- It will ensure greater participation by women in the political process. This will provide greater opportunity to more women to gain experience and confidence in managing their own affair.

- Their enhanced legal status will have a direct impact on the general status of women in rural society and their increasing experience and responsibility may be expected to improve women’s keenness and capacity for greater participation in the political process. It will serve as a springboard for participating in Zilla Panchayats, State Assembly and even at Parliament level.

- The existence of such Panchayats will also ensure better coordination of various services and programmes for women at the level of implementation.

- The all women’s Panchayats have been success stories in other states. The networking and pooling of resources have been better among women. The all women’s Panchayats, if successful in Goa, will change the perception of men who are pessimistic about women’s role in such bodies.

- Such establishment will be of immense help in understanding and analyzing the development priorities of women and making a comparative study of success of such Panchayats and co-Panchayats.

4. Devolving more powers to the Panchayat

The 73rd Amendment is an effort to ensure adequate powers and finances to the Panchayats to implement the economic development programme meant for the people. However the Act requires more teeth to make decentralization more effective. There is general grievance that the state government considers the Panchayats as mere instruments for carrying development objectives. There is a dire need that they are considered as autonomous units with political authority and administrative capacity to formulate their own skills and potentials. In the survey conducted, one of the women Sarpanches lamented that the position of the Sarpanch was degraded to only issuing water connections and income certificates. She felt that even the Secretary of the Panchayat enjoyed more powers than the Sarpanch. She said that if the situation did not change, she would not contest elections again.
One of the major problem faced by most of the Panchayats is the inadequate finance. The functions of the Panchayats included in Schedule I of the Goa Panchayati Raj Act, 1994 comprise of all the 29 items specified under Schedule XI of the Constitution of India. However the resources of the Panchayat are too inadequate to carry out the work entrusted to it. The State Legislature enjoys the power to authorize the Panchayats to levy, collect and appropriate local taxes. The state government is neither willing to give more sources of finance to the Panchayat, nor to give aid to the Panchayat. In fact, the R.D.A (Rural Development Agency) has even stopped some of the schemes like TRYSEM implemented through the Panchayat from Jan.1999. It is necessary that the Panchayats have sufficient finances or they will be 'grass' without 'root'. The Panchayats also suffer from various problems like corruption, lack of transparency, criminality, delays, antagonism between the administrative functionaries and the elected representatives, the political interference from M.L.A and M.P. etc. It is necessary to cleanse these bodies from such defects for its smooth functioning.

Thus spirit of self government cannot come with a stroke of law at the centre. It is slow, steady and a conscious evolution from below. For women to be active participants in this process, what is required is external support for their action, and not external action for their development. The 73rd Amendment has acted as a centripetal force for women. It is heartening to note that one of the women panchas, expressed her desire to contest for legislative assembly, while two other are enthusiastic about contesting for the Zilla Panchayat which will be set up in the state soon. Thus to conclude with Ela Bhatt, founder of SEWA, 'Everywhere in the country we found the women were the most committed proponents of our future. So the Future of the Nation lies in the hands of these women.'

CHAPTER V
WOMEN AS POLITICAL ACTIVISTS

'The agenda for the women's movement in Goa must go far beyond the kitchen and the four walls of the house; women are half the world and most of the world's problems are theirs too.' Albertina Almeida

In any society, women are victims of patriarchy, oppression and violence in varying degree. This has led to coming up of a large number of women's organizations, organized by women, based on the maxim 'women's problems can be best understood by women'. These organizations may have different priorities, ideologies, strategies and goals, yet they share a common assumption about women's oppression. It is necessary to study the role played by women in these organizations. A sizable number of women NGOs have emerged and survived in Goa. This chapter looks at women as activists in these organizations.

Understanding NGOs

The last two decades have seen an unprecedented growth of non-government organizations (NGOs) in India. They have come up mainly due to failure of the government to cater to the basic requirements of the people. The role of NGOs has become varied and complex and its range of activities encompasses a wider perspective. Some NGOs operate on larger arenas, while others function within the localized setting. Some aim charity and are great providers of benefit, while some others are part of larger establishments. NGOs strive to change social, economic and political conditions, to achieve development and social justice, to redistribute power, status and wealth. They monitor the effects of developmental actions of the government, industry or other voluntary agencies, and of people themselves. They strengthen democratic values and institutions and facilitate participation processes. They envision for themselves a watch-dog role, the corrective role and the change-

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agent role and thus are 'Harbingers of silent Revolution'. The role of NGOs can be broadly labeled as developmental, mobilisational and political. NGOs are non-government non-party formations and have no formal affiliation with any political party. They exclude governmental or quasi-governance organizations. In fact many of them came into being as a result of the failure of state-sponsored programmes of development to benefit the poor and disadvantaged. However not all NGOs are hostile to Government. Some prefer to collaborate with the State to implement developmental programmes. Yet some others question the role of State in perpetuating the existing inequality and injustice.

NGOs which operate in a localized setting are now important and contentious actors in the political process. The structure and style of these organizations reflect their challenging ideology, and herein lies their larger significance for contemporary political systems. These groups have certain features:

- The participants are drawn from the underprivileged group, are young and better educated.
- The size and nature of such groups is limited (small and local).
- They are more organized in non-hierarchical pattern rather than in a bureaucratic fashion.
- They do not operate as proxy for the government.
- Though they follow the conventional methods such as petitioning, eliciting public opinion etc, to put forward their demands, however they are aware that their demands are more likely to be noticed if they follow unconventional methods like protests, filing writs etc.
- They are not successful in bringing out large revolutionary changes, yet they possess the capacity to influence the policies of contemporary political system.

3 These roles make impact on three different sectors. The developmental role refers to improving physical quality of life and it aims to effect the design and delivery systems of Government or those organizations, which concern themselves with programmes aimed at raising the physical quality of life. The mobilization role attempts to mobilize the intended beneficiaries of development so that they can influence the government's delivery system or look after their own development. In the political role, the approach is to influence the political system: either its policies, laws and legislation or its processes and performance.
(Source: Bhatt, Anil (1995), 'Voluntary Action In India, Role, Trends and Challenges,' Economic and Political Weekly, 22(April), p.870.)
4 Kothari, Rajni (1986), 'Non-Government Organizations, the State and World Capitalism,' Economic and Political Weekly, 13 (December).
A great diversity exists in the origin, nature, size, character, ideological background, activities, approaches, methods, forms of organizations, techniques and strategies, social support, funding support source etc, but underlying all this variety and divergence, is a 'mission of social transformation'. Today, a large number of NGOs have made headway in India. These include environment protection groups, NGOs for protection against cruelty to animals, developmental NGOs, NGOs that work with women etc.

**Understanding Women's NGOs**

There are a large number of women's organizations all over the world working for the cause of women. They have inter links and communication where information is shared and global action is strengthened. The women NGOs forum held in Beijing in 1995 saw 40,000 women participating in it. It brought to centre stage the perspective of women, their capacities and their views. The patriarchal, hierarchical, and authoritarian nature of most of the organizations gave an impetus to women to organize separately from men. Women were denied positions in higher cadre. They had little or no say in decision-making. Women's issues were never given priority in these organizations. Women's experience as second class workers, as second class citizens, as sex objects, as bearers and rearers of children and so on, led them to challenge the sexual division of labour in the home and the workplace. They questioned the outdated laws. They criticized the reproduction of stereotypic choices for girls and women within the educational system. They identified the discrimination women face at the work place, such as lack of access to male dominated trades, to training, or to promotion.

Women suffer a range of injuries inflicted by living within a social hierarchy based on sex. These includes violation of 'bodily security and .... the social bases of self-respect, the loss of self-esteem associated with having been objectified, marginalized and trivialized in the polity and the culture, the pain of being targeted for sexual and physical violation, and the frustration of being denied economic and political power'. Thus one of the tasks for feminist organizations was to present women as persons whose injuries are recognizable, compensable and remediable. Thus

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5 Bhatt, Anil (1995), op. cit., p.873.
the sense of powerlessness, oppression and exploitation, physical violence, combined with a lack of economic independence caused women to feel the need to organize themselves. These feminist movements revealed to women: a) that there is an existence ‘independent’ of man. b) that physically they need no longer ‘fear’ male domination c) that there is a way out for them from exploitation and oppression which has been their fate for centuries.

**Trends in feminism**

Feminism may be defined as transformative perspective on any question that person can take by looking specially at how something affects women and challenging how gender is socially constructed. The activity thus constituted varies by context, time and place. The older feminist movement which emerged in the late 19th century in Europe, was based on two cardinal principles: (i) personal is political and (ii) sisterhood is powerful. The slogan ‘personal is political’ asserted that the shape of women’s personal lives was not the result of individual choices or the law of nature. The overall direction of women’s lives - their ideas, behaviour and choices, is primarily shaped by the particular way in which a society is structured. It challenged the way the private and public realms are separated. Thus the discrimination against women needed to be seen in the context of existing social and ideological structures. Sisterhood is powerful asserted that womanhood itself formed a basis that united all women. It acknowledged that there is a common character to women’s experience, hence a fundamental bond.

