CHAPTER SEVEN

SAAD (THE AWAKENING CALL):
Priorities and Responses

In this chapter the work of Bailancho Saad, the issues it has been involved with as well as the views it holds on those issues, will be discussed. The priorities and responses of the organisation will be drawn from the newsletter called SAAD that the organisation publishes as well as its diaries that exist as records. All issues ever printed, from the earliest issue, which was published in 1989, to the last issue till date, which is Volume III – Number 6: In the Wake of Communal Violence (not dated), are analysed below. Why is Newsletter? …., is discussed in item 7.2 .These newsletters were circulated amongst members and supporters of the organisation and had a suggested contribution of Rs 10.00. This contribution has increased over the years and SAAD is now priced at Rs 20.00. The organisation has also brought out a wall calendar for several years since 1990. A priced diary also formed part of the organisation’s source of fund collection for several years. The diary contains quotations and illustrations highlighting issues that the organisation has been involved with or concerned about.

7.1. 1989: Women’s Day Special

This very first, 16-page issue was brought out to celebrate Women’s Day in 1989 and was titled Women’s Day Special. This issue of the SAAD, (which had a collection of articles on a range of topics), is particularly interesting as it gives a reader an insight into not only what the organisation has committed to do, but also what issues they have been involved with in the last few years of their existence, that is since 1986. It contains a write-up on the origin of the internationally celebrated ‘women’s day’ explaining why every year all over the world the revolt of the women textile workers that took place in the USA on 8 March 1857 was commemorated on this day as a mark of solidarity for women’s struggle for equality.
The objectives of the organisation as mentioned in 6.1 were outlined and work of the organisation was described here as a ‘challenging journey’ (SAAD 1: 1). There was a mention of the range of its interventions from ‘taking up individual cases of harassment’ to ‘public campaigns to highlight discrimination against women’. The organisation’s vision for the day when ‘women and men will march shoulder to shoulder in a humane and egalitarian society’ was also articulated.

This issue contained a story about a case of domestic violence, and mentioned how the popular notion that crime is relegated to dark streets is just a myth and how increasingly the home is becoming a site for violence which exists irrespective of class, caste, education levels, colour or race. As early as 1989, the organisation’s experience was that violence was not necessarily a consequence of alcoholism or psychological depression, but a larger outcome of a patriarchal mindset. Its demands were for stringent laws to punish offenders, for shelter and protection for women victims who had the courage to protest, for employment opportunities and education for women as well as mass awareness campaigns for women empower women to come out to talk about their problems.

This issue of SAAD carried a summary of the provisions of Section 498A of the Indian Penal Code, which defined ‘cruelty’ as a cognizable offence and an article on the organisations experience with the police, Our tryst with the police, which talks of the lackadaisical attitude of police personnel and the poor handling of cases of violence against women. Interestingly, through the article the issue of the organisations involvement, way back in 1988, against sexist advertisements was noted. The article also brought to light the fact that the organisation’s complaint against the advertisements were replied to by the police department saying that the advertisements have been examined and two of them were not found to be derogatory to women. The basis of this comment was not given, however. The relationship of Bailancho Saad with the police at this point was confrontational. This relationship has transformed over the years, as we will see in the next chapter. The same article also makes a mention of the organisation’s demand for a ‘Crimes Against Women’s Cell’ or a special cell to take up cases of crimes against women and also states the need for regular refresher courses for police personnel on the law and how to create a better environment for women victims.
Another article in this newsletter was an interview with a woman who was a victim of gang rape. The way the story was narrated speaks of the organisation’s early years of case handling, where details of the case did not conceal the identity of the victim, but graphically narrated the pathetic and vulnerable plight of a poor pregnant widow who was a survivor of gang rape. This was followed with a few tips to women on how to protect and defend oneself against a violator and what one can do in case one is a victim of sexual harassment, molestation or rape such as (a) early reporting to a police station, (b) the importance of not washing or bathing, as it destroys evidence, (c) the importance of a medical examination, and (d) a warning that the procedure is psychologically testing and the process of justice long drawn out. This ended with a quote ‘No woman is safe till all women are safe’.

A few clippings of the organisation’s notes in the press were put together in a collage. Some observations from the clipping are:

1. The banner used for the organisation was written in Devnagiri script while other placards were in English. This was in the early years when the organisation was conscious not to let the image be urban, educated, English speaking.

2. In the press note condemning the increasing crimes against women following the rape in Trivia, the organisation has mentioned the victim’s full name.

3. In October 1989, the organisation had held workshops in Margao and Panaji as well as in schools and colleges together with the National Forum against Sex Determination and Pre-selection Techniques as part of a campaign against Amniocentesis. Interestingly, even in 1989 (Newslink News Service, 3 October 1989) the organisation had predicted that Goa should not be complacent about its sex ratio which was for long in favour of women ‘…expressing apprehension at Goa’s better sex ratio compared with the rest of the country they said that this could get worse with the increasing female foeticide, the Goa Bailancho Saad expressed determination to fight miscues of these tests’. It may be noted that in Bailancho Saad was instrumental through their campaign in getting the Bill introduced in the Legislative Assembly in Goa on the ban on Amniocenteses (Ravindra 1991).
4. In a press statement on the 22 June 1989, the organisation talked of dowry deaths being on the increase, so also the incidence of rape particularly among minors, prostitution rackets in the guise of massage parlours, and called for a ban on nudism. It is indeed like deja vu for Goa that after 20 years we are still talking of these issues as serious concerns for the State of Goa. At a meeting held on 3 November 2008 at the Goa Union of Journalists Hall, Panaji organized by Bailancho Saad with several other organisations working for women and children such as Jan Ugahi (Margao), Bailancho Ekvott (Margao), Goa State Commission for Women, Saad Alashiro, Anayay Rahit Zindagi (Vasco), Children’s Rights Goa (Panaji) the same issues were discussed, namely, the increase in rape of minors only now there was the involvement of political big wigs like the son of the Education Minister for Goa, nephew of an MLA, etc. The issue of nudism on beaches was still being voiced as a concern.

Another article included in this issue of the SAAD was titled *Working Women Speak Out* which talks of how only 30 per cent of women work out of a personal choice and 70% out of an economic compulsion. It mentions the stress of the double burden of women who work outside the home and bear the major share of work within the home as well. The article ends with ‘Is it meant to be a Woman’s World and His Paradise?’

The impacts of ‘Tourism’ have concerned the organisation almost since its inception. While the article points to some advantages that tourism promised such as jobs, improved transport and communication, it highlights the impacts that were overlooked namely the ‘environmental damage, AIDS, drug addiction, nudism and voyeurism’ (*SAAD* 1:12). However, the organisations stand against tourism was not clear from the article as it ended with this paragraph:

> It is not our contention that tourism should be abandoned altogether and that the Goans should live in a closed world shut into themselves. That is, not only not advisable, it is also not possible. The natural wealth that Goa is endowed with can certainly be enjoyed by other too. It is only right that we should permit others to enjoy aspects and facets of our land which would bring joy and pleasure to any human being. It is important that interaction and intermingling of cultures and lifestyles takes place too. As long as the visitor and the visiting hours have their limits. As long as our culture, our traditional and our privacy is maintained (ibid.: 13).
The last article in this premier issue of the SAAD Newsletter was The Scarcer Half, which discusses the prevalent preference for the male child, the customs that are used to argue for the importance of the male presence in families and the techniques that are being used for sex pre-selection such as Amniocentesis, Chronic Villi Biopsy. The article draws attention to an advertisement that appeared in the local papers which read ‘You can have a child – boy or girl – of your choice’. The erroneous theories that talk of how women’s status will be enhanced if the ‘supply of women is reduced’ was also discussed. The impacts of repeated abortions on the health of the woman were mentioned. Interestingly, the lobbying of the autonomous movement against these sex determination tests was met with success in 1988, when the Government of Maharashtra first banned the tests in 1988. These sex determination centres from Maharashtra, however, moved to Goa and it was only after much lobbying by Bailancho Saad, that the Goa Regulation of Use of Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Bill was introduced and passed in the Goa Assembly in April 1989. Bailancho Saad celebrated the passing of the bill but continued to campaign against the ‘barbaric practices’ with a slogan in 1990: Girl Child or Boy Child Give Them Your Care, Give Them Your Best.

At the end of the newsletter, Bailancho Saad made a declaration that ‘Bailancho Saad is financed through small individual donations. We do not receive grants from any institution or agency, whether governmental or governmental. We welcome contributions from you, however small.’

There were two other contact addresses printed apart from the Saturday meeting venue, which was for many years a flat belonging to one of the founder members. The other places mentioned were contacts for Tuesday 4–6 pm (Susan’s Social Work Centre in Mapusa) and Fridays 9.30 am to 5.30 pm (c/o Fiona Dias, Nirmala Institute of Education, Panaji).

7.2. 1994 March 11: Volume 1 Number 1

SAAD - the fearless voice and call of women

This 8-page issue marked 8 years of Bailancho Saad’s existence and was once again a collection of various articles on a collage of concerns. The introductory article titled Why this Newsletter? is interesting for several reasons. One being that it states
Over the last few years, we may not have achieved as much as we desired. We have had our share of setbacks. But we have also been fortunate enough to be part of many path-breaking interventions and changes (SAAD 1994b: 1)

In the article, the members talk of the days when there was not such support from many sections of the society that felt that it was not necessary to form a women’s organisation. They talk of the nonchalant attitude of the local press and how the organisation’s press notes were not accepted by most newspapers and how they slowly gained recognition and ‘the media had to acknowledge our existence, our views, our work’ and go on to illustrate how the anti-alcoholism campaign of Bailancho Saad in 1993 appeared in the local press only after it was covered in the national print media.

