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Advisory Panel

The advice by the Chairpersons of European Blind Union, African Blind Union and Latin American Blind Union provided valuable insight to the research team. Eminent demographers, anthropologists and experts in gender studies from several organisations have also been instrumental in shaping the report and lending support throughout the entire process of the study.

Panel of Consultants

Ms. Brigitta Brookeland, Chair, Women's Committee of the European Blind Union; Ms. Kicki Nordstrom, President, WBU, Tove Kittleson, Director NABD; Dr. Neena Herburne, Anthropologist in Denmark; Dr. Norma Tossedo, a psychologist in Uruguay; Dr. Asha Bhide, Director, Research and Development, NAB, Mumbai, India; Prof. Prabha Chawla, IGNOU, India; Ms. Kanchan Sinha, Oxfam India.

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I Background of the Survey

This present study is one of the agenda items of the plan of action 1996-2000 of the Women's Committee of the Asian Blind Union. Blind persons and their organizations around the world have united under a single forum known as 'World Blind Union' (WBU). The members of this forum represent over 165 countries of the world. For the purpose of management, the WBU has divided itself into seven regions. The organisations belonging to Asian countries constitute the 'Asian Blind Union' (ABU). The WBU and ABU have several Standing Committees that look into specific issues concerning the empowerment and full integration of persons with blindness.

In the recent past, WBU and its regional unions like ABU have focussed their attention on the gender question. For a long time, the activists in the disability sector believed that disability influences the lives of both males and females in a similar fashion; but a study conducted by UNICEF recently reveals that in reality, women and children receive less than 20% of the rehabilitation services. The study points out that where residential facilities are available, often these facilities either do not cater to women or women have poor access to them due to cultural, religious, or attitudinal barriers. The Committee on the Status of Blind Women in Asia is of the view that the rights of the blind and persons with other disabilities are most difficult to achieve without addressing the gender question within the disability rights movement. Similarly, if the women around the world do not recognize disability as one of the factors responsible for their marginalised status, the dream of achieving equality, development and peace may get only partially achieved.

The members of the ABU Standing Committee on the Status of Blind Women have committed themselves to the single objective of empowering the blind girls and women, since empowered persons have the ability to negotiate a more equitable distribution of power, by securing a greater space in the critical decision making processes in the home, in the community, and in the economic and political life. Moreover, empowerment is an essential part of any genuine development effort. In order to achieve the laudable objective of empowering the disempowered blind sisters, the Committee realised that it should most focus on two more objectives.

- 1 **to organise Blind Women Groups at local, and national levels,**
- 1 **to compile a document reflecting the status of blind women and girls in Asia in order to highlight their living conditions.**

The efforts of collecting information from as many as thirteen countries on the situation of blind girls and women often met with frustration as neither the government nor the

voluntary organisations in the member countries had conducted any studies to ascertain the socio-economic, political and cultural status of blind and disabled women. The data that was available was inadequate, 'hiding more than it would reveal'.

The few sources, which reflected on the status of disabled women, were found in the reports of the international organizations such as ILO, WHO, UNESCAP, UNICEF. The committee members, at times, had to rely on the anecdotal evidence for compiling the country reports.

From the analysis of the reports received from various countries in Asia, the picture which emerged of the status of blind women was that of the most disempowered, marginalised group of women, their visibility extremely poor, their concerns unrecognized and rights most often violated.

With regard to Employment

Some studies reveal that women with disabilities in developing countries are engaged in labour intensive, low paid, and home based employment. Their poor mobility further hampers their chance of gainful employment even in the informal labour sector. *'Employers show considerable prejudice in the placement of people with disability. It becomes more pronounced when it is a question of employing a woman with a disability'*. (as quoted in hidden sisters 1995, UNESCAP). Even in a country like USA, the census data of the year 1984 reveals that the disabled women working full time earn only 56% of the salary which is earned by full time employed males with disability.

With regard to Literacy

The ratio of literacy among blind girls and women in comparison with the literacy levels among blind and disabled males and non-disabled women is extremely low. In India, the literacy rate among women in the year 2000 was 50%, but, among blind girls the literacy rate was less than 1%. In other words, 50% sighted women cannot read and write and 99% blind girls and women lack literacy skills.