By the late 1970’s these principles came under severe criticism. A section of feminists began to emphasis on ‘difference’ argument rather than equality in treatment. The third world feminists movement which emerged at this time, also challenged the western stand. It is interesting to look at the third world feminist movement. Third world feminism, unlike western feminism, was part of the colonial struggle for independence, which gave them legitimacy and some perks after liberation. Most of these countries gave women voting rights. However, the feminists struggle continues and they have to fight double battles, firstly against the

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patriarchy at home, and secondly against the new economic imperialism of the west. Women in the third world are worst hit, as their societies are impoverished, and because they are women. While western feminists are concerned with equality in political participation, the third world feminists have emphasized liberty from poverty. Thus ‘politics of location’ reflects that women’s experiences are structured by race/ethnicity, region, class, sexuality and so on. It emphasized the need to acknowledge that there are relations of power between women. On one side there are all those who feel the need to associate with other women as woman, as they have something to win by doing so, and on the other hand are those who see themselves as having much to lose if they are categorized as women. This is the result of the contradiction women constantly experience between the pressure to be a woman and the pressure not to be one. This conflict is rooted in contradictory interests of race, class, caste, religion and experience. Today feminism is faced with the ‘problem of representativity’, that is who is to speak for whom and on what basis, which has given rise to feminist debate which has led to significant division. However there are certain common assumptions shared by all feminists. (i) It is accepted that gender is social construction that oppresses women more than men. (ii) These constructions are shaped by patriarchy and (iii) women’s experiential knowledge best helps to vision a future non-sexist society.

**Women Organizing in India**

The theoretical maturity and sophistication in the contemporary feminist intellectual tradition helps us in understanding women’s movements in India. The concept of ‘difference’ helps in understanding the complexities and pluralities in which Indian women are placed. Women’s Movement in India has had a long and chequered history in terms of perspectives, issues and ideological trends and also in terms of participation, intensity and form of struggle, public visibility and impact. ‘The women’s movement in India is one of the many burgeoning efforts at assertion of citizen’s claims to participate as equals in the political and development process. This

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places it in a situation of direct confrontation with the forces of conservation and reaction.‘Women’s movements can be defined as those which arise as conscious, organized efforts of groups of women to change their system of economic, cultural, and political inequality. Their efforts often centre around correction and/or replacement of existing social, economic and political institutions in order to serve the needs of their new urgencies and priorities. Thus a movement per se is an effort and the organization is the means used to achieve the specific goals.’ The women’s movement in India has expanded enormously, both in number of women’s organizations as well as range of issues it has addressed. Today there are several thousands of women NGOs working on multiplicity of issues facing women in India – violence, poverty, work, unemployment, property, health, dowry deaths, illiteracy, laws biases against women, rape, lack of access to common property etc. The groups differ in their ideologies, strategies, priorities, mode of organizing etc, yet they share a set of core assumptions about the nature of women’s oppression. However there is no consensus on strategy as one women’s liberation can be another woman’s destruction, but understanding is definitely possible. Suppriya Akerkar giving central place to politics of difference in feminist practice, views for a possibility of plural practice which includes the categories of race, class, ethnicity and sexual strategies. She asserts that the question of difference between women need not become point of immobility, but a focus of solidarity. Thus the splintering of groups is seen as a much needed diversification.

Understanding Women’s NGOs In Goa

Women’s movement in Goa encompasses a sizable number of women’s NGOs in Goa. The major among these are Bailancho Saad, Bailancho Manch, Bailancho Ekvotte, All India Women’s Conference (AIWC), Women Entrepreneur Group (WEG) and Nari Annaya Nirmulan Samiti. The AIWC is the oldest organization, and its branch was set up in Goa in 1962 and one of its major meetings of all India level was held in Goa as far back in 1963. This is a hierarchical organization and has a

written constitution. Its annual membership is Rs. 12/- and life membership is Rs. 250/-. It has its general body meeting twice a year. It raises its own funds. It has its own food centre and runs a working women's hostel in Porvorim. Bailancho Manch was launched in 1993 and has its headquarters in Mapusa. Bailancho Ekvotte functions from Margao and is a hierarchical organization, though elections are not held and its executive body has not been changed for last few years. WEG was formed in 1990 and consists of around 250 members. The president of this organization resides in Bombay and has a say in every thing. The communication mostly takes place on the phone. They organize exhibitions every three months. They have their co-operative in Ponda. They also undertake classes for women in computers, flower making, and assist its members in getting loans from NABARD. The Nari Anyan Nirmulan Samiti, formed in 1992, consist of 22 members. This is a group of rural women living in a small village in Taligao. They were encouraged and assisted by an advocate to form such an organization. They get financial assistance from Project Assistance Sponsorship from a NGO from Rome. (more details could not be extracted as the members could not give any information about sponsorship or its whereabouts. They are contacted by one woman from Verna who hands over funds to the members after specific periods). Bailancho Saad was set up in 1986 and it has shouldered major responsibility of voicing women’s questions in Goa.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NOMENCLATURE</th>
<th>DATE OF FORMATION</th>
<th>ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE</th>
<th>REGISTRATION</th>
<th>MEMBER SHIP</th>
<th>OFFICE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AIWC</td>
<td>1962</td>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>Registered</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Panaji</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bailancho Saad</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>Not registered</td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>Porvorim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bailancho Ekvotte</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>Registered</td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>Margao</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bailancho Manch</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>Not registered</td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>Mapusa</td>
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<tr>
<td>WEG</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>Registered</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nari Anyan Nirmulan Samiti</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>Registered</td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>Taligao</td>
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These organizations have various tasks ahead. Irrespective of their ideological positions, their tasks can be directed at three levels. At one level they are directed to address some situations specifically adverse to women, at the second level the tasks are addressed at the character of Goan society, and at the third level, the forces at work
globally and regionally have to be addressed as Goan society is located in India, which is in the Third world.  

**Bailancho Saad - A Case Study**

This study evaluates the performance of one of the major women's organizations in Goa - *Bailancho Saad* in terms of its structure, functions, activities, decision-making and overall orientation. The aspects examined are:

A) Growth of *Bailancho Saad*

B) Organizational strength in terms of (i) membership, (ii) decision-making process, (iii) financial position.

C) Its areas of concern - (i) women and violence (ii) women and health, and (iii) women and development.

D) The strategies followed by *Bailancho Saad*.

E) Its relationship with the state

The present scheme of analysis depends on qualitative data from secondary sources and primary data collected through field work. It is based on qualitative material collected through interviews of its members, discussions and observations made during its meetings. The leaflets of the organization have been used in assessing the role of the NGO.

**A) Growth of Bailancho Saad**

*Bailancho Saad*, a Goa based women's collective, came into existence on 12th October 1986. It was formed in response to the need for an organization which would deal with women's rights issue. The initiative was taken by group of like minded women who felt that a collective organized effort was required to tackle problems of oppression and exploitation faced by women in Goa. The founders were Sabina Martins, Albertina Almeida, Sushila Mendes, and Bernie D'Souza. After a lot of discussion and debate it was decided to name this organization *Bailancho Saad*, i.e., the Awakening Call of Women. The members had two to three meetings only to decide on the nomenclature for their group. They wanted the nomenclature in local

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15 Martins, Sabina (member of *Bailancho Saad*), Interview’97.
language (Konkani), and which would reflect their goal. Thus Bailancho Saad was derived from Konkani word ‘combecho saad’, meaning cock’s crow at dawn, which signified a call to women to arise against oppression. The initial centre of activities was at Margao. However as the membership began to spread out, it was decided to have three sub units of the group, at Margao, Panaji and Mapusa respectively. It was decided that they would have a joint meeting in Panaji, once a month, and each unit would have to send at least one representative. However, by this time some of the members were married and settled, while some were busy with their careers. Some of them, however, wanting to keep the organization alive and active, kept working for it. Most of them were working or staying in Panaji. Thus, at a later stage the whole focus was shifted to Panaji, which became the central place of the organization. One of the older members felt that this was only a transitional phase, as the collective is spreading out once again. Thus three sub-units of Bailancho Saad have come up, at Tivrem in Ponda, at Margao, and at Pilgao in Bicholim.16

The immediate reason for formation of Bailancho Saad was the Carnival parades which were heavily commercialized. Carnival, is a festival of fun and frolic celebrated in Goa before the Lent season begins. Earlier it was a spontaneous celebration by people. However commercial interests began to intervene. This festival was now used to promote tourism in the state. This had dual effect on Goan society. Firstly, it robbed people of Goa of their moorings by homogenizing culture, and secondly, the commercial Carnival parades and the advertisements about them portrayed women as sex objects. The tourists assumed that women in Goa were available for the asking. Bailancho Saad objected to the vulgarity in the Carnival float parades. It objected instances of gestures, writings, derogatory to women. It protested by having an exhibition in two major towns, Margao and Panjim. It was a small voice then, and very few took cognizance of the protest. That was just the beginning. Today Bailancho Saad is a Goa-based women’s collective striving for a just and humane society where both women and men will walk shoulder to shoulder. It has, for its objectives, the following:

• To collectively understand, and analyze the status and oppression of women in general and women in Goa in particular.

