CHAPTER VI

WORK SHOPS

The workshop on Child Sexual Abuse was conducted with the police department of Thrissur district to share knowledge and information on the issue, to sensitize them and to envisage more efficient methods to deal with this problem. The objectives of the workshop were to elicit opinion on the below-mentioned aspects of the issue, arrive at an understanding about the administering of a just and fair investigative procedure and recommend children friendly changes in the existing legal system. The main questions addressed were:

1) What is CSA? Conceptual Definition of Child Sexual Abuse?

2) What they think are the causes and what are the consequences of CSA on the child?

3) How should investigation be conducted?

4) What is the lacuna in the existing legal system?

5) What corrective measures need to be taken?

The researcher began the presentation saying that we are deeply disturbed when our child falls and is hurt. We just cannot imagine our child being sexually abused. But the chances are not rare. Even in Thrissur district hailed as the cultural capital of Kerala, instances are in
plenty and the invisible scourge can attack our children, their friends, our relative's, our neighbour's children at any time.

While introducing CSA, it was emphasized that it is a crime. The crime is committed against the abused, it is not the fault of the abused and nobody has the right to sexually violate a child. Sexual abuse takes place when the child has been kissed, fondled or handled against its will, forced to have sexual intercourse, sexually violated through oral or anal intercourse, forced to view pornography and penetrated with a foreign object.

By sexual assault, men assume power over the most private aspect of a child's life; her body. Sexual assault is an attack against children on a physical, emotional, psychological, moral and social level. Sexual abuse is a stigmatised subject and people do not like to talk about it. Concerted efforts are made to conceal the subject. The researcher tried to convince the participants how crucial an issue CSA is and how necessary it is to talk about it and discuss it. It is dangerous to hide it; it is important to expose it.

Why is it on the Rise?

There are many factors responsible for this. Disintegration of joint family, nuclear family set up, degradation of moral values, consumerist culture, exposure to media, easy access to pornography, lack of love and care within families where children are treated as machineries of production and policies of tourism designed by the state
which indirectly exposes our children to paedophiles exploitation are traced out as causes for this escalating crime.

**What is Sexuality?**

We need to explore what sexuality means and how our concept of sexuality leads to such criminal tendencies against children. Sex refers to female and male physiology whereas gender is a learned quality. Gender corresponds to the roles attributed by society to women and men which we describe as feminine and masculine.

Sexuality refers to a set of ideas about sex. It also refers to the social practices within which sex takes place. These include:

* sexual behaviour or social practices such as monogamy, polygamy, polyandry or celibacy.
* sexual identity- whether we define ourselves as heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual.
* sexual desire
* sexual relation

Sexuality is often considered primarily biological but is not a purely biological phenomenon but a product of the social forces of culture and history. For example, when a woman is raped the focus is on the woman's provocation of man. There is never any questioning of the oppressive forms of sexuality which are upheld by our society.

'Power play’ makes child sexual abuse an acceptable and condoned off crime where the accused goes scot free and the child
leads a life of stigma and scorn. Power play implies the imbalance of power in between the two genders and how power derived from the powerful economic, social and political position yielded by men is employed by them in defining and constructing what sexuality means.

Sexuality being the locus of male power, how useful the notion of consent is for distinguishing between wanted and unwanted sex.

Socialization plays a great role in women’s sexuality especially her passive behaviour. Men are more powerful both physically and in terms of their social power to define what sex is, to initiate and control sexual encounters and to deny women any say or control about the content of sexual encounter.

In India, the need to discuss sexuality seems to emerge more as a tail-piece to the discussion of fertility and fertility control. Sex is a social event and attitudes towards sexuality are shaped by caste/class factors. Among low caste working women, sex is often described as a daily household chore.

There is also a marked difference in the attitudes towards one’s body inculcated in girls and boys. Girls are schooled in a sense of shame from an early age. Boys are also controlled but to a much lesser extent.

