

ANNUAL REPORT 2005 - 2006

Introduction :

STEPS is a society registered under Tamilnadu Societies Act of 1975. STEPS has in its board 90% of women and 10% of men. STEPS as a Non-Governmental Organisation aims at developing women's self-confidence and help them to live with self-respect. STEPS has not adopted any particular village or block but concentrates on all issues affecting women as individuals or as social beings. Their special focus is on raising voice consistently against atrocities on women. STEPS aims at developing a positive image. Various issues at local & state level are taken up and maximum efforts are raised to find out solution or alternatives. Their "Slogan" is **Self respect is the first steps of women's liberation.** The activities of the organization for the year 2006 - 07 are as follows :

Activities towards empowerment of Muslim Women :

a) District level Federation Meeting :

The district level federation was conducted among the Muslim women SHG members and non SHG members in the respective districts. It was planned in our action plan to conduct district level meetings two times in 9 districts. But STEPS has conducted 26 federation meeting in the 10 target districts based on the needs of the community. The details of the meetings conducted in districts and the details of participants are as follows :

S.No.	Name of the districts	No. of meetings	No. of participants
1.	Trichy	3	101
2.	Thuthukudi	5	246
3.	Nagarkovil	1	50
4.	Pudukottai	2	103

5.	Dindigul	3	179
6.	Nagapattinam	3	163
7.	Theni	2	105
8.	Thirunelveli	2	108
9.	Madurai	3	142
10.	Sivagangai	2	112
	Total	=SUM(ABOVE) 26	=SUM(ABOVE) 1309

The common agenda discussed during the district level federation meeting are as follows :

- Activities of Self Help Group (SHG), Need for SHG, Savings and Credit
- Different economic activities which can be started by the SHGs.
- Possible sources of financing of economic activities of the groups.
- Activities of STEPS for the empowerment of Muslim women – One day fasting of Muslim women, demands of Muslim women from the government and religious institutions.
- ‘Women’s Jamaat’ magazine – significance of the articles published in the magazine.
- Need for educating Muslim girl children.

Cross learning from Muslim women / jamaat from other district and success stories.

b) Organising Muslim Women Groups :

Organising women into SHG is one of the strategy to bring women together, enable the women to understand the power of unity and collective action. So far, STEPS has organized

136 SHGs among 2245 Muslim women. Not all the groups organized by STEPS engaged in savings and credit activities. Some of the groups regularly meet and discuss about the issues of Muslim women, address the issues and women jamaat magazine. STEPS team is in the process of converting these groups into Savings and credit groups. The details of groups formed by STEPS are as follows :

S.No.	District	No. of groups	No. of members	Total savings	Loans from banks		Loans through STEPS	
					No. of SHG	Amount	No. of SHG	Amount
1	Trichy	9	139	33000	0	0	2	80000
2	Thuthukudi	17	292	239500	3	415000	5	200000
3	Nagarkovil	15	275	132780	3	198000	1	40000
4	Pudukottai	13	183	526301	13	338960	1	40000
5	Dindigul	14	305	37190	0	0	2	80000
6	Nagapattinam	10	164	220450	5	225000	0	0
7	Theni	14	209	33940	0	0	3	120000
8	Thirunelveli	16	256	250550	6	695000	0	0
9	Madurai	16	238	7850	0	0	0	0
10	Sivagangai	12	184	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	136	2245	1481561	30	1871960	14	560000

With reference to the Groups formed by us 29 groups in Madurai and 28 groups in Sivagangai, could not continue to be associate with us because of the pressure from religious people and the other NGOs. Efforts are made by our District coordinator, Jamaath leaders, and volunteers reviving the groups some of the muslim women are part of our campaign activities.

Apart from the above groups two volunteers has been deputed in Perambalur District to form and strengthen muslim women. There are 30 Muslim women groups of 354 members saved Rs.4,31,850/-. In perambalur 12 groups are not involved in saving and credit programme, all of them are part of campaigns, trainings, and conferences.

c) Education Support Centre :

Two education support centres are functioning in Vallathirakottai and Muthupattinam villages of Pudukottai district. In each centre 30 muslim girl children are studying. The teachers Ms. Ayisammal and Ms. Rejibeevi are regularly conducting test and find out the progress of the children. Totally 60 Muslim children are benefited out of the education support centre.

d) Parents Meeting :

Parents meeting was conducted in the month of February'07 to interact and inform the parents on the progress of each student and to discuss the deficiencies of the students. The parents shared that the children are improving well and their tendency towards learning has increased. Regarding some dull students, the parents were informed to provided additional attention at home for passing through this academic year. The parents were very happy to take part in the meeting and share their opinion on the education of their children.

e) Public Hearing :