16 Ibid.
• To raise the consciousness of people about women.
• To assist women in gaining confidence to develop their talents and to live their own lives.
• To take up issues relating to women.
• To build solidarity among women at the national and international level.

It believes that changing the attitudes of people is of primary importance in pursuing the above objectives.

B) Organizational Structures

Success of any organization depends on its membership, their attendance at meetings, frequency of meetings, its structures, tenure of office bearers, its finances, and whether or not fees are collected. The size of the organization, in terms of membership as well as asset position, is a conventional measure of strength. Larger the membership, and sounder the financial position can contribute to the strength of the organization. However when we try to assess the success of NGO which is set up for charitable purpose and/or has non-profit objectives, the above criteria may not be applied in toto. Thus for e.g., rather than membership per se, what is more important is the proportion of active members in such NGOs.

(i) Membership- small and informal

Adequate participation by members is a key to the success of women’s organizations. Bailancho Saad has informal membership. It does not have any restriction on membership. It does not have membership form or fee. Any woman who wants to join the collective can do so and attend meetings as and when it is possible. There are no identity cards and no statutory attendance. It does not have any record of its membership. When the members were asked as whom they considered as a member, it was observed they judged the membership in terms of amount of time and work put in for the organization. Commenting on the criteria of membership, one of the older members, said that members could be classified as:

1. Those who are very active and involved in running of things
2. Those who regularly attend the meetings
3. Issue-based membership
4. Area based membership
5. Activities-based membership.
6. Those who are sympathetic with the group.

Another member of the group gave her interpretation of membership. A member was recognized on the basis of her involvement in organization’s activities, the frequency of attending meetings, whether the member ‘was able’ and yet did not come for the meeting, spirit of involvement, degree of commitment, readiness to accept responsibilities and the degree of identification with the organization. Thus the criteria for membership is subjective. The organization has got trapped in the intangible hierarchies of commitments. Some members prefer not to attend meetings, others come only for demonstrations, others may be interested in particular campaigns. Thus it functions on ad-hocism, and is open to whoever want to be part of it and willing to work on the basis of collective decision making. However such an open policy give ample opportunity for anyone who would like to join in. The only qualification that is required is gender. This has attracted women from different walks of life to join this organization. It consists of students, housewives, working women, teachers, journalists, nuns, lawyers, accountants, clerks, etc. This has enriched it with talents, and varied agendas. Study of membership, reflects that they come from middle class families. A genuine lack of caste/political/religious bias and true spirit of cosmopolitanism is something of *Saad* (*Bailancho Saad* is also referred as *Saad*) which needs to be appreciated. One of the members of *Saad*, who is a nun, commenting on the membership said that, she as a nun is religion oriented, however the members of the group were not religion oriented, in fact, some of them did not believe in religion at all, ‘but they were all concerned with humanity, and cared for human beings.’ 17 However, most of the members are working to earn their livelihood and cannot give their full time to the organization’s work. They do not receive any remuneration for the work they do. In fact one of the members said that ‘at a time, they not only spend time, but also money from their own pockets.’ But there are problems too. Such an open door policy has not encouraged a growth of membership. Lack of formal membership has resulted in less sense of identity, responsibility and commitment. It may also be a problem for new women joining it, as they may have to depend on older members or ‘cultivate’ them to be accepted into the group. Due to lack of sufficient membership, many a times cases go without dealing.

17 Sister Alba (member of *Bailancho Saad*), Interview’99.
(ii) Decision making - Non hierarchical

Hierarchies organize all aspects of life. All traditional organizational theory is based on the concept of hierarchy. It does not question whether hierarchies should exist, but emphasize on how they can run more smoothly. However some feminist organizations function without hierarchies. *Bailancho Saad* has rejected hierarchies. In fact, one of the members insisted on the writer to call their group as collective and not an organization, as organization was patriarchal and brought in male dominated values. The member was asked to differentiate between organization and collective. Organization emphasizes on hierarchy with formalized process of functioning. Such a system is likely to ignore human needs and emotions, affecting the involvement of members, and therefore their performance. The member felt that the horizontal system brought members more close and established a friendly bond between them. Their collective is service based and not profit based, and rejecting hierarchies has strengthened group feeling and solidarity. It was decided to critically understand the non-hierarchical functioning of the organization.

*Bailancho Saad* does not have any executive or elective body. All members are involved in decision making. They oppose the belief that there are some people with leadership qualities who ought to carry the responsibility of leading others. They feel that it is unequal and oppressive relationship. Leadership denies others the room to develop their abilities and ideas. *Bailancho Saad* is for total decentralization. Each member is able to relate to others equally as well as assume collective responsibility of leadership. It provides a space for the participation and development of capacities of all women. There are no salaries paid nor there is job hierarchy. It functions as a collective with meetings being held on a fixed day regularly and all decisions are taken collectively on that day. The business is transacted at meetings which all members are free to attend. These meetings are held every Saturday. The writer attended some of these meetings. The average membership for the meeting was four. The members were usually delayed due to preoccupation of their work. The discussions were carried in English or Konkani. Any member volunteered for taking down the minutes. The members sat on the mat on the floor, facing each other. There was no modulation or chairing done by anybody. Agenda for the meeting was decided by the members present. They voluntarily shared responsibility. There was point to point discussion on different matters for consideration and consensus was reached. With the small number of members present it was possible to reach a consensus. Thus the group is open to
listening. At times a matter is postponed if no agreement is reached. For e.g. the organization could not reach to consensus on their stand on the ‘Miss India beauty contest’ which was held in Goa in 1994. However they debated the issue at a later stage and agreed that they would oppose such beauty contests tooth and nail in future. Thus the organization played an important role in stopping the Amitabh Bachchan Corporation Ltd. from holding such a contest in Goa in 1996. When asked about this dual policy, one of the members said, that the organization does not take stand till all members are clear in their minds about the issue and are able to take a stand. However if the matter requires urgent attention, emergency meeting is called. Any member can initiate emergency meeting. They contact each other on phone and inform each other about the meeting. Individual member is free to take decision on her own if the need is felt. In individual cases of rape, dowry, wife battering etc, any member, whoever is approached by the concerned party can proceed with the case without discussing it in the meeting, however, the other members have to be kept informed about the cases dealt with. In the meetings, each member has to brief the case dealt by her and discuss the follow up. Sometimes, if any member come across such case reference she handles it on her own. Also if one member is approached by the aggrieved party, and the member is preoccupied, she suggests to the party, the name of other members or at times she herself requests the other member to handle the case. However this is all based on mutual trust. If the case is complicated, advise may be asked or the case may be discussed in the regular meetings.

Sometimes, a member is given authority, to carry out the task allotted. However this is only temporary, meant for that purpose only. The need for consensus is felt when the organization has to decide its stand on some major issue, issue that affect position of women in general. Thus they apply modified consensus as method of decision-making and a form of organization. They view concept of consensus and efficiency as compatible. The routine decisions of the organization are usually taken by those who have particular skill, knowledge and time. But critical decisions, those that determine the overall path and goals, are retained for the entire membership and
are arrived at by consensus. There are various features of such consensual structures.\textsuperscript{18}

This is very different from decision-making in hierarchies in which critical decisions are made by the few at the top of the organization. All members of the organization discuss matters of policy until a decision acceptable to everyone is reached. Thus it believes that leadership is a process of collective efforts rather than one person who leads others. The members interact, are interested in one another, and negotiate with one another to achieve their goals. They identify issues, study them, make recommendations and act on them. This strengthens the feeling 'not that one is better than other, but that together we are better'. Thus there is no formal acknowledgement of leaders and no encouragement to hierarchical or authoritarian practices. The deliberations are oral and decisions are also taken orally. For the members the sense of fitting into the organization grows stronger as they discover their own capacities. Some offer the capacity to 'get things done' others are best at strategizing while others employ both kinds of skills. There is no rotation of tasks. Thus the administrative structure is non-pyramidal.

\textit{Bailancho Saad} cannot go without criticism. The following are the major shortcomings in the functioning of \textit{Bailancho Saad}:

- The minutes of the meetings are not regularly maintained.
- The major handicap of this organization is the lack of proper membership procedure.

\textsuperscript{18} Features of Consensual Structures are as follows:

- Authority - Authority rests with the collective and not in individual according to her position or rank within the organization as in bureaucratic structures.
- Substantive ethics - In the consensual organization, the rules are minimal and based on the 'substantive ethics' of the situation.
- Social control - Social control is based on something akin to peer pressure. Social control rarely becomes problematic, because of homogeneity of the group.
- Social relations - For the collective, social relations stems from the community ideal. Relations are holistic, personal of value in themselves. In the traditional model, the emphasis is placed on impersonality.
- Recruitment - In the consensual organization, recruitment is based on friendly networks. The concept of advancement is generally not valued, since there is no hierarchy of positions and related rewards.
- Incentive structures - For such organization normative and solidarity incentives are primary and material incentives are secondary.
- Social stratification - The consensual organization strives to be egalitarian
- Differentiation - Division of labour is minimized, particularly with regard to intellectual versus manual work. Jobs and functions are generalized.