Consequences of CSA

As pointed out earlier, this heinous crime affects children at all levels- emotional, intellectual, moral, spiritual, psychological and
social. Fear and guilt is instilled into their minds after being victimized. Sleep disturbance is an instant aftermath. The child may not be performing well academically either. They feel lonely and withdraw into themselves. All these points were made clear to the participants. The persistent question that occupies the children’s mind is ‘What did I do wrong?’

Children do not have control over their own bodies and lives. They constantly battle acute depression and suicidal feelings. They may hate their own bodies. If the abuse is incestuous, they may find it very difficult to adjust to their own families. They may feel abandoned, unprotected, worthless and insecure.

The participants were also briefed about the legal aspect of CSA. There is no specific legislation in India against CSA. It is taken up under section 376, 377, 354 and 509 of the Indian Penal Code which deals with eve-teasing and its aggravated form, sexual assault but the way these provisions have been worded, the complexities of the procedural laws and the type of proof that is required make it very difficult to get the culprit punished.

The morning session was facilitated by Dr. Arun Kishore, Assistant Professor, Medical College. He said that we are all here to share our ideas. He suggested that Pinky Virani’s ‘Bitter Chocolate’ should be read to understand the issue of CSA. He narrated a few cases of which the following is typical:
Rani, a one and a half year old child was brought to the hospital in blood stained clothes. When the doctor examined, he realized that her vagina was torn but the mother was silent as to how it happened. He said that it looks like someone has tried to insert an object. On hearing this mother started weeping. It was really her brother who attempted an intercourse with the child.

Another case was that of an 8 month old child Pushpa. Her father and grandfather were businessmen and only the mother was at home during day time. They had brought a 17 year old male domestic worker to help in the household chores. One day when, the mother went to attend the phone call, she asked the boy to take care of the baby. Meanwhile, someone selling magazines knocked at the door. When she came back after 45 minutes the child was soundly sleeping.

When the grandfather returned for lunch, he went in to see the child as was his usual practice. Sensing something, he smelt the vagina of the child. The boy had masturbated and ejaculated. He slapped that boy and sent him to the village and slapped the mother too.

This can happen in our homes, our relative’s homes. After narrating these incidents, he then invited a discussion on what CSA is, its causes and consequences.

The police started giving their views. No child knows what is CSA. It is committed by known and loved ones. People usually think that it happens only to other children, not mine. So the offence increases. A Circle Inspector cited the case of an 11-12 year old boy
who was abused by some youth using threat and allurement. He disclosed it only when he has had to take confession to the priest before his first communion. He felt terribly guilty that he had committed a sin and suffered from guilt consciousness.

Children do not realize that they are being abused. When the abuse is by close people, they may be apprehensive of even disclosing it to their mothers. As the child is comparatively weak it won’t have the strength to resist. As parents bring up children with a lot of restrictions and they are even not allowed to urinate in the open or touch private parts, children feel curious. Regarding the cause, the CI said that there are some elderly people who move around with this intention in mind but mostly sexual abuse is committed impulsively.

The Doctor intervened to point out some differences. He asked whether the act of exploring each other’s genitals by children of the same age can be labelled as abuse. Is sexual abuse caused by men's high sexual desire and sudden impulse? Power does not merely imply the physical strength that an elderly person has but the authority that he can yield over the child due to his position of trust in the family as an uncle, father or grandfather. These questions generated very lively discussion.

It was pointed out that children’s perspective about sex has changed due to the influence of TV serials, magazines and internet. Teachers reported how children commonly bring pornographic pictures
to school. Along with the discussion on CSA, we also need to talk about the need to prevent the causes of such trends among children.

The lack of sufficient laws to prevent and to deal with sexual offences against children was highlighted. In some families, having small houses children may witness sexual acts of parents. So children become curious and fall prey to sexual acts. Alcoholism also leads to such crimes.