According to Mr. Hellender of UNDP, there are about 80 million women with disabilities in Asia. This figure is growing at the rate of 7000 women with disabilities per day. The highest rate of disabilities is among women belonging to developing countries. For example, while the global sex ratio is 1050 females against 1000 males, in India the sex ratio is 927 females against 1000 males. In contrast to this general trend, the NSSO percentage of blind women in rural areas is 53.85% and that of males is 46.15%. In urban areas, the percentage of women who are blind is 54.03% and of men who are blind it is 45.97%. These trends not only indicate a high prevalence of disability among females, but also confirm that women who are disabled or blind also have poor access to a nutritious diet, health facilities and to financial resources.

Several initiatives have been taken by various governments to ensure a better access to women in the developmental and poverty alleviation schemes. But, no such effort has been made to improve access of the blind and disabled women in the programmes and developmental schemes. As a result, hardly any improvement in the socio-economic and political status has been achieved so far as the blind and disabled women are concerned. On the basis of the report and its subsequent analysis, one can safely assume that all such factors that have influenced the status of women in general have also affected the blind women and girls. In addition to this, all impediments caused by disability have compounded the situation. The factors impeding the chance of blind girls and women to benefit from the existent policies, schemes and laws are matters of investigation and research.

Against this backdrop, the ABU Women's Committee has accorded a high priority to activities, which would bring to light the factors adversely influencing the status of blind girls and women at home, at place of work and in society at large. Reliable information on several aspects of the life conditions of blind women is of critical importance for planning a **Comprehensive, Enabling and Empowering** environment.

Hence, systematic information needs to be documented in order to demystify the belief that disability influences men and women similarly and to understand how the attitudes related to disability and gender, when compounded, create new forms of barriers to the development of women who are disabled/ blind.

Therefore, the ABU women's committee decided to conduct a study in collaboration with the partner organisations from the member countries in Asia. In India, this study has been conducted in collaboration with the NGO Forum on the Status of the Blind Women. This forum is composed of eight organisations of and for the blind, working at National, State and Local levels. Out of the eight member organisations, two are affiliated with World Blind Union and Asian Blind Union. This forum came into being in February 1997 and since then has worked in close co-operation with each other to give an impetus to the concerns of blind girls and women.

The Study

- 1 Specific objectives of the study
- 1 Methodology adapted
- 1 Coverage of study
- 1 Sample design and size
- 1 Data Entry & Processing

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Specific Objectives of the Study

Documentation and dissemination of concerns

Document the living conditions of the BWGs and disseminate their concerns and ideas.

Obstacles in way of women exercising rights

Understand the obstacles perceived by the BWGs in way of exercising their right to education, training, work and family life.

Support services and training required by women

Gauge the priorities of blind girls and women in terms of support services, information and training required by them.

Gauge the perception of BWGs regarding qualities of various levels of people

Gauge the level of self-esteem and self-concept of the BWGs and their perception of qualities of a leader, man, woman and an entrepreneur.

Relevance of organisations in life of blind

Estimate the relevance of organizations of the blind and of women in the life of BWGs.

Systematic generation of data for use as a positive tool

Generate data systematically so that it may be used as a tool by disability rights activists, human rights activists and women rights activists.

Reviews existing schemes, programmes and laws for creation of a base

Provide a basis for initiating a review of the existing schemes, programmes and laws focussing on women with a view to making them realistic and accessible for the BWGs.

Methodology Adopted

In order to collect information on the status of blind women and girls in India, an in-depth interview as a technique was adopted. A questionnaire was designed with both close-ended and open-ended questions. For the purpose of collecting quantitative data, close-ended questions were framed. However, for the collection of the qualitative data, open-ended questions had to be devised.

The questionnaire was classified in the following 7 sections:-

Classification of Qualitative Data

- Section 1 Personal Data.
- Section 2. Educational & Vocational Training.
- Section 3. Employment & Economic Status.
- Section 4. Family: Marital Status & Children.
- Section 5. Participation in the Organizations of the Blind, and of the Women.
- Section 6. Value System : Perception of leadership qualities, Male and Female Qualities.
- Section 7. Self-concept & Self-esteem.

During the face-to-face interviews, each of the respondents was met by the investigating team, which usually had two members, *the professional investigator* and *a blind woman*, generally, the blind woman was a member of the '*NGO forum on the status of the Blind Women*' from the respective state. The arrangement to involve blind women in the investigating team was deliberate with the objective of familiarising the blind women leaders with research techniques and to bring them into contact with their sisters in their own region.

The interviews were conducted often in the regional language. The investigators after translating the responses from their native language to English recorded them in the respective sections of the questionnaire.