Also those with strong personalities (the pushy ones) dominate the group. The writer witnessed that although it appeared that all made the decision it was the informal leaders who were responsible. The older members monopolize the decision making process of the organization. The combination of experience and information which founder members usually have, can sometimes become the basis of hierarchy and power. As Foucault has pointed out, the invisible authority do exist, and does not operate through hierarchical organization as it is charted out. Power comes from everywhere and nowhere.  

Though the members claim that they have sizable membership, the average number of members attending the meetings has been only four.

Ambition, desire for power, knowledge possessed, different perceptions and self centered attitude have made its presence felt in this organization. The organization has not been able to harmoniously synthesize the identity of individual within the group and the autonomous identity of the collective. Individuals have felt rejection by the group, which has led them to disassociate from the group. While at times the need to identify as individual has overpowered the need to identify as member of the collective, which has led some members leave the group and form a new one.

There have been personality problems which have made some women leave this organization. Some of them could not associate with the non-hierarchical nature of the organization, while some others felt the existence of invisible hierarchy and domination. A member of this organization has split and formed another women's organization which is also based on non-hierarchical structures. When asked about this split, one of the older members felt that it was basically a growing up process, and coming up of more such organizations would be encouraging at large. Another member felt that when members cannot identify with the informal functioning of the organization they split, while yet another member felt that it was 'personal and personality problem' which has led to split.

There is presence of subtle, invisible forms of hierarchy. There are some members who can afford to spend more time, take more responsibility and therefore have more access to people and decision making. They have gained a special status,

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without accountability, because of their non-remunerative social work which is based on the notion of altruism. Women with full-time jobs and family responsibilities who may be equally committed, may not have sufficient time at their disposal to intervene or opine on issues or actions. Thus there are certain members who have gained positions of power within the organization without their positions being formalized. And once such individual develop power there is no procedural means of removing them from the position. When the positions are formalized, the organization runs the risk of becoming ‘The Tyranny of structurelessness’.  

There are certain factors which limit the ability of the organization to achieve a non-hierarchical structures.  

- Then there is a group within group who have certain things in common such as education, social class, tastes, language or a political tendency. They are, at the same time friends who share similar ideas and values. This has been both a help and a hindrance to the group. For example work allocation is often swift and easily executed as people are personally close, but this has also lead to the formation of inner circle which has become an elitist force and which often has control of the decision-making.

- Lack of job hierarchy and sharing of work has also lead to problems. Tasks are not completed in time and correspondence is not prompt. There is no system of deadlines. Some members take the specific tasks and do not meet their commitments and eventually the burden falls on others. In such a case, where few

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21 These factors include:

- Time - Consensus-style decision-making takes more time than bureaucratic decision-making. The idea of consensus, in which every member of an organization must agree to a decision, confuses up the picture of long drawn-out sessions in which members never agree. However the issue of time is specific to the issues and circumstances facing the organization.

- Emotional intensity- There is more emotional intensity in the consensual setting. Consensual organization provides face to face communication and consideration of the total need of the individual. As a result, conflict within the organization may exact a much higher personal cost, individuals are held accountable for their actions.

- Non-democratic habits and values - Patterns of domination learned in earlier contact with family, educational institution, and setting which is more bureaucratic, are likely to be repeated within other organizations.

- Environmental constraints - Economic, social and political pressures from outside, and such constrains are more intense for consensual organization often form around issues which run counter to mainstream of the society.

- Individual differences - Differences in attitudes, skills, and personalities of individual members pose a problem for such organisations as such diversities may lead to conflicts.

(Source: Ibid., p. 27-31.)
work and others don’t, everybody having a say in the decision making has led to
annoyance among some members. Also the more interesting jobs are picked up by
the older members, thus leaving the less interesting tasks to others, thereby
reinforcing hierarchy.

- Its composition also points out to another factor. Only few of them are vocal,
resourceful and perform most of the group's administrative work and suggest
programmes. The rest neither have experience nor the time. Such a lopsided
division of work and responsibility has created a situation in which these few have
become the mainstay of the organization and its unofficial leaders, and by virtue of
this, dominate the decision making process. For decision-making to be truly
collective and equal, there is not only need of a common background of skills,
political experience and time, but also respect and value for each other's views.
This would help to overcome the various differences between members and
encourage them to get fully involved in the group and its processes.

(iii) Financial assets

Profitability and viability have been traditionally used as measures of financial
strength. These measures cannot, however, fully explain the strength of such
organizations since these are more welfare-oriented as compared to business
enterprises. Yet some amount of money is necessary for bringing out pamphlets, to
contact officials, getting press releases, police permission etc. The sources of funds
vary from sales, grants, fees, subscription, donation etc.

Donations are accepted by Bailancho Saad from both, individuals and groups.
This may be in form of kind or cash. Thus the furniture, the shelves, clip boards, etc
for the office of Bailancho Saad were donated to them. This organization do accept
small sums from charitable trusts and from individuals. However it is difficult for the
few activists to reach a large number of people who are willing to give small personal
donations. It does not go for outside organizational funding as it feels that such
funding come with strings attached. To maintain its autonomy it lay emphasis on
fund raising efforts. Funds are raised through the holding of charity films shows,
variety concerts or plays. This is not so easy. As it is not easy to sell high-priced
tickets, people are willing to buy once, but not every year. Bailancho Saad volunteers

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22 Almeida, Albertina (member of Saad), Interview '97.
to sell tickets of the dramas and *tiatr* (Local Theatre Groups) at various places in Goa. Once it decided to raise funds by selling the tickets of a *tiatr* staged by local group. Coincidentally, the name of the *tiatr* was also *Bailancho Saad*. However the group gave it up as there were derogatory remarks made against women in this *tiatr*.

*Bailancho Saad* also publishes a newsletter called ‘*Saad*’ once in two months as the free and fearless voice of women. This newsletter is for private circulation only, and there is a minimal charge for it. There is annual contribution made for it from abroad as well. Unlike the souvenirs of other organizations, *Saad* does not have any advertisements or any sponsors for it. It does not have cooking recipes, nor instructions for beauty-care. It is a small leaflet which throw light on some major issues affecting women, women’s experiences and the cases dealt by the organization. *Bailancho Saad* organizes programmes of low budgets. Usually some well-wishers sponsor the space or hall required to organize these programmes. It organized a seminar-cum-workshop in coordination with Centre for Women’s Studies, Goa University on ‘Gender Equality’ on 19th August, 1994. Nineteen colleges participated in this workshop. Similarly, it planned a participatory workshop for rural students of Canacona in coordination with S. S. Angle Higher Secondary at Mashem. Such programmes are organized in various schools in different parts of Goa. The collective has also organized health camps for women in association with the village Panchayats. One such camp was held in Tivrem village in Ponda Taluka.

It also follow other methods of raising finance like selling of yearly planners, dairies, Christmas cards, organizing some fete, exhibitions, putting up its eatable stall in exhibitions, etc. In search for an alternative economic model, it held its first exhibition and sale of products made by women, indigenous, sustainable products of small scale or individual ventures on 15th-17th December 1995. The purpose was to encourage small scale ventures of indigenous, wholesale goods. This was in the wake of the New Economic Policy’s market-economy, which promote big business at the cost of small ventures. *Saad* felt that the ‘NEP fostered and promoted industrial and factory-made commodities of big business, national and international, which pushed out of circulation healthy, wholesome, time-tested goods of a local area, produced by individuals, families, small groups, often traditionally. Such people are a valuable resource. They are self-employed and put no pressure on the very limited jobs in the organized employment sector. They contribute to the economy and preserve and conserve local goods many of which are made from the produce that grows abundantly.
on Goa’s soil and environment.\textsuperscript{23} The exhibition of \textit{Bailancho Saad} consisted of items like Goa-special masalas, coconut oil, vinegar, pickles, handmade letter paper and greeting cards, needle work and kitchen items, fibre items, etc. It also introduced services offered by women, like that of a woman cobbler, potters, women who cane chairs and make furniture, practitioners of alternate health care, etc.

The members also send messages on women issues or those of concern for women and write articles in local dailies. The members conduct surveys and undertake projects individually or in collaboration. These reports are sold by the organization. Thus the organization constituted a fact-finding team to look into ‘Evictions in Goa, Case study of Baina.’

The money thus collected is accounted and deposited in bank in organization’ name. Though all the members are signatories to this account, it is operated by only three members, right from the initiation of the organization. The members of this organization agree that finances are less. The members are not professionals and do not expect any payment for their services rendered. On the other hand there is a tendency where the members spend from their pockets if need be. The organization does not take fees from the clients. However the donations, even in small amount, from the clients do contribute to the finances of the \textit{Saad}. The expenditure of the organization includes celebrating women’s day, organizing campaigns, making posters, etc. It does not have salaried staff. It had staff for the Counseling Centre, but it was sponsored by a Trust from Gujarat. Lack of funds has affected the functioning of the organization. The organization cannot bring out its documentation and publications. They cannot organize programmes of high budget. All these years they had no office to operate from. They operated from one of the member’s personal office. However from August, 1999 the organization has bought an office in Porvorim, which has exhausted a large sum of their finances. The members expressed their willingness to furnish the new office with proper shelves, table, chairs, and a computer would be an additional asset as they can then co-ordinate with other NGOs, at national as well as international level. The members were thankful to their well wishers who are willing to help them for the services they render. Thus people have


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approached the organization and are willing to help the organization in kind and cash. However the members are cautious while accepting such donations as it may encroach upon their autonomy.