It was proposed to conduct a public hearing at the state level during the the month of February 2007. But due to some unforeseen circumstances, STEPs could conduct the meeting in August. Based on the needs of the community, we have conducted public hearing at three places as given below :

S.No.	Date	Venue	No. of participants	No. of New cases	Special invitees
1.	08.08.06	Community Hall, Thenkasi	61	5	Ms. Susila, SI and Ms.Regina, SI
2.	14.08.06	Anna Nagar, Madurai	77	4	Ms. Jeena, Ms. Reetamma,

					Advocate
3.	17.08.06	Sithayankottai, Dindigul	73	6	-
		Total	=SUM(ABOVE) 212	=SUM(ABOVE) 15	

In all the three programmes, the district level Jamaat members, Ms. D. Sharifa and the respective district co-ordinators participated. Apart from the cases addressed by the district jamaat members and district co-ordinators by family counseling, the most complicated cases identified by them were brought to the public hearing. During the public hearing, the cases were elaborated in detail and necessary solutions were also provided. For some cases, the husband's family members were called for enquiry. Very few cases went upto legal action.

f) State Level Campaign :

Campaigning on the rights of Muslim women are carried out through one day fasting of Muslim women in different parts of the state for the past 3 years. During the reporting period, it was conducted near District Rural Development Agency, Panagal building, Thanjavur district on 03.07.06. Project plan is 250 participants but 512 Muslim women from entire Tamil Nadu participated in the fasting of Muslim women. Ms. Nagma, Mr. Sivakumar, Mr. Akas and Mr. Sukumar from Delhi Doordharsan participated and documented the proceedings of the campaign programme. Ms. Geetha, the board member of STEPS also participated in the fasting and shared her valuable ideas on the rights of Muslim women. As Thanjavur is not our target district, we have conducted the fasting in Thanjavur strategically as we started receiving more petitions in Thanjavur. Hence the Male jamaat condemned our campaign programme saying that how can a muslim women sit in the common place without getting any permission from the local male jamaat. These issues are the regular opposition STEPS received from the Muslim male and we tackled the situation. The issues raised during the campaign programme

is as follows :

- Representation of women in male jamaat
- Pronouncing Talaq through letter, phone, email should be eliminated. Hence divorce through court should be considered.
- Government should enact laws to provide reservation to Muslim women in education and employment.
- Including Muslims also in BPL list.

These are the major demands of Muslim women, which have been raised for past three years. Followed by the campaign, the demands were sent to state and central government and Personal law board for taking necessary action.

g) State level Muslim Women conference :

The fourth state level conference was conducted on 06.01.07 at J.K. Mahal, Perambalur. Project plan is for 400 participants but, 569 Muslim women from Tamil Nadu participated in the conference. Ms. Geetha and Ms. Subathra participated in the conference on behalf of Tamil Nadu Women's co-ordination committee. Mr. Ingulab, Ms. Hameed, Mr. Syed Hussain babu, Convenor, SAAYA network, Dr. Najipulla, CWS, Hyderabad, Fr. Savier Arulraj, Chairperson, Tamil Nadu Minority Financial Development Corporation participated in the conference.

The specific issues, apart from the regular demands of Muslim women, discussed during the conference are as follows :

- Extending benefits and support meant for vulnerable people should be extended to Muslim women.

- Fund allocated for the welfare of the minority people should really reach the muslim women.
- Changing the Muslim community from Backward class to Most backward class for availing more benefits from the government.

h) Dialogue with Muslim men :

It was planned to conduct 'dialogue with men' for 3 times in a year. The details of three programmes conducted are given below :

S.No.	Date	Venue	No. of participants
1.	07.05.06	District Revenue Office, Nagarkovil	59
2.	10.09.06	Kanava Wash Company, thuthukudi	51

During the 'Dialogue with Men' programme, men in the target area are mobilized by the respective district co-ordinator. The peculiar feature of the meeting is that men who are in support of Women jamaat as well as men and youth who have different presumptions about STEPS participate in the meeting. During the meeting, we have addressed men who are sitting with two different notions about STEPS. Hence, STEPS team has discussed about the following

- Activities of STEPS for the dignity and self respect of women in general,
- Issues of women in general and muslim women in particular
- Problems of muslim women generally handled by men jamaat, their ill treatment.
- Success stories on men jamaat who have banned dowry in Lubbaikudikadu, Perambalur district.
- Purpose and need for fasting of Muslim women for their rights.