One needs to understand the psychology behind the attraction for children, it was pointed out. Incest is on the rise. Another CI cited the instance of a 65 year old "Ustad" who raped a 12 year old. The doctor leading the discussion raised the question of arriving at a definition of sexual abuse. He mentioned the following instances:

* When a ten year old boy was standing on the road alone, a man passing on the bicycle lifted his moond and exposed his genitals.

* An aunt aged 40 rubs the genitals of her nephew sleeping close to her. He is aroused and semen passes.

* A 16 year old asks a small child to take penis in his mouth.

Then the doctor asked whether all these are instances of sexual abuse? Do we define sexual abuse on the basis of the act or on the basis of the perpetrator's intention? When we say that sexual abuse is committed due to a momentary impulse, is the gravity of the crime reduced?
It was agreed upon that in order to understand the subject, we need to know what proper sex is, in between whom it should take place and whom it should not. There is no agreeable definition. Information is scattered in religious books and mythical stories. Parents and teachers should impart information but they have an orthodox mind. The symbolic story of the mother who warns the little lambs of the treacherous wolf who may attack them in her absence is not imparted correctly. The police only have a limited role and that too after the crime is committed. Prevention is to be done by various agencies at various levels through co-coordinated efforts. We see only a tip of the iceberg. Reported cases are few and far between.

The statistics of Thrissur district was discussed.

1977- 43 women and children were raped
1997-27 children were raped
1998-40 women and 11 children were raped
1999-29 women and 7 children were raped

Marital discord in between parents where children are not given enough love can make children vulnerable to sexual abuse. People should be made conscious about the consequences and the hurt it causes to the child. For example, the Vithura girl’s family has been degraded and humiliated by people. Her future life is shattered. Standing in the parent’s position, we need to understand how frightening this is.
A predominating opinion was that it was circumstances that led to sexual abuse. At present, sexually awareness among children is comparatively more but they do not understand that they are being victimized. It was suggested that workshops should be conducted for children and guardians and information should be conveyed through the media.

Citing an instance of a 16 year old boy with slight mental retardation who was abused by an elderly person aged 60, the doctor said that the parents should not be careless. It was suggested that TV channels like HBO and Fashion Parade which even shows scenes of intercourse should be stopped.

There should be a special court and such criminals should be convicted. Fear of conviction and defamtion that the accused would face in society would reduce the crime rate. A police opined that 90% of us are victims. Many offences and violence takes place in front of children. He questioned as to what is the difference in being sexually abused and being witness to such crimes? Circumstances alone cannot be blamed for sexual abuse. Social, cultural and psychological factors should also be taken into account. It is very difficult to define what sex is. If Children happen to watch parents having sex, children will not realize what is happening but impressions will be formed in their mind. This query was raised by several officials during the course of discussion. He continued that sex education in schools is inevitable. Doctor intervened to say that he has given us various thoughts.
Circumstances are not solely responsible. There is an element of pre-planning. The accused takes advantage of easily available chance.

This comment elicited various responses. An officer said that circumstances were an important factor but it was not the sole factor. Another policeman said that mind was the most important factor. A person may consciously or unconsciously have received various pictures about sex. It may be about proper sex or perverted sex and when he gets favourable circumstances, he uses it. Maturity of the mind is the important component in preventing sexual abuse. Society has prescribed various methods like religious consciousness and educational knowledge to make the mind refined.

Doctor raised a poignant question. Do abusers have a mental problem? The researcher pointed out that thinking of circumstances and other causes, most of the cases of CSA does not happen just once. They are repeated within the family several times. What causes do we trace for such cases where there is an element of pre-planning? Taking the child into confidence, the circumstances are manipulated to suit the abuser.

The researcher continued that though we say that in recent times children have comparatively more sexual knowledge, we should question what type of sexual awareness a child has? What values do the media impart? Pornography creates complete objectification. This is from where the child gets sexual knowledge. In the schools teachers omit information on sex education as they feel embarrassed to discuss.
So, what kind of information is reaching children? Do we have proper channels for spreading information?