The organization is also trying to extract the benefits from the government schemes. One of the members, when interviewed in 1997, had confined in the writer that the members are looking into the possibility of registering a part of their organization, to avail the benefits that follow due to registration. By 1999, a part of the organization was registered under the nomenclature of Alashiro. A separate account is maintained of this registered body, however its members are same as that of Bailancho Saad.

It was observed that the members were keen on reducing their expenditure. Even for the meetings, they did not spend on tea or snacks. Any member voluntarily brought some snacks for others. Also the banners, posters for the campaigns were made by the members themselves.

There are practical difficulties faced by the members due to lack of funds. With meager resources it becomes difficult for the members to arrange a lawyer or temporary accommodation for the victim. In cases like dowry harassment, the belongings of the victim have to be transported from the husband’s place to her mother’s place, which demands bearing of transport cost by the organization. Also swift action may not be possible if there is no sufficient finance. Thus one of the members narrated an incidence as how she was approached by a victim whose husband had deserted her and had left to Karwar to marry for the second time. The member in swift action hired a taxi and traveled from Goa to Karwar and reached at the nick of time and stopped the man from marrying again. In such cases the victim cannot be expected to pay such charges, specially if they come from poor class.

C) Areas of Concern

Bailancho Saad deals with various issues that affect women. The areas of concern are identified under :-

(i) Women and Violence
(ii) Women and health
(iii) Women and Development
(i) **Women and Violence**

Violence against women is an obstacle to the achievement of the objectives of equality, development and peace. ‘Violence against women refers to crimes which are specifically directed at women - rape, sexual harassment, sexual exploitation as in prostitution, sexual abuse by being reduced to objects of gratification as in pornography and domestic violence from beating, torture etc. to inducing death. The nature and forms of violence against women spring from the form of patriarchy - defined broadly as a system of male dominance, legitimated within the family and society through superior rights, privileges, power.' In all societies women are victims of violence, physical psychological and sexual, though its degree and form may vary from society to society. Violence against women impair them from enjoying their fundamental rights.

*Bailancho Saad* believes in some form of change or transformation of society. Its major concern is to check violence against women. It is concerned with rape and wife battering, with divorce, maintenance and child custody, strict implementation of the existing laws, and equal opportunities to work with equal pay. It takes up cases of violence in family - natal as well as marital, dowry, women torture in the custody, cases of women alcoholics, etc.

a) **Dowry deaths**

Dowry deaths is one of the serious forms of violence committed against women. Violence is perpetuated on usually young married women in their marital homes. This takes many forms - beating, torture, verbal abuse, starving, lock up, imposing excessive work burdens, denying money for running the household, sexual abuse etc. Sometimes women are even murdered by burning them alive. However, many such cases of murder gets camouflaged as suicide. The complaints are not registered and even if registered, the culprits are not brought to court and even if brought to the court for trial, rarely convicted. Women’s groups have led intense campaigns against dowry harassment. Various reasons are attributed for increasing rates of dowry deaths: (i) women are devalued and seen as liabilities because they

become housewives instead of earners or producers, (ii) women lack property rights, (iii) consumerism and greed on the part of the boy's parents, and (iv) patriarchal family structure also play important role.

In Goa the scene is not different. In spite of property rights being granted by law to women in Goa, dowry system is prevalent in Goa. As per the survey conducted by Bailancho Manch, in the year 1993 there were 70 cases of women who were burnt to death- 30 of these were of the age of 30 years or below. In 1994 the statistics available up to August showed 39 cases of death due to burning. However not a single case of dowry death is recorded by the Police for the year 1993 or 1994. Thus most of these cases go unregistered. Dowry demands are not only for cash, but also include gold, jewelry, clothes, lavish wedding, consumer items like scooter, refrigerator, television, cupboard, machine, cash needed for the groom’s education or business and other things called as denem, and vojem. Bailancho Saad has campaigned against the dowry system in Goa. It has written several articles in Saad condemning dowry. It has drawn the attention of the police towards the dowry deaths and pressurized them to take immediate steps. It has taken individual cases of dowry harassment. While following up dowry cases, it realized that the Dowry Prohibition Act was not applicable to Goa. So it demanded the extension of the law to Goa, but with amendments so that loop-holes in the law as it applied to the rest of the country could be plugged. The law was extended to Goa, however, without amendments. The Saad has helped harassed women to go to the court for justice.

The legal system is long drawn, time consuming and expensive. Therefore to some extent it has evolved alternate support system, for example, when woman is thrown out of her home by her husband or in-laws, instead of waiting for a court judgement to retrieve her dowry or her belongings of day-to-day use, the Saad activists pay surprise visits to her matrimonial home to collect whichever things the woman wants. Three copies of all items are made. One copy is given to the in-laws, one copy is given to the nearest police station and one is kept in the case-file of the organization. In Pushpa dowry case in Siolim, the father-in-law of the victim charge sheeted the activists on the grounds of theft.

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b) Rape

This is a common crime against women in nearly all parts of the world. Rape is a grossly unreported crime because the stigma is attached to being a victim. There is also occurrence of custodial rape, that is mainly by the police. *Bailancho Saad* views that rape or any sexual assault is an expression of power which keeps girls and women in constant fear, humiliates them, violates them, destroys them physically, emotionally, psychologically, puts restriction on their movement, behaviour, dress. The slogan of *Bailancho Saad* is

‘WE MUST DENY THEM THAT POWER
HELP EMPOWER ALL WOMEN’

The organization’s struggle against rape has been long and consistent one. They feel that rape is expression of power. Its takes place because women are in a vulnerable position. Women get raped during property disputes, to settle scores with the men because women are considered to be properties of men. Women need to be bold, courageous, independent, confident, and assertive. The cases of rape go unreported because of the negative consequences it has on the women. Young girls and women do not come forward to report rapes because fingers are pointed at them rather than the accused. Secondly, going to the Police Station, repeating the story over and over again to convince the Police to register FIR etc., in the presence of predominantly male police is hardly a conducive environment for reporting. Thus few come forward to complain about rape and those few who report, even fewer have their cases actually registered by the Police. *Bailancho Saad* has shown concern about the gang rapes, rape combined with kidnapping, rape combined with theft, and custodial rapes. In 1993 it analyzed the official figures of reported rape cases and the charges in each case. There were 14 cases which were actually registered. In 13 of the cases, the rapist was known to the victim. Thus it refused to believe in myths associated with rape like - rape is committed only by strangers or that it occurs at the spur of the moment. Four of the cases were gang rapes, which reiterated the fact that rape is a well planned, intentional crime. Seven of the rapes were committed in broad daylight, this disapproved the myth that rapes are committed only at nights. *Bailancho Saad* also criticized the lethargic manner in which these cases are dealt with. First of all,

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26 *Leaflet issued by Bailancho Saad on rally organized by it on 18th January, 1996.

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investigations are not thorough, secondly, the complainant is pestered to bring witnesses, thirdly the chemical analysis reports had to be obtained from Mumbai and this took very long time (Goa Medical College-Bambolim has a laboratory to provide such reports, however such cases are given the lowest priority and involves a lot of delay). Bailancho Saad dealt with the Sandra rape case, who is mentally retarded, and who worked as a maid, was raped by her employer. The police insisted that they should produce a certificate to the effect that Sandra was mentally retarded. Sandra was pregnant by then, and the rapist was able to get bail. In another case of gang rape in Vasco, the Police refused to charge-sheet the case on the grounds that woman was of 'loose character', and on the contrary, charge of criminal trespassing was kept on the complainant. Meantime, the rapists were given bail. Saad strongly feel that bail should not be granted to the accused. The organization demands:

1. Gender sensitive police
2. Thorough investigation
3. Full fledge Forensic Laboratory for quick investigation
4. Speedy rape trials
5. Gender sensitive Judiciary
6. Moral support to the victim
7. Stringent punishment to rapists.

Bailancho Saad lobbied on this matter and got the question asked and drew the attention of the Goa Legislative Assembly in March 1993. On 13th August, 1993, it made a petition to the Goa Bench of the Bombay High Court for early disposal of rape cases. The letter read that precious evidence gets lost with the passage of time, as the possible witnesses and the women victims tend to forget relevant details. Besides the woman victim has to live with the trauma. By a letter dated 20th April, 1994, the Saad has been informed by the Special Officer of the High Court at Bombay, Panaji, Goa bench, that the Chief Justice of the Bombay High Court has directed District and Sessions Judges at North and South Goa, to dispose the remaining trials of Sessions Cases (Rape Cases) pending in their respective Courts as expeditiously as possible.