- Origin and need for the evolution of Women Jamaat and the magazine.
- Status of Muslim women after Tsunami
- Possibility of Collective Economic activity for Muslim community in Thuthukudi district.

i) State level Muslim Women Jamaat Meeting :

The Tamil Nadu Muslim Women Jamaat meets once in a month to discuss about the activities of Jamaat and to address the issues of Muslim women. Representatives from 10 project districts and other districts also participating in the meeting and along with them petitioners family participate in the jamaat meeting. Generally the Jamaat meeting starts with Kirath (Prayer) followed by reading of portion of Quoran which depicts the rights of Muslim women. Then different petitions which have come for enquiry for final settlement are discussed. The petitioners were informed of the Women jamaat meeting and they come with their family, some times with some representatives from Male jamaat too. The issues are sorted out by the women jamaat members in a humanist way solutions are provided consulting both the parties. The decision taken in the meeting are received in writing by both the parties that they agree to the decision. The nature of enquiry depends up on the nature of case. The details of the Jamaat meetings conducted in STEPS office, Pudukottai are as follows :

Date	No. of Partici-pants	No. of districts partici-pated	No. of cases resolved	No. of new cases	Visitors / observers
19.04.06	44	13	2	-	-
12.05.06	38	12	2	-	-
14.06.06	42	16	2	1	Ms. Nagma, Mr. Maharaj, Mr. Ravi, Mr. Sugumar, Mr. Akas Doordharsan, Delhi

07.07.06	42	13	3	-	Ms. Rohini from CNN TV
12.08.06	34	13	2	2	-
23.09.06	45	12	3	-	Ms. Subathra, Ms. Geetha, Mr. Vinoth, STEPS board members, Mr. Ganesh, Ms. Kavitha, Secretary, STEPS.
20.10.06	53	16	8	2	Ms. Asra Nomani, USA
16.11.06	61	14	2	-	-
05.12.06	36	13	9	2	Ms. Anuradha, Mr. Haritha, Resource team members & Ayisa, Chennai
23.01.07	54	12	2	-	-
09.02.07	68	16	11	-	-
21.03.07	59	13	3	-	-
Total			49	7	

Details of the Jamaat members :

S. No.	Name of the district	No. of Women Jamaat	No. of members in Women jamaat	No. of men jamaat members in favour of Women jamaat
1.	Tiruchirapalli	1	16	1
2.	Pudukottai	1	31	1
3.	Thirunelveli	1	35	3
4.	Dindigul	1	32	9
5.	Kanyakumari	1	24	4
6.	Theni	1	25	8
7.	Nagapattinam	1	30	5
8.	Thuthukudi	1	35	20
9.	Sivagangai	1	21	4
10.	Madurai	1	16	0

11.	Perambalur	1	25	20
	Total	11	290	75

Almost all the Muslim women group members can be called as the member of women Jamaat. But they are meeting regularly for the group meetings and we could not invite all of them for the State level jamaat meeting or conduct district level jamaat meeting every month due to financial constraint. Hence the most vibrant jamaat members forming a small group, are often meet at the district level for the redressal of the local issues of the Muslim women.

j) State Level Legal Aid cell :

STEPS is known for addressing the issues of women with reference to human rights violation and violence at the family level and community level. STEPS is addressing the issues of muslim women with respect to Talaq, dowry harassment and polygamy. Unlike women in general, Muslim women are first sent to male jamaat for the redressal of the family problem. When the women did not get justice at the men jamaat or when they did not have confidence on the male jamaat, they approach STEPS for resolving the problem which will protect the interest of the women. The jamaat members and district co-ordinators are receiving petitions at the district level. When they could not find solution to the problem they bring the case to the women's jamaat meeting. Apart from the 10 districts where we work, petitions from all over the state are approaching STEP

Details of Muslim women cases addressed by STEPS are as follows :

S.No.	Category of the Case	No. of Cases
1.	Dowry Harassment	13

2.	Second Marriage	13
3.	Family Problem	37
4.	Drunken violence	9
5.	Cheating	17
6.	Sexual violence / abuse	4
7.	Family violence	7
8.	Love marriage	4
9	Talaq	9
10.	Threaten to death	2
11.	Property problem	5
12.	Suspicion	4
13.	Others	5
	Total	=SUM(ABOVE) 129

Details of cases addressed in different project districts are as follows :

S.No.	Name of the district	No. of Cases
1.	Pudukottai	34
2.	Nagapattinam	2
3.	Trichy	4
4.	Thirunelveli	6
5.	Nagarkovil	22
6.	Tuticorin	23
7.	Dindigul	11
8.	Theni	10
9.	Madurai	12
10.	Sivagangai	5
	Total	=SUM(ABOVE) 129

k) Internal evaluation :

The internal evaluation of the project activities in 10 districts are made during the month of June 2006 by Ms. D. Sharifa Khanam, Ms. Kamala Board member, Ms. M. Padmavathi, the Administrator and Ms. Ayisha, District Co-ordinator of Sivagangai. Records and registers maintained by the respective co-ordinators are verified. The representatives from Muslim women Groups were asked to bring their group registers and

interaction was made by Ms. D. Sharifa, Ms. M. Padmavathi, regarding the procedures for conducting meeting, registers, linkage with banks and other institutions. The Muslim women expressed their requirement for financial assistance to start small enterprises.