While talking about CSA, we quote examples of animals but don't human beings have the rational capacity to discriminate? Is sexual abuse caused only by an impulse in favoured circumstances or is it a product of social, cultural, political and historical forces? Is sexual initiative taken only by men?

Opinions poured forth in reply to the question. A policeman opined that sex is divine. When we talk about power relationships and the control of impulse, we are unnecessarily developing fear and guilt about sex. The sexual urge is different in different people.

Another commented that when we see a person of the opposite sex we feel like making an advance but only when we think about our position and authority in society, we curb our instincts. He felt that Police only have a limited role. He suggested other means for preventing the problem. Developing religious consciousness is good. Mature children should be married soon.

A policeman said that both circumstances and man's character should be taken into account. He narrated an incident when a 4 year old went with her brother to the barber's shop. The barber send the boy away on the pretext of buying cigarettes. Then he placed the girl child on the chair and in the standing position, he abused her. Due to her age, she did not react. When her mother removed her clothes for bathing, she realized and reported to the police. But our society readily
forgets such crimes and absorbs the accused person back. Despite this heinous crime, he has become a party leader and a public figure. He questioned as to how should society treat such a person? He asserted that law should be made stricter.

Another policeman said how a brother abused his own sister after their parent’s death and she was forced to commit suicide. This clearly, he stated revealed how circumstances are responsible for CSA.

A mother approached a policeman to protect her daughter from the sexual abuse by her father. In another case a mother wanted to protect her daughter from father who was fondling the breasts of the daughter in the pretext of bathing her. In Kozhikode, boys are abused. So the policeman opined that male dominance is not the reason behind sexual abuse. He contradicted the earlier opinion that laws alone cannot help. He questioned as to who will report, when father abuses?

A policeman commented that in the past, discussion about CSA was like discussing AIDS or global warming. Now, the truth is recognized and accepted here too. Man is a civilized animal and circumstances stimulate sexual feelings. If child shows interest, it is mistaken. The child will have sexual feelings when stimulated. In sleep, children may enjoy being fondled or stimulated. But when they are awake, they may feel confused as to why only a particular uncle is touching the child like this. Earlier, in the joint family, there always used to be someone to look after the child but at present both are earning members and may have to leave the child at a crèche or they
may find an ayah to look after the child. The child may complain of the ayah's abusive behaviour but mother may not encourage the compliant as they are not ready to suffer the consequences of the ayah leaving the family. In Kerala we always wear masks and everything is hidden. If a man wants to relate to women sexually, there is no outlet in Kerala unlike the situation in Bombay or Delhi where everything is accepted and open.

Another opinion was that both circumstances and mental deformities were the reasons behind child sexual abuse. An important question which needs to be addressed was where sexual education should start.

Awareness imparted at the age of 10 and 15 is different. Should awareness imparted be social or academic? There is need to combine social awareness, educational and cultural awareness. Sex education should be part of educational curriculum.

Doctor again threw open the question if they believed that the perpetrator was mentally ill. He quoted some statistics. Samvada conducted an internationally acclaimed study where 348 girls were interviewed. 47% of the abused were below the age of 10 and abused by one person. 170 were abused by parents, relatives, grandfather and neighbours. Can so many people be mentally ill? Madhyam at Bangalore also conducted a study of students where 47% of the abused were below 10.

One opinion which arose during the discussion was that a sexual compliant is registered only when a third person sees/ is witness
to the fact. The existing social system is the predominating reason. We do not blame the woman's silent consent as it is out of the fear that she will lose her honour. He narrated the case of a minor girl and boy who were caught from a field where they had sexual relation. It seems that they were returning from a festival at the temple and it is the girl who took the initiative. When they were caught, she said that she had been raped. If the child is below 10; it is easy to conquer her.