Bailancho Saad organized a rally against rape on 18th January, 1996. It asked the people to lend their voice to the public condemnation of such crimes. It would act as a deterrent to potential rapists. Public condemnation also would strengthen the base for a safe and secure environment. It asked people to conduct/join an awareness campaign against rape in their locality. It assured the public that women’s
organizations in Goa would give helping hand in such matters. It distributed a Leaflet at the rally against rape titled ‘What are you doing against rape?’ Besides this, it has been tackling various rape cases in Goa. The *Saad* activists keep making trips to the police stations to make sure that the cases are charge-sheeted. They monitor the follow-up of these cases. Very often the activists accompany the victim to the court.

c) Obscenity

*Bailancho Saad* strongly targeted the media for obscenity and vulgarity. Media plays an important role in perpetuating the exploitation and oppression of women by depicting women in stereotyped roles, sensationalizing issues pertaining to women, omitting news and dismissing it as not newsworthy. The organization campaigned against the advertisement of MS Cigarettes, subsequently the advertisement as well as the cigarettes were withdrawn. A slide shown at International Tourism Fair at Berlin showing the breast of a woman superimposed on a beach was withdrawn after the protest letters and a delegation of this organization to the Manager of Goa Division of the Department of Tourism, Government of India. *Bailancho Saad* took strong objection to the then Deputy Chief Minister, Dr. Wilfred de Souza’s reported invitation to M/S Amitabh Bachchan Corporation Ltd. to hold the ‘Miss World 1996’ beauty pageant in Goa, in wake of protests in Karnataka. *Saad* saw it as yet another hurried attempt to bring a decadent element of tourism into Goa. The *Saad* decried the move particularly in the wake of its consistent opposition to ‘treating human bodies as consumer products.’ In beauty pageants, it is vested interests that set such standards as they could use in the market to sell their products. *Saad* viewed that standards more often than not, reinforced certain traditional stereotypes about women. They only highlight physical beauty and devalue women’s individuality and intellect, and project women as mindless sex objects, equate them with a commodity and exploit them commercially by vulgar exhibitions of the female figure for promoting products. *Saad* alleged that the primary aim of these contests was to sell their products. To sell these, particularly cosmetics, unrealistic dreams were sold on the vast majority of women. This is clear from the way in which the standards of beauty have been ‘manipulated’ and the trends at present to set standards with an eye on third world markets, *Saad*

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claimed. It refuted the rationale for holding beauty contests in the name of raising funds for charity, in the present case, for spastics in Karnataka, as nothing but a clever move to launder money, akin to the government’s projected rationale of setting up of off-shore casinos to raise funds for the schemes for destitute women and widows. *Saad* strongly objected to the trend of seeking to reinforce certain evils on the pretext of promoting a noble end. It declared its solidarity with women all over the world who have consistently opposed beauty contests on all above counts. It also extended solidarity with the protestors in Bangalore, and threatened to oppose tooth and nail any move to hold the beauty pageant in Goa. It called upon like-minded organizations to gear up for this ‘possible onslaught’. Written representations, delegations, issuing press notes, demonstrations and other methods of protests were employed to make a point. With the pressures mounting from these organizations the beauty pageant was not held in Goa.

d) Alcoholism and family violence

Wife beating is invisible violence as it is hidden in many intimate, intricate and complex layers of the relationship between a husband and wife with overtones of romanticism, sexuality and patriarchy. Wife beating does not even have social recognition in the sense that the neighbours do not interfere nor are the police willing to register such case as they consider it a ‘private matter’. In Goa under the guise of alcoholism, a lot of violence is perpetuated consciously. *Bailancho Saad* led a campaign on this issue. The push came from the women of a small village called Tivrem. The activists with women from Tivrem launched a concerted campaign against alcoholism. They were successful in thwarting the setting up of a bar in this locality. They were also successful in their similar attempt at Cacra, Bambolim. The demands of the *Saad* has been:

- Moratorium on issuing of new licenses for outlets of liquor
- Enforcement of timings for the existing bars
- Non-promotion of liquor

The government assured that no bars would be set in any area without the ‘consent of the people’.

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e) Prostitution

There is alarming increase in prostitution. It is an organized crime, that takes place despite the prevention of Immoral Traffic in Women Act. Poverty make women easy victim. The conditions of prostitute is pitiable. Women rescued from brothels are sent to rescue homes where their fate is just as bad. *Bailancho Saad* time and again has addressed itself to the issue of prostitution, specially in the context of tourism and with reference to its impact on women. In Vasco, at Baina there is growing incidence of prostitution. The population in this Red Light Area is approximately 6,700 including the prostituted women, gharwallis, the bar owners, small time hawkers, port workers, contract labourers and class IV employees of the Municipality. The area covered is of 0.09 square kilometers. The Government of Goa attempted at evictions in the Red Light Area in September, 1997 for three reasons - (i) the need to stop HIV Infection from spreading from Baina to other parts, (ii) the need to clean the area of criminals, especially those involved in prostitution; (iii) the need to recover the beach from the Red Light Area and make it accessible to the other residents of Baina, especially their children. This move of the Government activated the *Saad* to look into the serious consequences of such clean-up operation. It constituted a fact-finding team to look into the legality and other dimensions of these attempts to evict the people living in the Red Light area. The committee found out that in reality the evictions were being carried out in order that the Government may get back its land and then to lease it out for some commercial purpose. Government had made no arrangement for alternative homes and jobs for this evicted families. The investigations revealed that although most of the 3,000 to 4,000 prostituted women were from Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, the people who were profiting most from the sex trade were the local businessmen. *Saad* criticized the highly selective use of law in eviction. It was used to harass and terrorize the victims of trafficking i.e. the prostituted women and those who are living on them. The harassment included arrests, raids and even making their access to the toilets difficult. *Saad* believe that the prostitution trade and trafficking must end. There is the need to end the traffic in women which is a modern form of slavery and yet there is the need to

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30 *Bailancho Saad* refers to the victims of trafficking as prostituted woman and not a prostitute so as to emphasize the fact that she has been forced into the profession, and also because no stigma should be attached to the woman but to the system which allows such a practice.
protect the human rights of the prostituted woman over her body, mind and life. She is a trafficked person who is not a criminal but has suffered as a result of criminal activity. Saad feels that there should be thorough comprehensive plan chalked out to bring the culprits to book and also a comprehensive plan to equip the victims psychologically, emotionally, economically, and socially.

Bailancho Saad is also confronted with situations where children are victims of rape and other forms of sexual exploitation. They deal with complaints of sexual harassment of school children by their teacher. Thus on the one hand their case work throws up individual cases of minors, and on the other hand their campaigns throw up cases of commercial sexual exploitation of children. A member of Bailancho Saad was invited on the Government formed Advisory Committee on child prostitution. Saad suggested that in case of child prostitution, the method of rescuing children should be such that it should not be traumatic to the child. There should be proper rehabilitative methods for the victimized children. Their re-entry into the prostitution web should also be prevented. Saad has been networking at various levels with other organizations like UMED, National Commission for Women on the issue of child abuse. Activists also have tried to impress upon the CID Foreign Branch that it was necessary to ensure stricter surveillance over foreigners residing in Goa in this regard.

(ii) Women and health

Women have the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. The enjoyment of this right is vital to their life and well-being and their ability to participate in all areas of public life. Health is the state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. Women's health involves their emotional, social and physical well-being.

Women have different and unequal opportunities for the protection, promotion and maintenance of their health. Health policies and programs often perpetuate stereotypes and fail to consider socio-economic disparities and other differences

32 'The issue of Sexual Abuse,' (1997), Saad, II (4), Goa: Newsletter of Bailancho Saad.
among women. Various factors like poverty and economic dependence, their experience of violence, negative attitude towards women and girl child, limited power women have over their sexual and reproductive lives, and lack of influence in decision-making have proved to have adverse impact on their health. Besides, inadequate access to safe water, sanitation facilities and fuel supplies, particularly in rural area, and poor housing conditions, all overburden women and their families and have negative impact on their health. The tradition of early marriage which results in early pregnancy and child-bearing pose grave health risks. The social taboos does not give women even the control over her fertility. She is left with little choice in deciding the number of children she is going to have, or what method of contraception she would use. The government further pressurizes women as it targets them as 'the motivated party' for its family planning policies.34 Women workers, specially those in informal sectors have poor working conditions and barely any safe-guards.35 The health problems of women in prostitution remains untackled. Apart from sexually transmitted diseases, there is also fear of AIDS which has led to increasing harassment of sex workers. The nature of their job, work conditions, the timing and social stigma attached are bound to take mental and physical toll of women body.