The organisation goes on to explain the purpose of the newsletter, which, as quoted above, is meant to serve as the ‘fearless voice and call of women’. SAAD, began as a forum for women’s expressions, for discussion and debate on a variety of issues that concerns the lives of women. SAAD, as we will see through this chapter, became an important organ of the organisation and one of the few pieces of documentation of the pulse of the organisation that exists. The earlier design, if we go by this article, was to be a collage of different forms of expression about the various concerns of women. The lead article in the newsletter was on the New Economic Policy explaining what it means to the common person, the implications for India as a whole.

Bailancho Saad made a special demand to the Goa government for an inventory of skills and resources locality wise, particular of the women: that there is recognition for the housework and survival work that women do and that mega multinational projects not be allowed.

A Consumer Disputes Redressal Forum was set up in Goa in August 1989 under the Consumer Protection Act 1986 and this marked the beginning of a consumer movement in Goa. In this issue of the SAAD the consumer movement was discussed. It outlined the rights of all consumers and explained how women can fulfil their consumer rights.

The last article was a long account by a member of Bailancho Saad of her experience of being one of 5,000 participants at the 5th National Women’s Conference held in Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh in 1994. The remarkable thing about the account is that...
it was that of a ‘housewife’, as she says, she was ‘married to the house’ and who was leaving home after 14 years of marriage. The experience was an empowering one. She spoke on issues concerning women in Goa as a representative of Bailancho Saad. This member of Bailancho Saad writes that slogans like ‘Avaz Do – Hum ek Haim’ and ‘Hum Ladke Rahenge- Azadi’ filled the air and that ‘one could feel the power of women in unity’ (SAAD Vol. 1 No.1: 7).

It was learnt through this article that Bailancho Saad also sold copies of its publication titled *Culture Vultures* and booklet against golf in Goa titled *In the Name of a Game: The Stakes in Golf* during the conference and also that another member from Bailancho Saad presented a paper on the *Tourism and the Commodification of Women’s Bodies*. This account of the National Conference also reported briefly on the sessions such as (a) Women’s Sexuality, (b) Problems of Single Women, (c) Governments Health Policy and the politics of contraception and population control, (d) Communalism and the role played by political parties, (e) The New Economic Policy and its impact on women, namely, a reduction of jobs in the unorganized sector, a reduction of government expenditure on health and education and the dismantling of the public distribution system and its effects of malnutrition amongst women in particular, (f) Women and the State, namely, the repressive attitude of the State like the Police for example, the need for women’s movement organisations to maintain their independence and not concede to funding from the State, the demand for 33 per cent reservation in Village Panchyats and land rights, and (g) Women and Violence in the aftermath of Ayodhya and how the state is a perpetrator of violence against women.

At this conference Bailancho Saad wrote several songs on their campaigns such as (a) Against crime, (b) The demand for a special cell to deal with crimes against women, and (c) Anti alcohol and proliferation of bars. These songs are still sung at meetings, workshops and demonstrations (see Appendix 1).

**7.3. 1994 May 11: Volume 1 Number 2**

This 12-page issue makes a mention of the money and muscle power at play in the Goan society. It may be pertinent to note that at this time we saw a steep hike in land prices in Goa and several families, especially along the Goa’s coast, sold family property
and came into big time money for the first time. This affected the Goan social fabric tremendously in its basic values which is harder to describe, but also visibly in the fact that people now had much more liquid cash, spent more on larger cars, the roads had visibly more traffic as a result, and the old tiled homes gave way to newer homes that were more ostentatious and screamed of the new found wealth. Larger housing complexes with facilities of swimming pools and other amenities became the new culture in the mid-1990s. The supposed stable culture gave way to this novo riche lifestyle. The changes and instability were also felt in the Goan polity. Despite the fact that it seemed then as if a new Chief Minister was being appointed every few months, Bailancho Saad continued with its demands.

The introductory article in this Newsletter titled *The Last Two Months*… ended with ‘Whoever generalized about women’s organisations and said that they lack persistence?’ This was followed by a letter from a supporter in which she talks of her plans to adopt a ‘baby girl’ and mentions the pathetic attitude in society towards the girl child and the prevalent preference for the male child.

*Women share their Experiences of Family Planning* is an interesting article about Bailancho Saad’s work with the women from Tivrem in Ponda taluka of North Goa. The women from Tivrem had got in touch with Bailancho Saad for support for their protest against the setting up of a bar in their village and were, according to the article, now ‘an integral part’ of Bailancho Saad. The programme that is being reported in this article is a discussion in the village with the women of Tivrem about sterilization and family planning. In fact, it appears from the article that the topic was chosen by the women in Tivrem themselves. The aggressive family planning promotion particularly the almost forced (as the consent was not an informed consent) sterilization with little after care facilities was criticized. It was reported that a number of women had post-operative complications and other ailments following the surgical procedure like chronic back aches, cramps in their legs, etc. According to this article, the meeting was just the beginning of the organisations struggle for women’s right over their body as it opened up several questions like:

1. Has the family planning programme eradicated poverty?
2. Why are women singled out for family planning?
3. How many more women suffer in silence?

4. Are there any safe alternatives?

In continuation of the organisation’s work against rape, the next article in the newsletter is an Analysis of Official figures of Rape Cases and the Charges as was submitted in response to a question in the Goa Assembly in March 1993. The official figure was 14 reported incidents of rape. In 13 of the cases the rapist was known to the victim, disproving the prevalent myth that ‘rape is committed by strangers’. Four out of 14 cases were cases of gang rape, 5 were combined with kidnapping, 6 were combined with theft, and 7 were committed in broad daylight, proving that rape was, in fact, well planned and that women are vulnerable in the day too. Ten out of 14 cases reported were committed on a minor. The article points out that, probably only cases of minors are being reported while this might be indicative of the numerous other cases that are unreported. It (a) highlighted the harrowing procedures followed at the police stations to even get a case registered, as in only nine cases were the perpetrators charge-sheeted, and (b) stressed the poor conduct of investigations – the fact that the rape victim is hounded for witnesses and that there is no forensic laboratory in Goa, so there is a delay in getting results. The article ended with the organisation’s statement of seven demands, namely: (1) gender sensitive police, (2) thorough investigation, (3) forensic laboratory, (4) speedy trial, (5) gender sensitive judiciary, (6) moral support, and (7) an egalitarian society.

The petition to the Goa Bench of the Bombay High Court on 13 August 1993 by Bailancho Saad for early disposal of rape cases was replied to on 20 April 1994 informing that the Chief Justice of the Bombay High Court had issued directions to the District and Sessions Judges of North and South Goa to dispose the remaining Rape trials in their respective courts as expeditiously as possible. This was a success for the organisation for it meant that it had been taken seriously.

The next article titled Talk of Persistence talks of the follow up of the case of gang rape of a pregnant widow mentioned earlier in the 1989 issue of the SAAD Women’s Day Special and mentions the horrifying incidents that transpired subsequent to the reporting of the incident at the police station. The police had delayed in filing the FIR, as the woman was first sent for a medical examination. In the interim period, the main accused filed a complaint of trespass against the victim, as the rape had occurred in the
house of the accused where the victim was a maid. Bailanco Saad’s intervention in the case was narrated in the article.

This article is followed by a short note commending the Supreme Court judgment which cancels Section 309 of the Indian Penal Code, the section that makes suicide a punishable offence. This Section 309, Bailanco Saad felt, was unfair to women who were often driven to suicide because of the mental and physical torture they were victims of and this Section was added trauma to a woman as it considered the victim a criminal. Besides, Section 309 was often used by governments to clamp down on activists who were on indefinite hunger strike for their demands.

*An extract from the life of Bailanco Saad* gives us an idea of the tenacity and commitment of the members of the organisation in 1994. It reports on the efforts of three members to understand the needs of women in Pernem and Bardez Talukas and to share with them the concerns of women from other parts of Goa. The article reporting on the days programme states that ‘Together we pledged to pool our energies to understand each other and move ahead together’. This was one of the instances of solidarity building around the state.

The organisations solidarity was not only restricted to local groups of women and local issues. In this newsletter a short note in solidarity with ‘Budhiben’, the Narmada Bachao Andolan worker who was gang raped in the village Antras in Baroda, Gujarat was also included. There is also a brief note on the support extended to her by Swashraya (a women’s organisation) and an appeal from Goa to the National Commission for Women, the Prime Minister and the Chief Minister of Gujarat to intervene to get justice for her.

The newsletter announced that copies of the UN Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) were available at a minimal cost with Bailanco Saad to encourage awareness of the provisions of CEDAW as it was ratified by India on the 9 July 1993. It was emphasised that it is the responsibility of all citizens to monitor and ensure that the government fulfils the obligations of the CEDAW.

The newsletter ended with a poem by Nishtha Desai, the first time any piece was separately authored. There was also *A Common Story*, which narrated the sad plight of a case of domestic violence. The woman already vulnerable, who fled the violent home
with her baby landed into another situation of abuse and domestic violence. The story is of her vulnerability but determination to fight and make her life worthwhile.