It was opined that social organizations should raise social consciousness. We should understand the child’s mental state and in which circumstances the child reported, ask only a few questions and ask elder's other details. We should have the mental ability to use existing laws with discrimination. Trial is prolonged for 10-15 years. The victim is punished several times instead of the criminal. There should be forums like family court for redressal of such cases. These cases should be tried with privacy so that the child's future is not affected. We should have procedures with minimum harassment to the victim.

Referring to the police's statement that sexual compliant is made only when a third person sees, said a policeman, is true only in cases where the children are missing. Usually such children come from broken families where the father is an alcoholic. Otherwise, disclosure is made directly to parents. A 3 year old child is withdrawn; a 5 year old has fever constantly after the abuse.
Another policeman opined that CSA cannot be eradicated completely. This is a mental disease necessitating study by Psychiatrists. It should be published so that parents can be careful.

Sexual pleasure in the child is inborn. There can be no informed consent. She does not have the information or knowledge to give consent. Even if she enjoys at that time or experiences arousal, at a later stage when issues of morality crop up and she realizes right and wrong, she feels guilty. Why did I feel sexual pleasure? What did I do wrong? Child feels responsible, traumatic and shattered. She will not form good relationships.

Doctor reiterated that abusers are not mentally ill. Victims can become perpetrators. He/She wonder if they had a role in causing the abuse. The abuse usually is not one act but happens several times. The abuser creates situations by using the power he has on the child and also by issuing threats.

Doctor defined CSA as the act which takes place when an adult, either through circumstances or through position uses a small child for his own gratification. There is misuse of love, respect of a child for your own gratification. Police do not have a role to play in the cure. Let not the cure is worse than the disease. Approach to the child should be sympathetic. In the next session, we are going to see how investigation should be conducted.

The facilitator, talking about laws and investigation procedure said that only when there is penile penetration it is considered to be
grave sexual offence. The gravity of the crime is considered to be less when there is oral, anal or penetration with an object. Section 377 is only dealt in the magistrate's court so the punishment is less. Using body part plus object should be graver offence for e.g. slap with a hand is less grave than offence with a stick. Oral, anal abuse should have equal gravity. If the episode of abuse is repeated several times, it affects children differently yet there is no law for it. Section 354 and 376 is not applied to boys. There should be difference in laws between those where children are abused by strangers and in those where they are abused by family members because the latter is more frightening. Should there be changes in laws for protracted sexual abuse?

How do we apply section 354 for children? How do we define modesty? The gravity of offences under section 509 is less. Is the offence less serious than penetration? In such cases also, the child’s psyche is equally affected. The source of laws is drawn from various International agreements:- International covenants, Immoral Traffic Prevention Act, Juvenile Justice Act, Indian Post office Act and Foreign Contribution Regulation Act. In Father Freddy Peat’s case in which he had kept children in custody and prepared porn films, Advocate Sheila Barse used the last two acts against him.

In Supreme Court ruling of 1983, the judge opines that testimony of the child is most important. Corroborative evidence is not essential. Asking for it is adding insult to injury. WE need not see the victim with suspicion or doubt. Mathura case brought changes in rape law. In camera proceedings were initiated. The disputed point in such
cases is that as there were no injuries the child did not resist and so she had consented to it. In March 2000, there was a Supreme Court ruling saying that lack of injuries does not signify consent. Another issue is that it takes 10-15 years for the case to reach Supreme Court.

The next question which was addressed was that what should the role of police officers be and how should investigation be conducted? What questions should be asked to the child? It should not be terrifying. While recording the child's statement, do we need the assistance of a child specialist/social worker? Who else should be there near the child? We make the child repeat the statement several times. Can we record the child's statement? Where trial should be conducted? Can it be conducted in the child's home? It should be conducted in a friendly atmosphere without uniforms. It is difficult to get report of the forensic lab in time. Should we wait for it or go ahead on the basis of child's statement? If the medical officer is not prepared to give an honest report, can we take action against them? In the morning session, there was an opinion that police role is limited. Strict investigation and speedy procedure by the police will definitely make a difference. Accused will fear that he can be punished if investigation is fair and smooth.