Meeting with the Muslim women was also organized to get the grievance of the Muslim women. As a result of the internal evaluation done by the STEPS team members, it was understood that the Muslim women groups are very vibrant and their financial requirement need to be addressed immediately. Hence STEPS took efforts to mobilize money from other sources. The internal evaluation has enabled the STEPS team to get cross learning from all the project district and find out best practices of district co-ordinators.

D) Staff / Volunteer capacity building training :

The district co-ordinators have attended various other trainings organized by different institutions at the district level :

S. No.	Date	Name of the training	Venue	No. of staff attended
1.	19.05.06 to 21.05.06	Human rights training	TMSSS, Trichy	2
2.	15.05.06 to 18.05.06	Gender training	Visthar, Bangalore	13
3.	25.07.06	Right to Information Act – District level meeting	Town Hall, Pudukottai	1
4.	27.11.06	Sensitisation programme for prevention of Trafficking and HIV / AIDS in women and Girls	CSR Training Centre, Kanyakumari	1
5.	20.02.07	Health Training	STEPS, Pudukottai	14
6.	30.03.07	7 th National convention of the federation of Dalit women strategic planning for alliance building	Vishwa Yuvakendra, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi	5

m) Training of Muslim Women Jamaat Committee members :

It was planned to conduct three training programmes for the Muslim women Jamaat members on Leadership, gender and health. We have planned to provide training for atleast 4 - 5 district level women jamaat representatives from each district. Thus, Leadership and gender training was conducted to 47 women jamaat members in Visthar, Bangalore. The training module was framed to suit the requirement of the women jamaat members by Visthar. This training has motivated the jamaat members to look into the problems of women with gender perception and take decisions as a leader at the district level.

Apart from this Health training was organized for 54 women jamaat members during the month of February 2007. The women were given education on self hygiene, general hygiene behaviour and practices, self hygiene during menstruation. The health issues of women in general were also discussed in detail.

n) Publication :

It was planned to publish a quarterly magazine as an outcome of the efforts of STEPS for the empowerment of Muslim women. Four issues were printed during the reporting period. Major content of the publication are as follows :

- Editorial
- Poems written by Muslim women
- Issues of Muslim women – national context – (translated versions are published)
- Quotations, sayings and articles from quoran – in favour of women.
- Short write up – on women rights.
- Case diary – Case history of Muslim women addressed by STEPS.
- Reports of the activities of Muslim women jamaat.

The publication 'Pengal Jamaat' (Women Jamaat), is being circulated to the groups organized by STEPS, local jamaats, and development organizations working for the empowerment of women. The respective district co-ordinators get copies of the magazine and circulate the book at the district level. Now STEPS started getting feed back from the public and some people have approached STEPS for the subscription of the magazine. One urdu tearabic communuyst – one year book in english

o. Participation in 7th National Women's Conference :

Apart from the above activities planned for the reporting year, STEPS has taken 8 staff members and 3 jamaat leaders for the 7th National Women's Conference held at Salt Lake Stadium, Calcutta between 9.09.06 to 12.09.06. The programme was organised out of the excess amount available through exchange rate difference. It was a great experience for the team members to see a large gathering of women talking about themselves, their rights, and ways of empowering women. This has motivated the jamaat members and staff members, that they are not alone in the struggle to bring women out of their shells. They felt more powerful and encouraged.

Activities towards Human Rights work :

Addressing the issues of women in distress:

STEPS is known as a rescue point by the women in distress. After a great deal of struggle with authority, power and tortures, women approach STEPS to come out of the struggle. STEPS fight with the authority and power and ensures the rights of women. At present, STEPS is directly working in 10 districts of Tamil Nadu. The district level co-ordinators address the issues at the district level. When they could not find a solution to the problem at their end, they bring the issue to the head office. The details of cases addressed by STEPS in 10 districts of Tamil Nadu are as follows :

S.No.	Name of the District	No. of Cases
1	Pudukottai	37
2	Trichy	18
3	Thoothukudi	5
4	Nagapattinam	1
5	Thirunelveli	13
6	Nagarkovil	1
7	Dindigul	61
8	Theni	39
9	Madurai	7
10	Sivagangai	8
	Total	190

The details of the cases addressed by STEPS according to the nature of the issue are as follows;

S.No.	Nature of case	No. of case
1	Dowry harassment	21
2	Second marriage	17
3	Family problem	46
4	Drunken violence	17
5	Cheating	11
6	Sexual abuse	26

7	Family violence	6
8	Love Marriage	12
9	Divorce	3
10	Threaten to death	3
11	Property problem	9
12	Suspicion	12
13	Others	7
	Total	190

Family Counselling at Help Line :

STEPS has been attending to the petitions coming to the Help Line of All Women Police Station in 8 districts of Tamil Nadu namely Thiruchirapalli, Pudukottai, Theni, Dindigul, Nagapattinam, Nagarkovil, Thoothukudi and Thirunelveli. The district level co-ordinators attend help line at their district level. The advocacy lobby with police department enables STEPS to find solution to the problems of the women at distress. STEPS tries to speed up the

government mechanism according to the emergency of the petitioner and make them to attend to the cases irrespective of the caste and creed.