Woman should have right to make decisions concerning reproduction free from all discrimination, coercion or violence. She has right to be informed and have access to safe, effective, affordable and acceptable methods of family planning of her choice, and right to appropriate health care services. Bailancho Saad strongly opposes the numerous anti-women family planning schemes adopted by the Government. The family planning seemed to have reached even the remotest villages in Goa. The idea that small family is a happy family is sold in the villages. The Department of Health has called this programme as Family Welfare Programme which is meant to encompass Family Planning and Maternal and Child Health Service. But there is no provision of better health facilities and education, what is being advocated is birth control methods. Saad points out that the focus of the family Welfare Program is on reproductive health and not on general health. A marked, disproportionate interest is

34 'Conservatism and Development, Two sides of the Same Coin,' (1994), Saad, 1(3), Goa: Newsletter of Bailancho Saad.
35 In one of the cases dealt by Bailancho Saad, it brought out the reality that 'bonded' labour existed in Goa. There were girls from Tamilnadu who were hired by M/S Rahul Foods. These girls were kept under poor working conditions, they were paid meagre amount of Rs. 2/- per day for peeling prawns and squids in a box weighing about 10 to 15 kg. They were not allowed to go anywhere. They were placed in dingy congested room with no windows.
seen to be given to 'population control'. Saad opined that there should be more emphasis on provision of education and better health facilities then advocacy of birth control measures. Also there is risk factor involved in birth control measures. Women in the third world countries are being used as guinea pigs for the contraceptive trials. Contraindications, possible side effects and long term risks are never explained to the 'acceptor'. Further it is not seen as the hospital's responsibility to follow-up the cases that are subjects for the trial. Besides, the whole scientific nature and human concern of such trials is questionable.

The Saad activists toured few villages in Goa to get the feedback of effect of Family Planning on women. They found out that the laparascopic method not only deprived women of their potential of motherhood in the future but also left them sans post-operative medical care and full of added miseries, repercussions and ill health like backaches, cramps in the upper and lower limbs at a young age of 35-40 years. Bailancho Saad has raised the following questions:

1. Has the Family Planning program eradicated poverty from this villages?
2. Why are the women singled out for family planning?
3. How many more women suffer in silence?
4. Are there any safe alternatives?

The matter has become worse for women with health care shifting increasingly from public to private sector. There are harmful drugs being used during pregnancy, lack of control over advertisements promoting goods which gives false information to consumers, illegal abortions etc, have affected women’s health. Saad organized health camps in villages. These camps gave free medical service and medical advice on family planning to the women. Saad has expressed concern over the insensitive ways of reaching people, and the potential misuse of family planning programme. It has also pointed out the possible medical danger this poses on female population and their offspring in the future. It has also taken the educative task. Posters and exhibitions have been found very effective methods for health communication. Health problems faced by prostituted women and their children have also been of concern to Saad. The plan of action focuses around women’s right over their bodies.

Bailancho Saad has been very much against amniocentesis. The use of amniocentesis to detect the sex of the unborn foetus and to abort it if it is a female has become widespread in the last two decades. Such tests were designed to detect genetic
disease to reduce the risks to the foetus and the mother. Today there is advance test done called as Ultrasonography. However these tests are used to detect the sex of the foetus, and if it is of female foetus, it is aborted. The Regulation of Prenatal Diagnostic Technique Act has been passed but its implementation has been indifferent and no conviction has been made. Bailancho Saad drafted a bill to ban the sex determination tests in the state. For this they took help from organizations like Forum Against Sex Determination and Sex Pre-selection in Mumbai. Saad lobbied to get it introduced in the Assembly. It was introduced. However, before it could be passed at the next Assembly Session, the Government collapsed and with that the efforts of the organization too. The members claim that the proposal for the Central Legislation relied principally on the Goa Bill. Saad created public opinion against these tests and their relationship with female foeticide, participated in public debates etc.

(iii) Women and development

Women have an essential role to play in the development of sustainable and ecologically sound consumption and production patterns. Resource depletion, the degradation of natural systems and dangers of polluting substances are destroying fragile economic systems and displacing communities, especially women, from productive activities. Development needs to be environment friendly. It should emphasize on aspects like food gathering, soil conservation, irrigation, sanitation, coastal zone and marine resource management, land-use planning, forest conservation and community forestry and fisheries. It should enable women's equal access to housing infrastructure, safe water, sustainable and affordable energy technologies such as wind, solar, biomass and other renewable resources.36

The involvement of Bailancho Saad in opposing the carnival parades led them to understand how it was being used to promote tourism in Goa. As a consequence they looked at tourism, and realized that tourism was homogenizing culture and robbing people of their moorings. It questioned about the price people pay and the benefits of the Tourism Industry with a focus on its specific effects on women. Searching for the answers to these questions led it to further question about kind of development envisaged for Goa, going as it were from the effect to the cause. It

36 'Conservatism and Development, Two sides of the Same Coin,' (1994), Saad, 1 (3), Goa: A Newsletter of Bailancho Saad.

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strongly opposes the development model pursued by Government in Goa. It results in
depreciation of traditional occupations and local skills. There is a vast pool of migrant
labour especially women and children which creates problems for both the migrant
labour as well as local people due to non-provision of basic facilities to them. Bonded
labour, prostitution and increasing crimes are the inevitable corollary. *Saad* opposes
the kind of development that either increases women's work or makes it more difficult
and takes local peoples survival system for granted. It emphasizes on that kind of
development which caters to peoples basic needs, is environment sensitive and
sustainable in character, is labour intensive, gender sensitive and involves people in
the decision-making processes. *Saad* struggled against projects which were more
destructive than beneficial. These projects were like Nylon 6,6 Project, The Kaiga
Nuclear Plant, Golf Courses, etc. The methods of struggle varied with different issues.
In case of Nylon 6,6, *Saad* elicited the opinion of the women in the vicinity. In case of
the Kaiga Plant, they coordinated the Anumukti Cycle Yatra in Goa organized by the
people of the Anti-Nuclear Magazine 'Anumukti'. It wrote to the Government to give
information about the project and expressed their fears over the safety of the same. In
year 1993, *Bailancho Saad* took up the issue regarding Government's approval of
setting up of seven golf courses in Goa. The Government had approved in principle
two sites, one at Verna Plateau admeasuring about 6.40 lakh sq. mts. And other at
Naqueri and Quittol villages in Betul, admeasuring about 10.00 lakh sq. mts. The land
for both the golf courses would be acquired by Government under land acquisition
Act, 1894.

*Bailancho Saad* opposed the issue of setting up of the golf courses on the
following grounds:

- It would have major implications on land and community survival. They were
  opposed to land being given up for leisure and pleasure at the cost of community
  survival as these tracts of lands are used for grazing the cattle.

- It would affect the water source. Golf courses involve clearing local plants,
  shrubbery, water retaining grass which would affect seepage of water into the soil.
  Also golf courses require enormous quantity of water to keep the grass green. This
  would result in scarcity of water. This means women walking longer distances to
  fetch water.

- It would have hazardous consequences for health. All the fungicides herbicides,
  pesticides, and soil coagulating agents used by the golf course would pollute the
water and air and the food chain. This would cause serious health hazards. Since traditionally, women have been involved in health care of the family it would increase her work load.

- Setting of golf courses would affect water sources, health, land fertility, etc. It only went to show how Government go in for the kind of development that takes women for granted.

It followed various strategies to protest against the setting up of golf courses. It wrote letters to the Government asking for detailed information with regard to sites, area of land to be acquired, water requirements, copy of environmental impact assessment report as regard setting up of golf courses. It organized various meetings for the people specially in areas where the courses were to be set up. It made people aware of the side effects of such golf courses. It educated people about the possible health hazards, depletion of water sources, and loss of vast lands. It gave press notes and also wrote informative articles on this issue. It came out with a pamphlet titled 'In The Name Of Game: The Stakes in Golf'. In cooperation with other women's organization it submitted a joint memorandum to the Minister of Tourism opposing the setting of golf courses. The Government decided to keep the issue under abeyance. These projects would have long term adverse effects on the culture, environment and people of Goa. Women would have to pay a heavy price. Saad pressed for:

a) Women to be part of the decision making process
b) All relevant information to be made available to the people so that people can make informed choices
c) Projects should be environment-friendly, labour intensive and gender-sensitive.

E) Strategies of Bailancho Saad

The success of any organization depends on the strategies it adopts. It is interesting to study the strategies followed by Bailancho Saad, which have varied with time and circumstance.

- Mass Campaigning: In matters which requires larger public attention, Saad has often taken up to mass campaigning. It has organized rallies, morchas, and coined catchy slogans. It makes posters and distribute leaflets to elicit public opinion. Thus it organized a rally to bring to the notice of the people the increasing figures of rapes in Goa.
They organize programmes, seminar-cum-workshops to make students aware of gender equality and child exploitation. They do this in coordination with the educational institutions in Goa.

They take the opportunity to express their views at various fora, when invited for talks/sessions. They have represented their organization at various conferences held, within as well as outside, India. One of the members represented Goa at the NGO meeting at the world conference in Beijing in 1995.

They organize training programmes and health camps with the help of local bodies like the BDO, or village Panchayat. They organize training programme for the police and the priests making them aware of women’s issues.

They mobilize the village women by touring these villages on foot, and having informal meetings with the rural women. This strategy was highly successful in Tivrem village where women asserted themselves to fight against the problem of alcohol.

The activists lobby at the state legislative assembly, where there is a need of new law or repealing the earlier one. Thus they got the question asked in the house with regard to increasing violence against women in Goa. It got the bill introduced on the floor of the house, with regard banning of amniocentesis test in Goa. It got the rape laws amended and has also been able to get a Commission for women established in Goa.