7.4. 1994 July 11: Volume 1 Number 3

The main article in this 12-page issue was titled *Conservation and Development: Two Sides of the Same Coin*, and it highlighted the inadequacy of governments, their shallow commitments and ill conceived policies. It condemned the religious fundamentalist attack on Taslima Nasreen’s freedom of expression saying that repression begets revolt and that those opposed to communalism will only be ‘strengthened in their resolve to combat it’. Although it is not articulated as such, it is clear that the feeling here is that communalism is a political game, in sync only with a patriarchal mind set. Talking about poor planning for policies and schemes, it is felt that women have not been part of this planning resulting in ill-conceived schemes which are also difficult to avail of because of ambiguous procedures and bureaucratic red tape.

The next article moved on to a discussion on oppressive marriage customs and then on to the plight of widows. This was followed with an interview with ‘Asha’ a widow who speaks on the customs after she was widowed. Despite the hard life faced by her after being widowed she still ends with a positive note namely that ‘people are changing’.

The next three articles on the Family Planning Policy and oppressive State interventions to control population are by this researcher. One is titled *Small Family: Happy Family?* was written in response to the then aggressive propaganda by the government in promotion of small two child families.

*About a Laparoscopic Camp in Goa* discussed my experiences as an observer at a sterilization camp held at a Primary Health Centre in Goa in 1988, where 129 women were ligated in one morning before lunch. The hurried and negligent manner in which the operations were performed, the poor pre-operative care and counselling and the lack of pre-operative care was reported. It may be pertinent to note that this was written long before there were any plans by this researcher to study the organisation or write about its work. This researcher was then a member of the organisation like any other member. This was followed by an *Appeal to Activists*. 
Although all three articles were authored by this researcher, at that time the researcher had just joined a job and being a salaried person of the Government of Goa there were fears as to what the consequences would be to be directly criticizing government policy or appealing to activists to make demands on the government. However, reporting on an experience or facts of observation were presumed to be safer articles to own. Now, however, many of the old phobias of members of Bailancho Saad have been shed and members, while still cautious, take many more personal risks.

*Kaiga Nuclear Plant: Better Activity that Radioactivity*, reads like a campaign call for solidarity in protest of the Kaiga Project. In 1991, at the Women’s Day programme a woman scientist spoke on the hazards of nuclear plants which triggered Bailancho Saad into organizing a Cycle Yatra in 1992 which brought together several other organisations from different parts of Goa. Seminars, street plays and small meetings were organized and signatures were collected for a resolution which was submitted to the Chief Minister of Goa. A response was received which said ‘the members of this women’s movement can rest assured that Kaiga Atomic Power Plant will not pose any health and safety problems to the people living in its vicinity’. A public meeting was called on 2 October 1994 as despite this assurance Dome No1 of the plant collapsed when under construction resulting in panic. The organisation demanded copies of some documents which were never received. This was before the RTI Act.

The organisation also requested for permission to be allowed at the site along with a team of experts to conduct independent evaluation and assessment. Apparently, this permission was granted and was reported in the subsequent issue of the *SAAD*.

The article *So Much for the Much-Touted Government Schemes for Women* gives a glimpse of the difficulties faced in those days by Bailancho Saad in availing government for women. It highlighted the non-cooperation of these government offices in imparting information about the schemes. Another observation from this report is the slim or non-existent line between rural and urban in the State of Goa and the lethargic government machinery which makes availing of available schemes next to impossible.

The harrowing time one had to go through to obtain information about the available schemes for economic empowerment was well described. The chase from pillar to post and from desk of one non-obliging government officer to another less obliging
A poem titled *The Girl Child’s Defiant Cry* by Agnes Messias was followed by a note in solidarity with the workers of Bal Kalyan Nagari, Bombay (now Mumbai) in their demand for equal pay for equal work and service conditions without gender discrimination. Interestingly the article makes a mention of Bailancho Manch in reference to a poster which dealt with this topic of marriage customs. This is interesting as it tells of the relationship between Bailancho Saad and this women’s organisation.

Bailancho Saad had sent a copy of one of the earlier newsletters to the ‘Women’s Center’, University of Washington and a note of appreciation was received from its Director which was also published in the newsletter.

### 7.5. 1994 September 11: Volume 1 Number 4

This 12-page issue, titled *Moving into the Ninth Year: Looking Forward, Looking Back*, is a summing up of the activities and concerns of the organisation over the last nine years. Once again, in this issue, as in the first copy of the *SAAD* and in a handout that was printed by the organisation, the organisation’s goals and the rationale for ‘a collective organized effort’ to tackle the problems of women was articulated. The decision of the collective on 12 October 1986 that the perspective of the organisation would evolve from practical experiences was also mentioned. Talking about the organisation process it was stated that:

We also saw it as essential toward the achievement of our aims and objectives that the organisation should not have a hierarchy (President, Secretary, etc.), that it should function as a collective with meetings being held on a fixed day regularly and all decisions being taken collectively on that day. Each of us would take on responsibilities voluntarily. We also decided not to take any institutional financial help either Government or non-governmental or foreign and make our work a labour of our convictions. We decided not to have a membership form or fee and any woman who wanted to join in the collective could do so and attend meetings as and when they want (*SAAD* Vol.1 No.4: 1).
The issue discussed here is the commercialization of the Carnival festival in Goa. The organisation felt that what was previously a spontaneous peoples’ celebration was now being used to ‘enhance business interests’ and to ‘attract tourists’ to Goa. The members’ faced harassment from tourists themselves, the root cause of which to them was ‘the images conveyed through the commercial Carnival parades’ and ‘advertisements’. Exhibitions were organized by Bailancho Saad in the two main towns of Margao and Panaji, but very little was reported about these protests in the local dailies. All but one daily refused to publish their press note which was viewed as ‘sexism in the media’. The impacts of tourism on the host community were seen to be a heavy price to pay with the environmental destruction and which was not matched by the small short term benefits.

Another issue that was described briefly was the protest against the Nylon 66 Plant, its negative impacts on the health of the surrounding community and the environment. The organisation intervened by holding meetings with women in the area to learn of their responses to the plant in their vicinity. Women, it was learnt, were not short-sighted and valued health more than employment. Some of the other developments in Goa which the organisation once again criticized in this issue were the Kaiga Power Plant, in protest of which a cycle yatra was organized, and the plan for golf courses in Goa. Bailancho Saad published a separate handout on their arguments against Golf which enabled some Panchayats to pass a resolution to oppose the setting up of golf courses in their localities. It also saw women’s groups in Goa come together in solidarity over the issue by signing a joint memorandum to the government to demand for:

1. Women’s participation in the decision making process
2. All relevant information to be made available so that people can make informed choices.

On the organisation front, Bailancho Saad set out clearly in this issue that it would team up and work with other organisations in Goa and outside the state only ‘if there was at least a basic minimum agreement on the immediate end as well as the perspective’ between that organisation and Bailancho Saad.
The crucial role played by media identified here, interestingly continues to this day to be a concern for the organisation. The earlier position, however, differed from the present day one in that the organisation felt that media was responsible for perpetuating stereotypes through images depicted/used. They were also accused of being exploitative and oppressive to women through the sensationalizing certain kinds of news relating to women and also selectively omitting other aspects that were important for the organisation to get media coverage for, like the press notes that the organisation submitted to the press for publication, for instance.

One of the earliest successful protests was against the MS Cigarettes, which was packaging ill-health and using the image of the progressive women to sell their product and also by targeting youth. The advertisements were withdrawn and so also the manufacture of that brand of cigarettes.

The most successful activity of the organisation has been its engagement with the handling of a variety of different cases such as sexual harassment, particularly of vulnerable groups like widows and single women. Other cases ranged from eve teasing to domestic violence, from starvation of women and children to deprivation of education and homelessness. The nature of the organisation’s intervention differed with each, and was defined by the need of that particular case. The demand for a ‘Special Cell to deal with crimes against women’ was an outcome of the organisation’s work with handling individual cases. This demand also received the support of other women’s organisations from across the state.

The work of Bailancho Saad towards the enactment of gender-sensitive laws and gender-sensitive interpretation of laws was outlined with the example of its successful campaign for the extension of the Dowry Prohibition Act to Goa. Its demand for amendments to the loop-holes that they saw in this law however did not meet with the same success.

Also narrated here is the organisation’s work together with Forum against Sex Determination and Sex Pre-selection, Mumbai to ban sex determination tests in Goa.

The fact that the organisations petition to the High Court for speedy trials in cases of rape was heeded to through a direction from the High Court to the Sessions Court resulting in such cases taken up on a priority basis was also mentioned as one of the
organisations successes. The organisation’s view of the Portuguese Civil Code was that it had more benefits for women than did the Personal Law, but still held that even the Portuguese Civil Code needed to be further amended to be more gender sensitive.

Once again the organisation’s campaign against alcoholism was mentioned, giving credit to the women of Tivrem village for the impetus to the movement through their protest against a bar in there. The other related demands of Bailancho Saad include a moratorium on the issuing of licences to liquor outlets, timings to be enforced for existing bars, no promotion of alcohol through advertisements and hoardings. The organisation achieved a fair success in getting an undertaking form the then Chief Minister that no bars would be set up in villages where none already existed and where women were not in favour of bars being set up. This verbal undertaking was considered, though minor, a victory for the organisation in its continuing campaign.