Several opinions were expressed. The abuse may have taken place at the age of 6 or 7 but trial will be conducted when the child is 15. The mental pain increases. Special courts should be formed just like there are juvenile courts for children. The examination is conducted on the basis of child's statement given to the Police. As this is inadmissible a probationary officer should be called while taking down the statement
and his signature obtained in the oral testimony so that the child need not come later.

A question posed was that even in camera proceedings, the cross-examination is conducted in front of the accused without parents or trusted ones. So, how secure is the atmosphere especially if there are many defence lawyers.

The researcher during her interview with police officers got the opinion that if the mother and child come on their own to the police station, the police may feel embarrassed to ask certain questions and the child will feel reservation to speak just after the incident. What changes should be there while preparing the FIR as the case in the court will depend on the FIR.

A suggestion came up that questions should be asked without uniform and in the presence of a woman police officer. There should be a woman advocate for the child. Court will mostly take a decision in favour of the child but cross-examination needs to be there as the accused should also get a fair hearing. The police said that they try to get corroborative evidence to be on the safer side. If there is some lapse then they will suffer more than the accused. They affirmed that unless the system changes, we cannot work honestly.

In Mala, one Harijan woman was dragged to the field and raped but doctor wrote that there was no sign of sexual intercourse. Doctors gave false evidence to save them the trouble of going to court. As the police had committed the mistake of not taking her to the medical
college but to the taluk hospital so he could not protest. In the investigation team, woman SI should be present. Crime should be detached from law and order. Trial should be conducted in special court.

The Public Prosecutor should be a woman advocate. Statement of the girl should be taken down before the police and woman magistrate. The gravity of 509 should be increased. If relatives and authorities are involved, punishment should be graver.

It was pointed out that it is not enough that the APP is a woman but she should be sensitive. The example of the APP in Wadakanchery was pointed out. As in-camera proceedings were not demanded, she found it embarrassing to conduct the case in front of the whole court where people had crowded and her colleagues who teased her.

The High Court advocate facilitated the session on law. When we talk about this issue, we need to think about the existing laws of our country and our outlook. Women and child victims are seen as accused, as prostitutes. The Vithura case was charged as a case of prostitution.

Then the Police Commissioner had a policy that he would return the girl victims to parents. She gave her right address to the police only after several efforts. They realized that a racket is operating behind this and several personalities are involved. In the identification parade, the girl has mental problems when she faced the accused and had to be taken to a psychologist. Hence, a psychologist should be included as part of the investigation team.
In the report, doctors mentioned that she had consented though they need not write this and they told the police officer that she was habituated to it.

It is essential that a cross-section of society including policemen, lawyers and doctors is sensitised. The girl should be desensitised first by showing her photos of the accused several times before the identification parade. The accused may frighten her with gestures which the magistrate may not notice. So a screen should be used where the child would not be seen.

In the Suryanelli case, both the aggressor and victim were taken in the same jeep and aggressor was teasing the girl? In a welfare state like ours, how much justice can we ensure to victims? When the case ends, can we rehabilitate them? They may reach a state where they will have to return to the same profession. What is rehabilitation? Who defines it? By rehabilitation, it is meant that they should enjoy the benefits of life as before.

The facilitator continued that Article 14 ensures equality. In Hindu religion, there is the concept of Ardhnarishwara and in Christian religion, woman is considered the backbone but due to Western influence we lack moral values and see woman as sexual objects. Women are looked down upon in court rooms, by the media, in cinema, in the textbooks where she is given only a conventional role. The bar dominates after 6 pm. in Kerala. When she registers a complaint in the police station, police ask her as to why she travelled that way.
After Vithura case, there was fear among pimps and prostitution was not practiced for 1 or 2 months in Ernakulam. Later, due to court's unnecessary interference and criticism and accused' false rumours, prostitution started again. In Wyanad, there are a large number of unwed mothers but no action is taken by the police. In most cases, aspersions are cast on the chastity of the woman.

