual attacks, as well as stigmatization?

The blind faith in ‘witchcraft’ needs to be eradicated.

* 1. Have you identified some promising practices in this regard?

To some extent ‘yes’. Few years before we have organised awareness camps for all the stakeholders related with this issue. The village level stakeholders like, *Sarpanch, Police Patil, Gramsevak, Anganwadi* workers*,* teachers etc and a coordination committee was established including our organisational activists and the *tehasil* level government officials and district level government officials. Under this coordination platforms number of awareness programs were organised in large number of places.

* 1. What kind of further action could be undertaken by existing mechanisms at the United Nations for the elimination of harmful practices amounting to human rights violations related to accusations of witchcraft and ritual attacks, as well as stigmatization?

The UN should ask the Govt of India, to frame the policy and enact law against witchcraft and ritual attacks.

To maintain, a proper record of cases registered of this issue and declare the data annually.

To create, shelter homes for the victims at district places.

To make available, free services of the counsellor/psychiatrist for the victims.

To form, district level coordination committees to organise awareness camps.

To impose punishment on police/govt officials if number of cases reported in their jurisdiction is very high. (But then they should not hide the number of cases)

The Govt should assign financial assistance to carry out above mentioned activities.

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