The organisation held that awareness was a pre-requisite for any change and, therefore, had organised a variety of awareness activities such as seminars, programmes in schools and colleges, talks, poster exhibitions, overnight workshops, meetings in villages, orientation programmes for police, orientation programmes for priests, etc.

It may be pertinent to mention here that at this stage of the organisation’s evolution, there were no paid employees. All these activities mentioned in this Newsletter were done through voluntary efforts of members of the organisation. There is a change in the articulation about the response of the Goan society to the work of the organisation and the issues as well as the support the organisation has for causes that they take up. In this issue of the Newsletter it is stated that ‘Today we feel a sense of fulfillment in being able to bring the agenda of women into focus. Many who even refused to acknowledge the problems of women do recognize them now, be they political parties, religious organisations, or social organisations, and they are forced to act’ (SAAD Vol.1 No.4: 4). Talking about its outreach it says that ‘Many women now feel they have somewhere to come and at least speak out about their problems’ (ibid.: 4).

The organisation criticized the concerted efforts of the Government of Goa to enforce the Goa Prevention of Defacement of Public Property Act when there are other laws that needed more urgent attention like that of the Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act. At this time in Goa there were numerous hoardings all over
the Goan countryside of alcohol companies and soft drink companies that used scantily clad women to sell their products. The organisation had lodged several complaints to the authorities about these advertisements.

Bailancho Saad felt that in a bid to destroy the Indian export of textiles, the issue of the ‘flammable Indian Ghagra (skirts)’ as the visual of a ghagra going up in flames in three seconds on a mannequin was broadcast through the US television networks. This they felt was an injustice to Indian small scale industry in particular and an unfair use of the gendered visual.

As had been done in the previous issue of the Newsletter, the *Oppressive Marriage Customs Among Catholics* was described followed by an interview with a Catholic Widow of the injustices faced by her, the oppressive customs and how she coped with them.

This was followed by a description of a collaborative full-day meeting with ‘Sita Mahila Mandal’ and Gram Sevikas on a Sunday. The significance of the day of the week gives us an insight into the dedication of the members who would even sacrifice their day off during the week to discuss women’s issues and collaborate with other organisations as well.

Bailancho Saad saw the introduction of Women’s Studies at the University, the introduction of ‘women’s cells’ in colleges and the fact that NSS and NCC Units were also taking up women’s issues as a success of the women’s movement in getting its demands into the education policy. The organisation was involved in the conduct of a participatory workshop in collaboration with the Centre for Women’s Studies of the Goa University on the 19 August 1994 for teachers and students from 19 colleges from around the State of Goa. Another workshop was also held for the extension cell of a Higher Secondary College in south Goa.

In *Tackling the Case of a Mentally Retarded Girl*, for the first time the organisation used a pseudonym for the victim to ensure confidentiality. This marks the growing sensitivity on the part of the organisation’s members. The difficulties faced in handling the case were narrated.

The newsletter ends with a note in solidarity with the demands of the Nursing Staff of the Goa Medical College. It is clear from this that now other groups of women
agitating for their demands see Bailancho Saad as a powerful lobby and support for their cause. This is an organisational strength that can be seen even today. Movements, even environmental ones, look to Bailancho Saad for support. Individual cases, including male members, who are not the perpetrators of crime, but are relatives of the victim, approach the organisation for help.

7.6. 1994 November 11: Volume 1 Number 5

The lead article in this 12-page issue of the *SAAD* is titled *Taslima Nasreen and Goa*. This was following the ban on her book *Lajja* which was a story about a family set in the aftermath of the demolition of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya on December 6, 1992 and which focused on the communalization of the people of Bangladesh. The book resulted in the announcement of a cash reward for her killing by fundamentalists. The related concerns for Bailancho Saad in Goa that brought the group together for an organized discussion on the topic were: (a) how a society gets communalized, (b) the impact of communalism on women, (c) the attack on ones freedom of speech and expression, and (d) the dying sensitivity to people’s religious sentiments. The group was particularly inspired by Taslima’s preface in which she wrote ‘I will continue to write and protest persecution and discrimination. I am convinced that the only way the fundamentalist forces can be stopped is if all of us who are secular and humanistic join together and fight their malignant influence’ (*SAAD* Vol. 1 No. 5: 1).

The book *Lajja* was translated and published in serials in the Konkani daily *Sunaparant*. In Goa translations in English and even Marathi were circulating, including a summarized version in Marathi. The discussion within Bailancho Saad were on the parallels they saw with the communalization of Goan society and the politics of the recent issues in Goa like the opinion poll, the language debate, the controversy over the medium of primary education, and the Konkan Railway. The reinforcement of communal ideology by the media was also discussed.

This article was one of the most introspective articles in the *SAAD* written till then. It analyzed the society, history, customs and the process of communalization of a society and its impact on women in particular. It also was aware of the larger political issues even when it came to supporting Taslima. The west for example, was using this to
reinforce its criticism of the ‘dark forces of Islam’. The prescriptions offered from the discussion were to assimilate secular ideology and to support the demand for freedom of expression.

Bailancho Saad had invited the audacious Marathi writer Madhavi Desai for the discussion, but as she could not attend, she wrote to the organisation. This letter was reproduced in the SAAD. Madhavi’s book titled Nach Ga Ghuma was a critique of the oppressive customs and traditions in Indian society. The title was taken from a traditional game from Maharashtra in which women stand in a circle holding hands while one woman stands in the centre trying to break out of the circle asking ‘how should I dance?’ to which they reply ‘nach ga ghuma’, which literally translates to ‘dance quietly – or keeping mum’. The object of the game though was for her to try and break free of the joined hands. Madhavi Desai too was attacked by her community for being outspoken. Madhavi said in her letter to Bailancho Saad that it was more painful to write about the oppressive customs in society than it was to actually go through it. She felt that today’s society remains wrapped in outgrown clothes and that the only answer is for people to change their attitude. Also printed in the Newsletter are two other letters of support for the cause against communalism.

The next article is unrelated to the earlier issue of communalism and is titled Countdown for Elections which places the organisations demands which were also published in the local dailies. This is followed by a note TADA – Shame on the Government which is in protest against the enforcement of TADA (Terrorist Disruptive Activities Prevention Act, 1987) to stop activist from protesting against injustices including women activists.

Making Dents is a short account of a case where the organisation met with success in getting a case that was closed as a case of suicide reopened and investigated for murder. Another article in celebratory mode is Justice in a Rape Case of a minor girl, where for the first time a rape accused was convicted to seven years imprisonment.

The next article Rigours of Bus Travel in Goa is an account of all the travails of bus travel in Goa, both physical and mental, and supported the demand from Curchorem which was published in the daily Gomantak Times on 21 July 1994 asking for a 50 per cent concession for standing passengers on the bus.
The *Rekha Kholkar Case: Confronting Torture in Police Custody* is a narration of a case which tells of the early years of the organisation’s case handling. Firstly, at that time, the organisation was not as sensitive as it is today about concealing the identity of the victim. Her name, details of her residence, etc., were revealed in the article.

This issue concluded with a note *In Solidarity* with the Tibetan women who were fighting for their rights to their land after the Chinese occupation of Tibet in 1959. The Tibetan Women’s Association was formed with Pamo Kunsang at the helm on 12 March 1959. She was however arrested, subjected to grave brutality in prison and finally shot dead. Many thousands of Tibetan women lost their lives. The year between 12 March 1994 and 12 March 1995 was declared as the International Year of Tibetan Women. It was in commemoration of this that Bailancho Saad included the note of solidarity asking women to support the Tibetan Women’s Association.

### 7.7. 1995 January 11: Volume 1 Number 6

On 8 October 1994, Bailancho Saad was instrumental in freeing 31 women from Tamil Nadu who were engaged as bonded labour at a food processing plant. The lead article in this 12-page issue titled *The Bonded Labour Story* was an account of the whole operation which required the coordinated effort on the part of Bailancho Saad along with SOCO Trust (a socio-legal organisation from Madurai), Aadhar (a Goa based socio-legal forum), the Labour Commissioner, District and Assistant District Magistrates, and the Labour Secretary, to name a few. This was the first time the organisation has published a successful networking together with NGOs, government officials and women activists. This one would say was the turning point in Bailancho Saad’s history of struggle as it was one of the largest cases handled till then which saw the organisation in a positive and collaborative role with the government for the emancipation of women. According to the report, it was a week long process ‘full of high drama, tension, suspense, anxiety, nervousness, fear of information being leaked, despondency when things did not move, anger at the lethargy of the bureaucracy, glimmer of hope in the eyes of the workers, heavy heads full of responsibilities of seeing to accommodation, food, travel, the recording of statements, frustration at not being able to communicate, the joy of seeing happy faces of released workers and finally relief …’ (*SAAD* Vol. 1 No.6: 1). One critical
aspect that came through from the narration is the legal implications in handling a case of this nature and therefore also the importance of having a legal person/lawyer on the team of the women’s collective. Despite the collaboration with certain government officials to ensure justice for these women, Bailancho Saad was not silent in its further demands and petitions to the Government of Goa.

This article was followed by a poem on women’s rights and then a piece titled *Sexual Harassment in Employment: The Cards of the Defence* which discusses games played by male colleagues/employers to sexually harass a woman colleague/employee and tries to empower women to understand the game and enable them to stand up for their rights despite these odds.

This issue was the start of the new approach, namely focussing on a theme. This issue began with the theme of bonded labour and issues related to the workplace. One article titled *Challenges at the Workplace*, talks of the different forms of harassment and how the woman has to embolden herself to defend her rights.