Poster Exhibition cum awareness Campaign programme :

STEPS is working in 10 districts of Tamil Nadu. STEPS has prepared a set of posters on gender and human rights of women in general. From its inception, STEPS is known for its excellence in conducting poster exhibition. Campaign on human rights through poster exhibition and meeting is conducted once in two months in all the 10 districts. The district level co-ordinators organise the community in their respective district and conduct poster exhibition and meeting. The district level co-ordinators are trained on gender and human rights perspective and they are imparting the knowledge on human rights to the community. It is an on going programme which is conducted in a periodically with the target community members. The key concepts taught during the campaign programmes are as follows :

- Constitutional rights
- CEDAW convention
- Protection against violence on women
- Constitutional protection available to women against domestic violence and tortures of any sort.
- Current affairs – on women issues.

This poster exhibition cum campaign programme serves as a very good approach to reach the community. The posters with poems, slogans on human rights and revolutionary pictures provokes the thoughts of the community and their curiosity to learn more about rights. This effort of STEPS helps our team members to enter into a new village and get their support for our programme.

Case Studies :

1. Case study of Ms. Arunthathi :

Ms. Arunthathi is a resident of Thirukokarnam in Pudukottai district. She has been living in the ITI colony for the past 20 years. Mr. Jaikumar of the same area has given a petition in the police station saying that the house of Ms. Arunthathi belongs to him. The police officials in Thirukokarnam police station did not hear the voices of Ms. Arunthathi and forced her to sign the enquiry register. The police was favourable towards Mr. Jaikumar only. Followed by the enquiry, Mr. Jaikumar started torturing Ms. Arunthathi by beating her, stealing jewels and money from her house and removing the roof of the house. Arunthathi approached STEPS at this stage and STEPS has given a letter to Thirukokarnam police station to look into her case. But the police at Thirukokarnam did not consider the letter and they just ignored the letter too. Hence a petition was given to district collector over the seriousness of the case, which needs police intervention in favour of Arunthathi. Even after giving petition to the district collector, Jaikumar demolished the house of Arunthathi and it was a threat to her life in that place. At this stage, STEPS has given a petition to Superintendent of Police to take necessary action against Jaikumar who have demolished Arunthathi's house. After giving petition to SP, Jaikumar came to STEPS and said that the house occupied by Arunthathi was the house of Jaikumar's uncle and he has documentary proof for that. But he took time to show the proof. In the meantime, the general public approached STEPS that Jaikumar was claiming ownership of all the houses in the locality. Hence STEPS team along with the public went to SP office to give petition. SP asked them to see DSP who sarcastically said why don't Arunthathi construct a hut and live? Arunthathi constructed a small hut in the place for living. Jaikumar warned her that he would again destroy the hut too.

After hearing this, STEPS wanted to conduct a protest against the lethargic attitude of the police department. The Superintendent of Police in Pudukottai district has changed by that time. Hence Arunthathi approached the new SP and narrated the issue. The SP ordered the DPS to enquire the case thoroughly and punish the offender. After the enquiry with the community at ITI colony, the police have arrested Jaikumar. It was a great struggle between the police department at different level, the deprived women and the community at ITI colony, Thirukokarnam. STEPS has facilitated the process of getting justice in favour of Arunthathi and the community. Even with the hand holding support of STEPS, the process took one month for advocacy and lobby with the police department and counselling to the victimised women and the community.