A policeman opined that the investigation is prolonged as they cannot give charge sheet without getting the chemical analysis report. There should be a special cell for women and children and result should be given within a month.

Dr. Arun Kishore gave some tips on how to deal with the child and how to question the child victim. Indian Psychiatry says that firstly rapport should be build with the child as she/he must be having a fear of relationships. If we spend 5 to 10 minutes building rapport with the child, we will have comfort in dealing with the child.

The child should be asked about two incidents unrelated to the abuse-some happening in school or some cinema they saw. This is to understand if the child can honestly say things. We should make the child realize that telling the truth is important.

Firstly, there should be free talk about the incident like what did you do and who came home on that day and who was present. Only then specific questions should be asked as to where she/he was touched. Anatomical dolls can be used. A humane approach is essential.
A police officer replied to the advocate that women do not come up with complaints of sexual offence fearing society. Even if accused is hung, the victim will not be left free. He defended the police saying that they are under fire's test. The media, the Human Rights Commission are always observing them.

The advocate replied that she is not making a generalization but in the ice-cream parlour case, the police was corrupted. Police personnel opined that in kidnapping and missing cases, they have to send children home without filing petition due to parents request despite the risk to their positions.

The researcher put forth a suggestion that we can demand a special sitting for pending cases. Can we start a child line for children in distress with the cooperation of the Medical college and Police department?

In the 82nd recommendation to the law commission, it is stated that in cases of CSA, one member of child welfare association should be present while taking down statement. There should be transparency regarding investigation. Identification parade should be conducted by keeping children behind screen. There are provisions in the Juvenile Justice Act to start child line and identify people to work. Street children should also be covered. As a preliminary condition, there should be protective homes for rehabilitation. Social organizations should take up this issue.
Laws should be changed through the assembly. Chemical analysis report should be received soon. There should be a lab in every district for chemical analysis. There should be counselling centers in schools and colleges. Children are not aware of the situations in which they can be abused and they should be told to avoid such circumstances. Classes should be conducted for teachers so that they are aware of this problem and students can approach teachers. Concluding Dr. said that we have seen a duty bound group. We began philosophically and concluded on a practical note.

The workshop in Trivandrum was attended by DYSP’s, CI’s and SI’s of Trivandrum, Pathnamthitta and Kollam districts. DIG Hemachandran asked the police to pay special attention to the workshop as they did not get sufficient information as to how such cases should be handled professionally. AIG Sandhya said that they receive several such cases and they have to estimate which is genuine. They should have a professional approach while dealing with such cases. They should behave with sensitivity towards the victim’s people. Political interference is a major hurdle. She quoted the example of an 18 year old youth who had raped and murdered a 6 year old due to the influence of pornographic films. Dr. Girish made a detailed presentation about CSA. The police mostly opined that circumstances were the cause of CSA. Their main query was to when and how could sex education be imparted to children. They complained about the apathy shown by lady doctors.
Workshops were conducted with college students on the concept of childhood, identity formation, gender, sexuality and CSA. Several group exercises and discussions were used. Students were very co-operative, shared experiences of molestation in public places like the buses. Some students took initiative in preventing CSA on buses.

Several classes were conducted with teenage children. Their main query was to how they could save themselves from molestation on buses and in public places from exhibitionism, would the molesters hurt them if they reacted against molestation in public places.

Classes were conducted with women some of whom broke down sharing the personal experiences of their children. They had been isolated by all neighbours and no one could take an independent stand protecting them. The woman’s main concern was whether it was right to impart sex education at home, how it should be imparted and how they could prevent their children from being sexually abused.

Workshops were included as part of the action research. It was used as a means of imparting information, sharing knowledge and experiences, engendering sensitivity and leading to a change in the attitude.