Bailancho Saad congratulated Bailancho Ekvott in its *Solidarity* note, for its success in getting the derogatory advertisements of the liquor company manufacturing ‘Officer Choice’ withdrawn. Bailancho Ekvott had written to the Manager of the distribution company that the messages in the advertisements were degrading to women.

This was followed by a reporting *Supportive Structures – A Must* which was on Bailancho Saad’s programme on 25 November 1994, the day that women come together to end violence against women. Three separate cases were narrated to highlight the importance of supportive structures for women who were victims of violence, be it a supportive husband, a supportive family or a supportive organisation like a women’s activist group.

The next article seemed innocuous at first as it was titled *A Discussion over Books and Lives*, but was extremely significant for many reasons. It was a reporting of a meeting that had taken place on 28 November 1994 in Tivrem. It may be recalled that the women of Tivrem had approached Bailancho Saad for support in their protest against the setting up of a bar in their village which had met with success. This meeting was on a very different topic. It was a discussion of the life and struggles of Savitri Bai and Jyothiba Phule, how they rebelled against the society of their time and promoted
education for girls. This was a discussion on customs and traditions and breaking those that were oppressive. It was a programme that was organized to empower women. It is significant as it tells us of the work of the collective which does not stop at short term goals but strives towards the achievement of broader goals of empowerment of women with which ever group they come into contact with.

The last page of this issue of the SAAD contains a short note on the Exhibition cum Sale - Searching for an Alternate Economic Model. This was the first time Bailancho Saad got involved in a sale of products made by women. It was in response to the New Economic Policy and it was an attempt to offer small-scale economic opportunities for women.

Observing Human Rights Day, the concluding article, mentions a programme in South Goa. From this it is evident that, even in the early years of Bailancho Saad, its outreach was far and unlike what was often rumoured about them in those years as been Panaji centred.

**Entering a New Phase**

From Volume 2 onwards the SAAD Newsletters begin to take on themes instead of putting together a collage of various issues and ideas. From this issue, the date of publication which was earlier posted on the front page with date, month and year now is on the last page with only the announcement of the year of publication. From Volume 2 onwards we also see a move to more national and international issues which is a noticeable change from the earlier focus on local issues with the exception of the earlier mention of some general information and the notes ‘in solidarity’

**7.8. 1995: Volume 2 Number 1**


This volume titled ‘From Goa To Beijing’, documents Goa’s preparation for its participation in the United Nations NGO Forum before the Fourth World Conference on Women: Looking at the World through Women’s Eyes, 29 August 1995, and subsequently for the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women: Equality,
Chapter Seven

SAAD: Priorities and Responses

Development and Peace, 4 – 15 September 1995, Beijing, China. It outlined the bottom up process followed to obtain the views of the various participating countries into the Draft Platform for Action which after discussion during the conference gets to be confirmed as the ‘Platform for Action’. The various states hold meetings with officials and separately with NGOs, this is taken to the national level, the Asia-Pacific level and finally to the international level during the World Conference.

The article mentions how Bailancho Saad was skeptical about being involved in the process, it thought that:

1. The powerful nations would finally determine the agenda.
2. Local concerns would not be heard at a world Conference
3. Even if their concerns get into the Action Plan, will these plans ever be implemented
4. Is the whole exercise worth being involved with as it is so far removed from the realities in Goa.
5. Will this affect work in Goa

Finally, however, Bailancho Saad decided that ‘… Beijing need not be the beginning or the end in itself. Rather it can symbolize a dynamic process through which we take stock of the status of women, consolidate our strengths, use the process to mobilize public opinion on women’s concerns and ensure that the immediate short term demands are met’ (SAAD Vol. 2 No. 1: 2). But the time the organisation was convinced of the need to be involved in the process, much time had lapsed and it entered the process late. One of the members Ms Sabina Martins however, was selected to represent Goa on the NGO team and her trip to Beijing was funded by the Government of Goa.

The next article Fundamental Right to Livelihood Non-Negotiable reports on one of the national Workshops organized in preparation for the World Conference in Beijing which stressed the Right to Livelihood as a Fundamental Right and the broad themes discussed were: (a) human security, (b) employment, (c) ownership, control and access to natural resources, and d) dichotomies created by different knowledge systems. Some of the salient points that emerged at this meeting were: (a) women’s voices were not adequately represented in the Country Report, (b) right to livelihood did not find a place in the report, (c) there were separate chapters on poverty and effects of liberalization
insinuating that the two were not related which differed from the view of academicians, activists and NGOs, and (d) the need to link micro level initiatives with the national and international so as to build strategic alliances on common/related issues. This was followed by a stern critique of the Government of Goa Report on the Status Women submitted for the Beijing Conference.

**Box No. 7.1**

**From Govt. of Goa Report on Status Women for the Beijing Conference**

The report was referred to as the ‘*Sorpotel Report*’ as Bailancho Saad felt that the report did not bring out the real concerns of women in Goa nor give a true picture of the present status but was bits of trivia about society and customs of the Christian population chiefly.

In the next article, the critiques of the Country Report from consultations held around India and from different NGOs too were pieced together and presented with a title *What About India’s Draft County Paper?*

*Looking at Various Aspects of Violence against Women in India Today* is a reporting of a meeting on the CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence against Women), which was organized in Delhi by the Co-ordination Unit for Beijing.

As part of the preparation for the Beijing Conference, Bailancho Saad organized a State Level workshop to discuss four broad areas concerning women namely (a) violence
against women, (b) women and economic activity, (c) women and health, and (d) women and development. Tourism was prime on the agenda of Bailancho Saad’s discussions. This workshop was attended by a number of other women’s organisations, NGOs and other groups and it was resolved at the end of the workshop that they would collaborate to draft out the Plan of Action for the Goa State. The participating organisations, apart from the organizers Bailancho Saad, were AIWC – All India Women’s Conference, Bailancho Ekvott, Shakti, Nari Anyaya Nirmulan Samiti, Women Entrepreneurs Group, Family Service Centre, All India Bank Employees Association, Vanita Mahila Mandal, Poinguinim, Mea Niketan, Panchawadi, Madanika Mahila Mandal, Savoi-Verem, Betim Fibre centre, Portais centre, Nirmala Niwas, Fort Aguada Resort Employees Wives, Pilgaon Yuvak Kala manch, Zuvarwada Mahila Samiti and other individual women not belonging to any organisation. The above organisations collaborated also for the organisation of the commemoration of International Women’s Day (1995) where a Draft Plan of Action was prepared. The plan included the demand for sustainable and environment-friendly agro-based industries taking local people including women and panchayats into account, dissemination of information and peoples’ consensus to be obtained on any proposed mega project particularly on revenue generating schemes that entails large social costs.

**Box No. 7.2**

**Bailancho Saad note on the Development of Tourism in Goa**

The concluding page of this newsletter had an article titled *Some Bones of Contention* which highlighted some of the recommendations from various countries
where no consensus had yet been reached and also the process that is being adopted for dissemination of information as well as to encourage participation in decisions for the issues to be taken to the world Conference on Women in Beijing.

7.9. 1995: Volume 2 Number 2

**Theme: Uniform Civil Code**

*SAAD* completed a year with this 12-page issue, which almost coincided with the debate that was taking place in the country on a ‘Uniform Civil Code’. *Which 'Uniform' Do You Want* warns of the patriarchal undertone and the ironically divisive nature of the demand for a Uniform Civil Code for the country. It was of the opinion that often the personal law of the majority community will be proposed as the law to be made uniform for all communities. Further, the proposed law might also be discriminatory on grounds of gender. The demand set out by Bailancho Saad is for a gender just code that lays down norms for ‘just’ family laws.

The article, *What has Compulsory Civil Registration of Marriage meant?*, outlines the formalities required for the registration of marriages which differ for Catholics and Non-Catholics highlighting, therefore, that these procedures were not uniform. It then discusses the pros and cons of compulsory registration of marriage.

The next article, *Grassroot-level Case Work: Grappling with the many Dimensions*, was a narration of how the organisation intervened in a case where there was a dispute between mother and daughter over the possession of some jewellery and how Bailancho Saad managed to help settle the dispute in an amicable fashion without the court intervention. This was again one celebration of success of the organisation in case handling.

The next article, *Of Divorces*, discusses the provisions in the Family Laws of Goa Chapter II Article 4 regarding divorce. It highlights a few problems with the law particularly for women. The subsequent article, *Communion of Assets - a Boon or Bane?*, looks at this feature of the Family Laws of Goa which brings all properties (movable and immovable), present and/or future assets, inherited or self acquired, before or after the marriage into a common pool owned equally by husband and wife jointly unless there is an ante-nuptial agreement signed before the marriage. However, it was opined that since
stridhan was not considered in Goa, there should be some way by which a woman who is a victim of domestic violence, who chooses to leave the matrimonial home can take with her immediately some essential belongings before the remaining can be settled gradually through the court. Today many of the issues raised as concerns here are sorted out with the Domestic Violence Act, 2005. In a Patriarchal and Inegalitarian Society, talks of the injustices that continue to exist despite a progressive Civil Code on family laws in Goa.

In this issue Bailancho Saad was In Solidarity with the victims of the earthquake in Latur which had occurred two years prior to this issue. This article highlights the need to rebuild lives as well as houses and more importantly the need for gender sensitivity in the rehabilitation process. Bailancho Saad brings out some of the aspects where the rehabilitation process was, in fact, insensitive to the needs of women affected by the earthquake.