2. Mr. Marimuthu's Case :

Even though STEPS is taking up the issues of women, one rare case of Mr. Marimuthu was being identified by STEPS during the reporting period. Mr. Marimuthu belongs to Iluppur taluk of Pudukottai district. He was psychologically disturbed and roaming in the streets, talking irrelevant things. STEPS enquired him and came to know about his story. He is a married person living with his brother and mother. He was emotionally controlled by his brother to the extent of relationship with his wife. He worried for his helplessness to live peacefully with his wife and he ran away from the house in a mentally disturbed manner. Hence STEPS approached Natarajan, brother and Uma Maheswari wife of Marimuthu and provided counselling to his wife to live with her husband without the disturbance of Marimuthu's brother. STEPS has provided counselling to Marimuthu through psychiatrist for building confidence on himself to live independently and to come out of the past struggles. Great effort was made by the STEPS team to convince Marimuthu's brother to allow Marimuthu and his wife to live independently, away from him. Finally he agreed to let them live with Umamaheswari's family for time. STEPS has got a letter from Marimuthu that he will live with his wife peacefully and if he deviate from his promise he can be punished as per law. Both of them met STEPS team after 15 days. They got some mental strength and both of them have agreed to live together independently. Both of them have promised to take care of each other. It is a peculiar case addressed by STEPS where the brother is emotionally torturing the younger brother and using his wife as a servant in the family. STEPS has strategically played its role with Natarajan, without wounding his feelings, made him to understand the need for peaceful life to Marimuthu and Umamaheswari.

3. Talaq to Sahira :

Shahira Begam is a only daughter to her parents who belongs to Melathiruppanthuruthi of Thanjavur district. She got married to Noor Mohamed in the year 2003, with 25 pounds of gold jewels and Rs.15,000/- as dowry. As per the request of bride's family, Noor Mohamed agreed to stay with the Shahira Begam's family. After her marriage, Shahira Begam's father went to abroad. Noor Mohamed started showing his ugly side by beating his wife, consuming alcohol every night and life became a curse for Shahira. Moreover, later on it was revealed that Noor Mohamed is a TB patient. Shariha begam approached the respective jamaat over this issue. By the time, jamaat enquires, Noor Mohamed promised to keep his wife happily.

But he was not at all keeping his promise. Life became a continuous threat to Shahira. She reported his behaviour to the jamaat. But they too kept quiet. Shariha approached STEPS on 26.06.06 and gave petition. STEPS called Noor Mohamed for counselling. On 15.07.2006 both the family came for counselling. During the counselling Noor Mohamed accepted his behaviour and expressed his willingness to live together with Shahira. But Shahira did not want to give one more chance to test himself. She decided to get Talaq from him. Finally, Noor Mohamed agreed to give talaq to her. But he said he did not have anything to give to Shahira. Then orally STEPS got oath from them that both of them will not disturb the other by any means. They were asked to attend the forthcoming Jamaat meeting on 12.08.06, to finalise their decision and give talaq to Shariha. The issue of Shahira was discussed during the Jamaat meeting. Shahira and Noor Mohamed were asked to express their decision. Shahira strongly demanded talaq from him. As Noor Mohamed also agreed to give talaq, Tamil Nadu Women Jamaat has decided to give Talaq through the Women's Jamaat. Women jamaat has decided to send a letter to Melathiruppanthuruthi jamaat over Noor Mohamed's Talaq to Shahira.

While addressing this, STEPS could understand the boldness and braveness within Shahira, which was disguised within herself for years together. She has been tolerating everything for three years, giving chances to her husband to show a lovable face towards her. When she understood it is not possible, she was courageous enough to face the future by herself without him.

4. Cheating of Anand Raj in Pudukottai :

In Tamil Nadu, Bishop Anand Raj has been on the screen, for his massive cheating of the rural community by promising them to construct house for them. He has collected crores of money as advance from the people for construction. But he did not complete any house and kept his promise. Some of the looser for Anand Raj's looting was found in Annavasal block of Pudukottai District.

Shakila Banu is a jamaat member of Tamil Nadu Muslim women's Jamaat. She approached STEPS on 3.4.2006 as if Elangovan of Vahavasal village has looted Rs.3000/- from her by promising to construct a pakka house. He was in collaboration with Stephen Raj, who also collected Rs.39,000/- for the construction. Both of them were saying that Anandraj was in abroad and the construction would be started as soon as he returns India. In the same way the

two looters have collected money from Sakila father (Rs.10,000) and another person Sahul Hameed (Rs.18,000 + 21,450). Totally Elangovan and Stephen raj have looted Rs.91,450/- from Annavasal in the name of Anandraj for construction of Houses. All the victims were given an agreement in the name of Molin Mission Church, which is counter signed by Bishop Anandraj. Based on the petition, STEPS has called Elagovan and Stephen Raj for enquiry at STEPS. But both of them did not responded to the letter. Hence this problem was discussed in Tamil Nadu Muslim women's Jamaat meeting on 12.08.06. Then STEPS has called reporters from Daily Thanthi, Dhinakaran, and Dina Malar and narrated the problem with the community members. The news was flashed in Daily thanthi, Dhina Malar on 15.08.06. STEPS has given a petition to the police station and they have filled FIR on Elagovan and Stephen Raj. The FIR copy was issued to the victims for proceeding the case.