Time and again, they file writ petitions in the High Court. Thus they petitioned the court for early disposal of rape cases. In another case, they petitioned against reservation of posts of police officers for males.

They often protest through letters and sending delegations. Thus they sent a delegation to the manager of Goa Division of the Department of Tourism, Government of India and got the advertisement withdrawn which showed the breast of women superimposed on a beach of Goa.

Writing in the local dailies has been a very effective way of drawing the public attention. Besides they bring out their own leaflet which is available for token amount.

They have also followed strategy of door-to-door campaigning in certain matters. They went from house to house, which would be affected by project Nylon 6,6, to make them aware of the harmful effect of toxic residues.
They conduct surveys if need be. They conducted a survey in Panaji city to assess the number of doctors who conducted amniocentesis test. The data collected assisted them to have evidence to get the bill to ban amniocentesis put on the floor of the legislative assembly. They also work on projects.

They have even resorted to satyagrahas. They organized a salt satyagraha on Panaji Bus stand on 15th August, 1997, to oppose the Government's move to ban the local salt pans. They made small packets of locally manufactured salt and sold it for a token price. They distributed pamphlets educating the people about the harmful effects of such ban which would leave large number of people in Goa jobless.

They work in association with other organizations to settle some important issues. They coordinated with UMED and National Commission for Women on the issue of child abuse. They worked with SOCO Trust, a socio-legal organization from Madhurai, and Aadhar, a Goa-based socio-legal forum to release the bonded labour from the M/s Rahul Foods Company.

They also demand representation on the committees formulated by the government. Today, Bailancho Saad is a part of the coordinating team of the women's cell. One of its members was appointed on the Drafting Committee for the State Women's Police and the Drafting Committee for the State Women's Commission Bill. One member is appointed on Goa State Women's Commission.

The activists, sometimes, bombard the government offices or Minister's cabins if they feel that a particular matter is purposely ignored by the government.

In cases, which are of individual nature, they resort to strategies like legal counseling, mediation, registering cases at police stations and 'giving fire brigade help to the needy woman'.

Thus a look at the various strategies followed by the organization reflects that it has been innovative and flexible for experimentation. As one the members put it 'the organization has evolved as per the need of circumstances, which has enhanced its sustaining capacities.'

F) Relationship with the State

'The relationship of women's movement with the state has been a tight-rope walk between protesting against its patriarchal and repressive aspects and yet seeking
more space for women in terms of legal, juridical and rehabilitative support structure.\(^{37}\) The relationship of *Saad* with State has been one of 'love and hate'. This relationship has to be understood over a period of time. In the initial years State was not at all responsive to the demands of this organization. It was looked down as group of man-hating women. However this opinion has changed today. The constant protests against and demands for certain legal reforms like amendments in rape laws and dowry laws, banning amniocentesis etc. have forced the State to recognize the need to devote attention to women issues. In fact the State has been consulting the members on the formulation of policies and legislation. Time and again members have demanded a voice on committees and commissions to investigate, guide and monitor. They have been cautious about co-optation and are adamant that their dissidence should go on record. They have questioned, exposed and combated lip-service paid by the state to women's issues. However there are certain areas where the State has continued to reinforce inequality between the sexes. The gender blind attitude of the Police and the Judiciary has often led to suspicion and hostility in the relationship. Their experience of working with the authorities has not always been positive. *Saad* activist often feel that police has been shielding the culprits and are more concerned about protecting the politicians rather than the common people. They criticized the engagement of police in the 'Bandobast' of the politicians, and are critical about the legal procedures which are enough to stop anybody from approaching the police-station. The concerned authorities are not always willing to meet the activists. In such times the activists have followed the strategy of bombarding in their offices without prior appointments.

Half measures and lack of political will on part of government for implementation of programs has been frustrating. Thus when *Saad* asked for women cell in Goa, Goa Government was quick to reply that there were no cases of violence on women in Goa, and government did not have finances to set up such cell. Thus the relationship has been cooperative or conflicting depending on the issues. There has been cooperation on welfarist issues but conflict on the issues of rights. The organization has been able to explore the space provided by the State on the questions of legal reforms. However, the activists have not followed this up with persistent

lobbying. Not always they have made a consistent, hard hitting critical assault on the state and its policies. Also the battle requires to be fought at community and family level. The activists can utilize the institution of State to contest against the community and family restrictions imposed on women. They should develop strategies which can impact the family, community and market arenas. It is no longer sufficient to address only the State. Thus Saad has to develop its strategy based on priority of working with people, widening its base, and linking with other groups working on similar issues.

**Observations:**

- Today Bailancho Saad has become a major force which cannot be reckoned with. In spite of being an unregistered body, with few members, it has been able to make a place for itself. It has reacted with intensity to various problems faced by women in Goa. It is a non-governmental body and does not take any institutional financial help. It is a voluntary, active, independent women’s collective. Rejection to traditional structures helps it in making quick decisions and taking swift actions, and to produce creative and innovative results. In observing this group, one receives a sense of a relaxed, informal atmosphere. The members are from different professions, some are lawyers, teachers, accountant, however the professional identities are not considered. Instead the heterogeneity has helped in building up strategies in achieving its goals. This group is fairly homogeneous in demographic aspects such as age (mid 30s to 40s) and level of education(high). Also the small size of the group has enhanced the group’s ability to function with consensus. One advantage of small size is that they get to know each other better than they would have otherwise. Members are considerate towards each and have clarity of goals. This helps in reaching at consensus. Small size and local character throws up the issues of identity and their position in general scheme of things.

- However lack of formal membership has resulted in a weak sense of identity, responsibility and commitment. Further, the organization has got trapped in the intangible hierarchies of commitments. The decision-making process of the organization is non-hierarchical. However on an average only four members are present for the meetings. Also those with strong personalities dominate the decisions. The older members monopolize the organization. Lack of job hierarchy
has resulted in tasks not completed in time. The organization has no system of deadlines.

- The kind of intervention it makes varies with each individual case, from helping women to take decisions by placing the pros and cons of various steps, to moral support, to general counseling, to legal counseling, to mediation, to registering cases at Police Station and follow up. It has been more sensitive to legal aspects of women’s issues. It basically tries and seeks that law is just to women. When it comes to common problems, they take to mass campaigns, elicit public opinion, bring out publication, write letters to government to ask for information, organize rallies, morchas, hold exhibitions, make posters, write protest letters, take delegations to the authorities etc. It has also lobbied on certain matters to get it introduced in the Assembly. It has organized programmes like Seminars on specific issues, Programs in schools, higher secondary, colleges etc on invitations, Talks/Sessions at various fora, Poster exhibitions, overnight workshops, meetings in villages, Orientation programmes for police and priests, etc. The small size of the organization has helped it to evolve different strategies according to the issues and circumstances.

- *Bailancho Saad* has not been successful in reaching women at grass root level. The four major defects in the organization are: Firstly, the small size, local nature and few active members lack impact and the area of influence gets limited. It has failed to attract more members. This is because of its elite composition. Secondly, the activists are not professionals and have to work to earn their own living, thus they cannot devote their time and energy to the fullest extent for the cause of women. Thirdly though its membership is open to all interested women, it has not grown beyond a basic core. This may be to foster and protect personal networks, their inability to resolve internal conflicts, problem of integrating new members, and the existence of the politics of identity. Thus differences between members has become more apparent and eventually lead some members to leave the group, rather than overcome those differences. The group has been able to keep itself small and comfortable by pushing out those who disagreed. Fourthly, lack of office premises is confusing for the women in distress (from June 1999, they have purchased an office, however it is open only on Saturdays in the afternoons when
the members meet). Lack of hierarchy is further confusing for the people as they cannot decide whom to approach.

- *Bailancho Saad* has been more successful in cases which are not totally gender specific, for e.g., issue of golf course in Goa. This is because such issue of general concern do not demand much human resource, finances or commitments. Also it has received the assistance of other organizations in such cases. However a detail study of cases tackled by *Saad* which are gender specific and individual in nature shows that they are still pending in the court. The maximum what is done by the *Saad* activists is to get the case registered. Very little effort is seen with regard to the follow up of these cases. In fact one of the important members of the *Saad* even confessed that lack of time and resources on their part is causing them to take up issues of general nature and avoiding individual cases. Also they have already registered (in August,1999) a wing of the organization under the nomenclature of *Alashiro* to extract the benefit of some schemes of the Government. The members of this wing are same as those of *Bailancho Saad*. However a separate trust is created for this wing.

- In spite of its short comings, *Bailancho Saad* has gone a long way in changing perceptions in the society and has lead to greater gender debates. State gives due recognition to the organization, and its members are invited on government committees and commissions. It has successfully lobbied and got gender questions raised in the state legislative assembly, and are given due recognition by police and press. However it is no longer sufficient for *Bailancho Saad* to address only the State, but should also address the arenas of the market, family and community. To conclude, Bailancho Saad is a growing organization, and is a ray of hope for women in Goa.