7.10. 1996: Volume 2 Number 3

Theme: Beauty Contests

Behind the Fests of Beauty Contests, the title to this 12-page issue of the SAAD, begins with a collage of press clippings including those of Bailancho Saad against the Miss World 1996 beauty pageant that was to be held in Goa. The organisation opined in the press notes that this was planned without holding a public debate on the issue, the commodification of the woman’s body and the use of the woman’s body to sell consumer products was derogatory to women, that traditional stereotypes were being promoted, unrealistic dreams of glamour and beauty were being sold to even rural women and the standards set for beauty were those that were being set by the First World.

The next article, a question and answer section contains more about the organisation’s stand against the Beauty Contest which explains once again the points raised in the press clippings. This was followed by a poem by Nita Nagarsekar titled Skin Deep Beauty and an excerpt from Rabindranath Tagore’s Gitanjali about The Bondage of Finery.

What Others Say, provides extracts from the points of view expressed by organisations from around the country like a group from Bangalore that was a coordinated effort of various women’s organisations called Mahila Sangharsha Okkuta
that highlighted that the excise on cosmetics has been lowered (from 120% to 40%) leading to an influx of cosmetic companies into India, a student group that called this beauty ‘artificial’, the report of a meeting with School of Women’s studies, Jadavpur and Maitree, a women’s organisation there that saw the trap and oppression of the cosmetic industry as a ‘concentration camp’ and Vimochana, a women’s organisation from Bangalore that opined that beauty contest homogenized and universalized culture and that that was a culture of the dominant white, blond, blue eyed and svelte. They held that the crowning of Sushmita Sen is only to net the coloured population into the consumer trap. 

*A Former Beauty Queen Speaks*, is an account written by Nelia Sancho, former Miss World on her experience of the ‘…dizzy world of travel and excitement. But also of drudgery and humiliation’.

**Box No. 7.3**

**The Impacts of Beauty Contests on Women**

The last two pages of this volume reiterate the organisation’s anger towards beauty contests and had a tinge of the organisation’s early radicalism. *Beauty Contests ...Mince meat for Tourism – Karnataka* has a copy of a seemingly innocent advertisement of the Department of Tourism, Government of Karnataka which has no visuals only copy text but the main caption read ‘Don’t MISS this WORLD of BEAUTY’ listing then the places
to go around Karnataka. A few more press clippings to reinforce that *Beauty is Big Business* and lastly a tragic visual of a woman lying in a pool of blood being run over by a car driven by a crowned queen with wheels of the various sponsors. The caption read ‘The harsh crushing wheels of commerce and politics behind the façade of the beauty contest’

7.11. 1997: Volume 2 Number 4

**Theme: Sexual Abuse of Children**

To put this 16-page issue in context, on 15 March 1996, a UK national, Freddy Peats was finally convicted of all the offences related to child abuse/paedophilia by the Additional Sessions Court, South Goa at Margao and the order pronounced in open court on the 21 March 1996. His imprisonment meant almost a life sentence, the first of its kind till then in Goa. The lead article, titled *The Issue of Sexual Abuse of Children: Where does Bailancho Saad come in*, introduces how the women’s collective came to be involved with concerns of the child. It was through case handling that they found that often domestic violence affected children as well as the woman, then they had cases of young girls given to the gods as Devdasis, domestic workers who faced sexual harassment were very often minors, there were also cases of sexual exploitation of children by teachers. The organisation was not only confronted with individual cases of violations against the child but also instances of commercial sexual exploitation that went unaddressed. This issue of the *SAAD* was written in the early years of the protest against paedophilia and at that time the organisation was a pioneer in the state. Several eyebrows were raised at the very mention of paedophilia and the organisation got little cooperation from the state machinery, like the police, in particular. It may be pertinent to note that this was before children’s rights organisations established in the state. The organisation also expressed its disapproval of photographing children in the nude and termed it as pornography. Included here was a brief abstract of a paper by two sociologists from the UK on *Child Prostitution and Sex Tourism*, in which the scholars tried to describe the different contexts in which children are sexually exploited in Goa, the identity and motivations of the exploiters and the risk of western package tourism on the host community.
Going greater depth into *The Breeding Ground* of child abuse, the next article details the various forms of child abuse, the worst of course being the commercial sexual exploitation of children. From the next article we learn that Bailancho Saad was involved in *Following up Cases of Child Abuse by Foreigners* and handled various cases of suspected paedophilia, despite the lack of cooperation from the police.

*The Government’s Iron Hand – The Raids* was an account of the events that took place in Baina, Vasco (one of Goa’s leading red-light areas) following the visit by the then Chairperson of the National Commission for Women, Ms Mohini Giri. During her visit, she stated to the press that child abuse/paedophilia was rampant in Goa and one of the places she had visited during her visit was Baina. Using the excuse of Ms Mohini Giri’s visit, a massive raid was conducted in the area although that was not the only area in Goa where child abuse existed. Ignoring the complaints of pedophilia that had already been placed before the police by NGOs, the police conducted the raids in Baina, asking NGOs and women’s organisations just the day before the raid to help with rehabilitation, etc. Of course, no proper arrangements for rehabilitation had been made and the situation made the girls more vulnerable than rescued. In 1997, the organisation published and circulated a 28-page report titled ‘*Evictions in Goa: Case Study of Baina*’ (November 1997) which detailed the issues in the area and recommendations for intervention.

On the issue of child abuse, Bailancho Saad believed in *Networking with Others* at various levels and reported in this issue that they had collaborated with a children’s rights organisation UMED and the National Commission for Women. The collaboration has been on cases, follow up of government action or inaction on cases, organisation of awareness programmes including seminars and National Conferences and with other local agencies like the Lion’s Club and EBCOP (Economically Backward Classes Organisation for Urban Poor).

Included in this issue is the account of Sr. Lawrenica Marques of Asha Sadan (House of Hope) one of the earliest preventative interventions in the Baina red-light area providing a day care centre, education, nutrition and health facilities for children of commercial sex workers. Sr Lawrencia had the opportunity to represent India as one of 80 countries participating in the World Congress in Stockholm on child exploitation.
organized by UNICEF and ECPAT (End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism) and in the article talks *About Asha Sadan and the Stockholm Conference*.

Before Bailancho Saad’s suggestions on the issue of Child Abuse, in this issue was included an article that discusses some *Initiatives by Goans Abroad to Stop Child Sex Trade in Goa* and the review of two books on the topic titled *Child Abuse – Fear, Secrecy and Shame* and *The Child and the Tourist*. The two initiatives discussed are PAPA (People Against Paedophilia Abroad) and the Goa Internet Community.

**7.12. Volume 2 Number 5 – not dated**

**Theme: Alcohol – Used and Abused**

Bailancho Saad now works more closely with the National Commission for Women and collaborates with them in the organizing of a state-level Workshop on Alcoholism at which the organisation presented a paper which was ‘borne out of the experiences of years of work with victims of those affected by alcohol and actively participating in struggles against it’ (*SAAD* Vol II No 5:1). A summary of the paper is presented in this 16-page issue of *SAAD*, which focuses on the political, economic, social and cultural implications of alcoholism. Also included in this Newsletter are excerpts of an address given by the Chairperson of the national Commission for Women, the highlights of few other presentations made at the Workshop and an extract from freedom fighter T.B Cunha’s ‘Goa’s Freedom Struggle’ where he talks of alcoholism.

*The Goan Context*, the paper by Bailancho Saad, traces the origins of the social acceptability of alcohol in Goa to its colonial past. This, coupled with the easy accessibility and availability of cheap liquor at numerous outlets around the state has worsened the situation; the demand being both from within the state and by tourists visiting the state. It is pointed out in the paper that although Goa distils large quantities of liquor, the raw material is imported from other states, as Goa does not grow enough to meet the demand. The paper looks at how the consumption of alcohol has become part of Goan culture be it by youth meeting at a bar to catch up on current affairs, the celebrations at weddings, football matches, parties, picnics and even school fetes. It points to how even election campaigns are not complete without alcohol. Promotion through advertisements, add fuel to the fire.
The sale of liquor in Goa is seen as a means to generate revenue and, in 1995-96, of the 27 crores generated from excise, 24 crores was earned from liquor! The government also argues that bars and liquor distillation give several a source of livelihood. Bailancho Saad, however, opines that alcohol is the ruin of several families particularly those already hit by poverty and unemployment. Further it was felt that globalization displaced people from traditional occupations and created new jobs and a work culture that people did not always identify with. Bailancho Saad inferred that many people resorted to alcohol to come to terms with the changed lifestyle. There are many problems related to alcohol dependency. Not least among those listed in the article are domestic violence and other crimes against women and children. When the woman is the alcoholic there is little available in terms of treatment for her. 15 strategies were suggested by Bailancho Saad to deal with the problems related to alcoholism. These strategies were not only addressed to the government and alcohol related agencies but to individuals as well.

Reporting on the various *Struggles against Alcohol* here again, the protest of the women of Tivrem, was mentioned. A signature campaign of women from Pilgao, Bicholim, in North Goa and the success in monitoring bar timings was also mentioned. Other items mentioned are Goa Foundation for legal action against liquor advertisements, Kripa Foundation and Alcoholics Anonymous for their work on rehabilitation of alcoholics. Bailancho Saad’s protests against alcoholism were supported by Gandhi Peace Foundation, Peaceful Society, Bailancho Ekvott, Bailancho Manch, All India Women’s Conference and Nari Anyaya Nirmulan Samiti.