5. Murder of Manjula Devi, Women Police, Pudukottai :

Manjula Devi was one of the woman police in All Women Police Station (Town Station), Pudukottai. She is one of the friends gained by STEPS through counselling in Help line. She was murdered by her husband and his friend Raja and hanged by them as if it is a murder. The details of her death is as follows :

Manjula Devi married Athavan who is also working as police and provide training to Armed force police. Their marriage is a love marriage. They have a 4 years old daughter and one year old son. The character of Athavan towards women was very worst. When Manjula devi delivered her first child, they appointed one servant maid to take care of the child. Athavan had illegal affair with the girl which was known to everyone in the street and hence they vacated the house and come to Pudukulam area in Pudukottai. The second house was taken on lease from Raja who is a big merchant in the area. Slowly Athavan made friendship with Raja and they became very close friends. With this friendship, Raja asked for 1 lakh money as loan from them. Athavan and Manjula took lot of efforts to mobilise the money and paid him for his marriage expenses. By this time, Raja's sister Veni come forward to take care of the child. Manjula and Athavan leave their child with Veni in her house and take back the child when

they return from duty. Athavan created chances to go to Veni's house, using the child as a reason and developed relationship with Veni. This was not known to Manjula Devi. But Manjula Devi was insisting Athavan to ask for 1 lakh money given to Raja. But Athavan was talking in favour of Raja and not interested in demanding the money forcefully from Raja. Manjula did not want to stay on Raja's house, hence she asked Rs.1,50,000/- from Raja. She went to Raja's house to ask for the money. But Veni shouted at Manjula as if the money matters are male's problem. Woman should not enter into the financial matter. When Manjula devi was forcefully asking for money, Raja and Veni said that they will even kill Manjula, if she is insisting for money. Manjula decided to give petition against him. Suddenly Raja and Veni surrendered to Manjula and asked sorry for their words. They promised to return the money soon. Hearing the events, Manjula's parents requested Manjula to vacate Raja's house immediately. Hence Manjula has shifted the family from Pudukulam to police quarters.

Manjula and Athavan tried to buy a house for which they were in need of money for registration cost. By that time also they have asked Raja for money but he did not paid the money. Manjula's parents could mobilise Rs.50,000/- for him, which was not sufficient for them to buy the house. Hence the deal of buying a house was cancelled.

On 06.07.06, Manjula shouted at Raja through mobile phone, standing near rose land, which was heard by the mechanic shop workers and passengers by the way. The neighbours also know that she used to shout at Raja for money. After the phone call she entered into the house. She talked with the college student in the downstairs. A few minutes after her arrival to house, the neighbours have heard a screaming voice from Manjula's house, followed by silence. After some minutes, Athavan and Raja carried Manjula devi saying that she had chest pain, and she was taken to government hospital for treatment to chest pain. The doctor said she is died before 20 minutes. Then they took her back to the house. When the neighbours and others asked for post-mortem of the Manjula devi, they have again come to hospital and said that Manjula devi has hanged herself and it is a suicide.

The suicide of Manjula was flashed in the newspaper. By seeing the news, the STEPS team rushed to Government hospital to know the fact. Seeing the STEPS team, the parents approached Ms. Sharifa and revealed their doubt over the death of her daughter. As everyone

know that Manjula devi was living with lot of family problem with her husband. Arrival of STEPS team to the GH has made lot of changes in the police gathering. Instead of few police standing for there, more women police and men police reached there, suspecting that STEPS may do protest against the murder. Even though police persons personally felt that it is not a suicide, they were reluctant to open the issue as Athavan is also a police. The parents wrote a petition and gave it RDO for taking the child with them and to handover the dead body with the parents. Police department also granted their request after serious analyses of the consequences of this issue. The children and the dead body of Manjula devi was handed over with the parents of Manjula devi. But the police did not take any action against Athavan. STEPS has recommended a leading lawyer in Trichy for taking up the case. Manjula's parents approached the lawyer and filed a case against Athavan and Raja. Even after 15 days of Manjula's death, the police department did not hand over the post-mortem report to the parents. STEPS sent letter to respective police station, called the police and approached the SP for giving a copy of post – mortem report. The police were very reluctant toward the letter and phone call. Hence Sharifa informed the police, if the police were not taking necessary action for the petition. Then police department said they have suspended from duty and they are searching for Raja and Veni. As a result of the post-mortem report, which says clearly that Manjula died due to Strangulation. After that FIR has been filled against Athavan and Raja. Manjula's parents approached STEPS and said that for getting justice for a woman police effort of STEPS is required. Now the children are living with the grand parents.

Advocacy and lobby with other institution :

Working with Police department :

STEPS is very closely working with police department in addressing the issues of women. The district co-ordinators in 8 districts of Tamil Nadu are attending to the helpline for counselling regularly. This brings cordial relationship with the police department.