*Discussing Alcoholism in the Family – Effects on Women*, the next article, highlights some of the issues drawn from the cases that have been handled by Bailancho Saad. It was felt that there are cases when men use alcohol as a substitute for confidence and courage, it was an excuse for wife beating. The effects are manifold and include domestic violence and disharmony, trauma to children, deterioration of health, financial loses etc.

Another first for Bailancho Saad is the inclusion of an article by a male writer (apart from once quoting from Tagore’s ‘Gitanjali’ and an excerpt from T B Cunha (1940). It was an article by Dr. Vikram Patel titled *The Politics of Alcoholism in India* in
which he discusses how elections are won with a promise of prohibition probably because of the widespread problem that alcoholism has resulted in within Indian homes such as poverty and domestic violence. Yet, he explains that prohibition has not remedied the real problem, namely, consumption of alcohol. It has, on the contrary, made the situation worse by being sold in the black and also by promoting the sale of bootlegged or illicit liquor. He states that the problem of alcoholism should be treated as a behavioural and public health concern and both primary and secondary preventative strategies should be used. Primary strategies include strict enforcement of licensing and drink and driving laws as well as peer education on drinking behaviour in schools and colleges. Secondary strategies include reduction in the effects of problem drinking once it has already occurred such as counselling a wife of an alcoholic, or counselling of the alcoholic himself. The article was accompanied by an illustration of the various Effects of Alcohol on the human body and then followed by a note on The Impact of Alcoholism on the Economy of Households, namely on household income, consumption, expenditure and household savings.

**Entering a New Phase: Focusing on Cases**

Case handling has always been one of the organisation’s strengths. It has been seen as a powerful support to women victims of violence and other injustices. At a routine Saturday meeting, one of the members commented, after six separate cases came in unannounced, that they had been so busy handling cases that no meeting minutes were recorded. The group joked that when most work is done by the group nothing gets recorded. This has been a reality for Bailancho Saad. In the next few issues, one notices a documentation of the cases. Maybe, it was a way to get the work of case handling of the organisation noticed by readers, while also highlighting the issue that were common to the cases such as bigamy, conflict around right over matrimonial home, etc.

**7.13. Volume 2 Number 6 – no date**

**Theme: Bigamy: The Hushed Issue – Nine Case Studies Presented**

This 12-page volume of the SAAD Newsletter was presented by the organisation at a Workshop on Bigamy organized in collaboration with the Goa State Commission for
Women on 3 October 1999. Here the various dimensions of the issue are presented along with nine cases that Bailancho Saad has confronted in its work to illustrate the points it wants to highlight. From the experience of Bailancho Saad, despite the compulsory registration of marriages stipulated by the Family Laws prevalent in the State, bigamy existed in all communities, regardless of caste, economic and social status. In this article it was pointed out that the patriarchal nature of our society makes the situation worse for a women in a bigamous marriage, as the onus of making the marriage work is placed on her and when the husband indulges in a bigamous relationship it is often seen as a failure on her part to keep the husband happy!

**Box No. 7.4**

**Sections of the Family Laws of Goa that deal with Bigamy**

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**FAMILY LAWS OF GOA**

**IV
USAGES AND CUSTOMS OF GENTILE HINDUS OF GOA**

**ARTICLE 3.**

However, the marriage contracted by a male Gentile Hindu by simultaneous polygamy shall not produce civil effects, except in the following cases only:

1) Absolute absence of issues by the wife of the previous marriage until she attains the age of 25 years;
2) Absolute absence of male issue, the previous wife having completed 30 years of age, and being of lower age, ten years having elapsed from the last pregnancy;
3) Separation on any legal grounds when proceeding from the wife, and there being no male issue;
4) Dissolution of the previous marriage as provided for in Article 5.

**ARTICLE 4.**

The indispensable conditions for the simultaneous marriage are as follows:

1) Proof of any of the circumstances mentioned in the preceding Article through the Court;
2) Consent of the previous wife, expressed in a public deed, in the case falling under clauses 1 and 2 of the said Article 3.
Whatever the reasons behind bigamy, the most vulnerable is the first wife and the legal redressal system is even more difficult, as she has to not only go through the long drawn out court case but burden of providing proof of bigamy by her husband rests on her. Many courts also insist that the case be tried by the court having jurisdiction over the area where the second marriage has been solemnized which makes it more difficult if that marriage has taken place out of town.

7.14. Volume 3 Number 1 – no date

Theme: Right to Matrimonial Home – Nine Case Studies Presented

As mentioned earlier, one of the most successful activities of Bailancho Saad was its interventions in handling individual cases of injustice and crimes against women, be it through counselling, providing support, assisting in retrieving her essential articles from her matrimonial home, assistance in legal recourse to get justice, etc. The most common concern that cases approaching Bailancho Saad were troubled by was a violation of their right to the marital home. The SAAD Volume 2 Number 2 had already discussed the Family Law in Goa which held all properties of husband and wife as a Communion of Assets unless an agreement stating otherwise was signed before the marriage was registered. However, regardless of any agreement, marriage gives both husband and wife the right to reside in the matrimonial home whether it is owned or rented by either party.

What was commonly noticed by Bailancho Saad was that in instances of marital disharmony, the woman/wife was often thrown out of the marital home. Societal norm holds that after marriage a woman’s place of residence is in the husband’s home and she cuts off links with her parental home. She is often thrown out of the home when there is a conflict, especially when the husband and his parents owned the home prior to the marriage with disregard to the wife’s right even to that home. Finding people to rent accommodation to single/deserted women is not easy as she is not socially accepted and in fact shunned in society. Because of society and these norms, it makes it difficult for a woman even for one in a violent marriage to want to walk out.

Bailancho Saad’s role in following up such cases was reported whereby they struggled for a six-month-long period to get a stakeholder meeting called to clarify with the Director of Prosecution and lay down certain procedures to get a woman her right to
the matrimonial home. This was done as the Police were often mishandling such cases or dismissing them off as a civil matter or private matter.

Following a meeting called on 20 June 2000, by the Minister for Women and Child Welfare and attending by the Development Commissioner, Secretary of Women and Child Welfare, Chairperson and Members of Goa State Commission for Women, Director of Department of Women and Child Welfare, Superintendent of Police (North Goa), Chairperson and Counsellor of Family Counselling Centre and activists of Bailancho Saad which culminated in a formal response from the Director of Prosecution. Bailancho Saad saw this as a success and state ‘Even as we have made a significant achievement in getting the right to matrimonial home implemented, its effective implementation needs to be monitored’ (ibid.: 11).

7.15. Volume 3 Number 2 – no date

Theme: Towards a Sexual Harassment-Free Workplace

In this 16-page issue of the *SAAD*, the organisation laments the fact that sexual harassment is not considered a ‘labour complaint’ that can be dealt with by the Labour Commissioner. Despite the serious violations that result from sexual harassment, particularly on the woman’s right to work and her right to livelihood, coupled with the fact that several women are engaged as unskilled labour in units where they are not even registered as employees, the issue is not taken seriously. Cases were reported where employers have claimed that the complainant is not a registered employee even if she had been serving the organisation for many years. Even in cases where the woman had all documentary evidence of employment, her offender if in a position of power would use that to get the case dismissed. Other employees are made to sign a character certificate exonerating him while assassinating the character of the victim as has been the case in several of the cases handled by Bailancho Saad. Very often the situation is made so uncomfortable for the complainant that she finally withdraws her complaint.

Bailancho Saad networked with women’s organisations around the country on the issue of sexual harassment at the workplace and demanded for a special legislation to deal with the issue. The organisation was also involved in the national debate around the definition of ‘sexual harassment’ and ‘workplace’. The relief for the struggle came with
the Supreme Court Judgment in 1997, better known as the ‘Vishaka Judgment’, which laid down guidelines for dealing with cases of sexual harassment at the workplace.

Bailancho Saad was able to use the Vishaka Judgment to put pressure on employers of cases that approached them to set up the necessary Complaints Committees and to monitor the progress made in the cases reported. It also conducted a random survey in Goa to find out how many institutions and offices had respected the directions of the Vishaka Judgment. Sadly, most offices did not have a Complaints Committee in place. Interestingly as Complaints Committees were set up, Bailancho Saad activists have been appointed as the NGO representative.

7.16. Volume 3 Number 3 – no date

Theme: The World is Not for Sale, Children are Not for Sale – Another World is Possible.

This 16-page issue of the SAAD was on the sale of children and trafficking and was triggered off by a case that had approached Bailancho Saad in 1992. This was that of a young woman from a tribal community in Goa who complained that she was forced into giving her child up for adoption when she had no intention to do so. Through handling the case Bailancho Saad unearthed a whole network of the involvement of a leading doctor and nursing home in Goa. Then in 1998, there was news that a baby was up for sale for Rs 15,000 at another nursing home. This time Bailancho Saad sought the help of the police and, with a woman decoy, caught the nurse red handed. However, the case opened up a pandora’s box, under the law, the sale of children for adoption was not an offence. Then, the future of the rescued child was also uncertain as no one wanted to get involved when there was the requirement of production of the child in court. Bailancho Saad, however, used this case to lobby for the need to criminalize the act of sale or commodification of children. It was realized the patriarchal nature of Goa’s adoption laws under the Family Laws prevalent in the State. Adoption was only available to Non-Christians and that too in instances where there was no male child. In this issue of the SAAD was also included a brief note on the Modus Operandi of Some Adoption Agencies in Andhra Pradesh by which children are trafficked and also the experience in other countries to curtail this trafficking.
On the subject of ‘rights’, included in this issue of the *SAAD*, is a note on the various international conventions to which India is a signatory to such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948, the Convention of the Rights of the Child 1989, and the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights 1966. In this issue, we see the collective’s attempt to bring in as many facets of the issue into the discussion.