Working with academic institution :

STEPS is considered as resource centre by the academic institution for the exposure and field visit of students studying human rights, gender and Social work. Ms. D. Sharifa is periodically providing seminar on Gender in American institute of journalism.

Working with Media :

The activities of STEPS regularly flashed once in 15 days in print media – leading daily papers, Tamil Magazine etc. The visual media also record the activities of STEPS and flash it in the television.

List of programmes attended by STEPS Team

Date	Name of the programme	Attended by
06.04.06	IWID –Meeting on Delhi, Tribal an Minority-Bangalore	Balkees, Roja, Nargis, Taj, Razia, Hamsoon, Faridha, Zubaitha, Pandijothi.
07.04.06	IWID –Bangalore	President
10.04.06	Prime minister High Level Meeting- Delhi	President
15.04.06	Sexual Harassment Training Organised by WIND, Trichy.	Ms.Narkis
27.04.06 to 28.04.06	NAWO Meeting – Delhi	Ms.Razia & Ms.Hamsan.
01.05.06	School for the mentally retarded – inaugural function by Shallow.	President– A guest invitee

15.05.06 to 18.05.06	Gender Training at Visthar	President, staff & Jamaath members.
23.08.06	Neeya Naana Vijay TV Interview at Chennai	President&Rajiya
26.08.06	LEISA Board Meeting at Trichy	President
03.09.06 to 04.09.06	Hivos Meeting on OCGE Process	President & Ms. Subathra
06.09.06 to 14.09.06	7 th National Women's Conference at Calcutta.	President, Staffs & Jamaath Members
21.09.06	Women's Study at Sisters Training Center, Dindugal	President
27.09.06	Peal GB Meeting at Madurai	President
29.09.06	Asaifa Meeting at Alangudi	President& Ms.Ayisha
09.10.06	Asaifa Meeting at Viralimalai	President & Ms. Ayisha
10.10.06 to 11.10.06	Visthar Meeting at Bangalore.	President
13.10.06 to 16.10.06	Dialogue with Andhra state Police -Organized by OXFAM, Hyderabad.	President
17.11.06	WISE International Muslim Women's Leader Conference at New York, USA.	President.
07.12.06	Hivos OCG Meeting - Bangalore	President & Rita David

to 09.12.06		
11.12.06 to 18.12.06	Women of Substance Award 2005 Presented to Ms. Sharifa by Ryan Foundation, New Delhi.	President.
20.01.07& 21.01.07	Sevai Sudar Award, Chennai.	President.
25.01.07 to 30.01.07	State and Community Seizing Citizenship, Bombay.	President.
02.02.07 to 03.02.07	Indian Associations For Women's Studies (IAWS) Workshop, Bangalore	President
14.02.07& 15 .02.07	Eleventh Five Year Plan – Delhi	President
16.02.07 to 17.02.07	Sachar Report Conference – Hyderabad.	President
02.03.07	Women's Day Programme,- Tuticorin.	President, Ayisha.
03.03.07	St. Paul College Annual Day Programme, Trichy.	President, Ayisha.
24.03.07	Women's Day Programme - Singampunary.	Ms. Easwari, Ms. Ayisha, Research Scholar Ms. Poongodai, Ms. Sathya, Ms. Shakila

		Banu.
28.03.07	Women's Day Programme - Thenkasi	President, Ms. Ayisha, Ms. Fareitha Begum, Ms. Packyalakshmi.
29.03.07 To 31.03.07	NAWO Meeting – Delhi.	President, Ms. Ayisha, Ms. Shakila Banu, Ms. Rajathi Begum, Ms. Jenagam, Ms. Subaitha Begum, Ms. Hamsan Beevi.

List of Programmes Organised by STEPS

27.04.06	Parents Meeting - valathrakkottai	Students Parents & Staff.
29.04.06	Men's Workshop - Narkovil	Staff & Director
27.05.06 to 30.05.06	Men workshop at Kanyakumari.	President, Staff and Jamaath members.
02.07.06 to 03.07.06	Fasting of MW – at Thanjavur.	STEPS Team & Jamaath Members.
18.08.06 to	Men workshop at Nagerkoil.	President, Ms. Ayisha, Ms. Easwari, Ms. Kamala.

21.08.06		
06.01.07	4th State Level Muslim Women's Conference Perambalur.	Minority Chair Person, Jamaat Members, Staff.
20.02.07	Health Training – Dr. Anne Victoria	Jamaat Members & Staff

List of Visitors to STEPS

- Ms. Nagma Imran & Mr. Raj New Delhi for Door Dharsan film Documentation
- Ms. Azra Nomani, International Journalist from United States Of America
- Mr.Haritha & Ms. Anuradha From HID Forum, Bangalore visited for Organisation Change and Gender Equality process.