This is followed by a note and a poster on the Campaign Against Child Trafficking (CACT) in India which was launched on 19 December 2003, and which is part of an international campaign. The issue concludes with a list of unanswered questions that we continue to be faced with on issues such as the reduction of a child to a mere commodity, the lack of uniform adoption laws, the cumbersome legal procedures, social stigma that exists against a woman who cannot conceive, the lack of action taken against persons manipulating birth records and against doctors involved in the sale of children for whatever reason, and the practice of baby swapping.

### 7.17. Volume 3 Number 4 – no date

**Theme: A Brave New World For Girls Is Possible**

In this 16-page issue of the *SAAD*, the collective attempts to piece together, almost as a documentation of its work against gender discrimination and sex selective abortions. The issue is not dated, so it is difficult to ascertain a chronological order of events. However, if we understand from the way they are written in the issue as the manner in which the events unfolded we get an idea of the evolution of the issue and the campaign.

The women’s collective felt that abortions done even in the first trimester of a woman’s pregnancy did have a subsequent impact on her physical health and mental health. In the early inquiry into the issue of sex selective abortion, the collective felt that the consequences could be dire for women. From secondary sources and research material available from other countries, Bailancho Saad felt that, in societies that had adverse female sex ratios, customs like polyandry, abduction and purchase of women were prevalent. Women were also vulnerable therefore to rape, prostitution and grave control. The collective also felt that one of the prime factors that have lead up to the practice of sex selective abortions was the practice of dowry or bride price which left a
girl child being labelled as an economic liability within the family and therefore unnecessary and unwanted.

One of the problems faced by Bailancho Saad in their campaigns against sex selective abortion and gender discrimination was that it was getting tied up with pro-life campaigners, which was not the perspective of Bailancho Saad.

In this issue it is reported that the collective did not get a supportive response from the Health Department on this issue as it was seen as a boon to the family planning agenda. Bailancho Saad then lobbied for a legislation to stop sex pre-selection. It managed to hand over to a member of the Legislative Assembly a draft bill titled Goa Regulation of Use of Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PNDT) Bill, 1989 which was raised in the Goa Assembly. Bailancho Saad also furnished to the Assembly a Memorandum of Objects and Reasons, the Financial Memorandum, and statistics showing the declining sex ratio. The Bill did not get passed, as the Assembly was dissolved. The Goa draft was, however, picked up for consideration when the Central Legislation was being drafted by the Joint Parliamentary Committee.

Since the issue had been introduced in the Assembly, here in Goa media coverage was accessible to the issue. It was also the Year of the Girl Child in 1994 so Bailancho Saad organized a large poster exhibition on the Girl Child. In the same year the Central Legislation came to be enacted titled Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act 1994 (henceforth, PNDT Act).

An interesting clip from this issue of the SAAD is the note on the Advisory Committee. Under the PNDT Act, very State is to appoint an Advisory Committee under the Act which has to advise the Appropriate Authority that has been given the responsibility to grant, suspend, cancel registrations of genetic counselling centres, genetic laboratories, clinics and also enforce standards, investigate any complaints of breach of provisions of the Act. Although the Act was passed in 1994 and the Advisory Committee set up in 1996, it was only 3 years later that Bailancho Saad learnt and that by chance that they were in fact listed on that Advisory Committee along with the Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology of the Goa Medical College Hospital as its Chairperson, the District Immunization Officer/Chief medical Officer, Directorate of Health Services as its Secretary, and representatives of the Directorate of Information,
Law Department, women’s organisations and other social organisations as its Members. Although the Advisory Committee had been set up, it had not had a single meeting in three years. Bailancho Saad lobbied with the government to call a meeting of this Advisory Committee, but there was hesitation as the government opined that a complaint had to first be placed before the Committee for them to meet. Finally, a PIL filed by a health activist resulted in a Supreme Court Directive to all State governments to submit quarterly reports of the work done in pursuance of the Act and the Advisory Committee meeting here in Goa was held.

Included in this issue of SAAD are six separate examples from cases handled by Bailancho Saad of gender discrimination and son preference in contradiction to the complacent attitude of the Goa government that insist that such practices do not exist in Goan society. This is followed by a poem written by Smitha Bhandare Kamat on female foeticide titled The Burden of Guilt.

In this issue of the SAAD, initiatives undertaken by Bailancho Saad towards creating awareness about declining sex ratio, gender discrimination, etc. were recorded. One such initiative was a State Level Consultation of stakeholders, which included health personnel, academicians, government departments, NGOs and activists held in collaboration with the Centre for Women’s Development Studies, New Delhi. The Consultation resulted in a publication titled Locating Missing Girls and the involvement of artists in a campaign against gender discrimination. This issue of the SAAD also highlighted several myths that exist as explanations for the declining sex ratio.

Bailancho Saad lobbied that the PNDT Act be amended or that the provision be included in the Goa State Children’s Act to allow any individual to be the complainant as the use of pre-natal diagnostic techniques for sex determination and sex pre-selection is a cognizable offence. The law however only allows the ‘Appropriate Authority’ to file such a complaint. So far this has not been achieved.
7.18. Volume 3 Numbers 5 & 6 – no date

**Theme: In the Wake of Communal Violence**

On 4 March 2006, Goa saw communal riots that it had not witnessed for a long time. This was a jolt to the seemingly peace-loving community. Bailancho Saad issued a public statement condemning the violence and called for peace. In this 20-page issue of the *SAAD*, *Bailancho Saad’s Solidarity Visit to Sanvordem* is reported. The organisation visited the area that was affected by the communal violence that took place on the 4 March 2006 and it was particularly concerned about the traumatic experiences of the women and children in that area.

From the point of view of collective power and organisation, the communal violence of 2006 in Sanvordem resulted in Bailancho Saad once again attempting to form alliances with other groups to *Join Hands to Contain Violence* and were even part of a *Spontaneous Citizens Initiative*. Bailancho Saad also participated along with other concerned citizens in a meeting called at the Secretariat and chaired by the Chief Secretary of Goa. A peace rally was planned but as Section 144 had been declared in the area, this rally could not be held. It was these meetings of concerned citizens that resulted in the formation of the *Citizens’s Initiatives for Communal Harmony* (CICH). There are another five initiatives that have been reported in the *SAAD* of local citizens responses to communalism and attempts to strive for communal harmony. Bailancho Saad got together women from all walks of life at a public meeting in Panaji under the banner of *Women’s Initiative for Peace*. At this meeting it was decided that a door-to-door campaign should be started with the prime objective of bringing the community together as one unit on any issue that was not controversial. Since Bailancho Saad was already involved in an HIV/AIDS awareness project, it suggested that it would conduct an HIV/AIDS awareness meeting.

International Women’s Day 2006 (March 8) was held a few days after the communal riots of 4 March. Expectedly, the issue of communal harmony played central to other concerns although there was a conscious effort not to allow women’s concerns to get drowned due to the communal violence. However, the focus was on the impact of all recent violence on women in particular. The *Hate Campaign* supported by communal
forces was discussed in this issue of the *SAAD* as well as the recommendations of the Fact Finding Report titled ‘*Broken Peace*’ prepared by the All India Milli Council.

Bailancho Saad also discussed the lack of concern demonstrated by the Panchayat in the violence affected area as panchayat members did not even visit those affected. The Sarpanch who lived within view of the site of violence stayed indoors and he informed Bailancho Saad that it was on the instruction from the police. Goa State Commission for Children, failed to express concern. The Goa State Commission for Women however did visit the area and made recommendations to the DG Police for additional security especially women police in the area. A recommendation was also made to the Directorate of health Services for medical and psychological care to be provided to those affected by the attacks. The only woman MLA of Goa, Ms Victoria Fernandes, however, made a public statement condemning communal violence.

The next article was a critique of the compensation that was offered to persons affected by the rioting and the faulty procedures that were followed. Bailancho Saad opined that the persons affected in the area of the communal violence had no idea that applications for compensation had to be placed before the Deputy Collector. Some had thought it sufficient to complain to the police. Then the compensation amounts offered were no match for what damage and loses that people had actually incurred.

In this chapter we have looked at the priorities and responses of Bailancho Saad to issues concerning women through their own publications and newsletters. In the following chapter we will analyse the success of the organisation through the outcomes of its activities in four large areas, namely, (1) the success of the organisation in getting its demands on the political agenda of the state, getting new policies implemented, the extent of the outreach of the organisation, its ability to transform political structures resulting in change that affects the whole society; (2) the success, if any, in changing social norms, behaviours and ideas that dis-empower women, the credibility it has earned not only among the women population but by society at large; (3) the empowering impacts of the non-hierarchical methods on individual members; and (4) the success of the organisation in creating a ‘collective consciousness’ thereby, activating a pool of people who can be drawn into subsequent movements creating resources for future mobilization.