The responses were recorded both in the templates and on the tape recorders.

Coverage of Study

The study was conducted in 14 states of India covering Northern, Western and Southern regions. The states in the Eastern regions could not be included in the study as the forum members had no presence and links with the organizations in Eastern states. A sample of 450 blind girls and women covering 24 states was selected.

The 14 states in the three regions of India were divided in this study on the following pattern:

<u>I Northern Region</u>	<u>II Western Region</u>	<u>III Southern Region</u>
1. Delhi	1. Goa	1. Andhra Pradesh
2. Haryana	2. Gujarat	2. Karnataka
3. Himachal Pradesh	3. Maharashtra	3. Kerala
4. Punjab	4. Madhya Pradesh	4. Tamil Nadu
5. Uttar Pradesh	5. Rajasthan	

Sample Design and Size

Due to the budget and time constraints, it was decided that the study would be administered on a sample of 450 blind girls and women in the age group of 15-45 years, which was later extended to 15-50 years. The sample of 450 blind girls was divided equally amongst the women from each of the Northern, Western and Southern regions. Further, the sample was divided into 3 age bands, having an equal number of girls and women in each of the age bands.

Division of sample into 3 age bands

Band 1 : 15-25 years

Band 2 : 26-35 years

Band 3 : 36-50 years

The sample was selected in equal proportions from urban, semi-urban and rural areas. In the selection of sample two methods were adopted:

- 1. Snowball Approach**
- 2. NGO Contacts.**

The initial contact with the blind girls and women was established with the help of institutions working with and for the blind persons in each of the selected cities of the region. These blind women made further contacts possible with other blind girls and women. Contact in the rural areas with blind girls and women could not be made easily. In fact, most of the respondents in the study were identified through the CBR projects.

The constraints of this method of selecting the sample are several, but the most conspicuous constraints are:

1. That the sample is not truly representative since the urban and the rural proportion of the sample does not commensurate with the actual rural and urban proportions of the Indian population.
2. That more than 60% of the respondents in this sample had an access to services and facilities provided by NGO's and Government against the overall 5% coverage of blind persons under the services and facilities. In other words, it means that the respondents had greater access to education, training, employment & information in comparison with the larger reality.

Data Entry & Processing

All the completed questionnaires were sent by the research team to the office of the Chairperson of ABU Women's Committee. The Principal Investigator post-coded all the close-ended questionnaires. The open-ended questions were also post-coded, since a specific pattern of responses emerged in this section.

The data was processed and analyzed on the computer centrally for rural and urban areas. Finally, the data was aggregated to provide findings for each state and three regions.

The research findings have not only been analysed on the basis of state, region and age but also, on the thrust of the analysis which focused on the major issues that had been classified according to the seven sections of the questionnaire.

The central processing/ reporting was done by the ABU Women's Committee in consultation with the research team.

Analysis of Findings on ...

- 1 Poverty and Disability
- 1 Education
- 1 Family and marital life
- 1 Children
- 1 Self-esteem

Analysis of Findings

Findings of the present study have certainly revalidated the belief that blind women and girls (BWGs) are among those who are the least educated, mostly poor, with limited access to family property, majority of them single, and with no social security system available in the declining years of their life. The socio-economic, cultural, and political status of blind women and girls is far inferior to that of the non-disabled women and even more inferior to that of their male blind counterparts.

Poverty and Disability

This study paid considerable attention to ascertain the economic circumstances in which blind women and girls (BWGs) live. The facts that have been established suggest that: -

- a) 72% (41+31) of the selected sample of **blind women and girls (BWGs)** belong to families having low income.
- b) 99% of the women revealed that they have no independent source of income.
- c) Out of those employed, majority are engaged in home-based, contractual, piece-rate work which is often labour intensive, time-consuming, low paid, irregular and unstable.

At a glance, some 19% of the respondents earn less than Rs. 500/- (US \$ 11), 21% less than Rs. 1000/- (US \$ 22), 33% earn an approximate of Rs 2000/- (US \$ 44) and a meagre 3% earn more than Rs. 5000/- (US \$ 109) a month.

Economic Empowerment

“Economic Empowerment” implies a better quality of material life through sustainable livelihoods owned and managed by women.

By this definition of economic empowerment, majority of women with disabilities can be counted among the most disempowered persons, as 99% of them are unemployed and those who are employed depend on irregular and unstable sources of income. Even otherwise, poverty is higher amongst women, since they rarely own any assets, particularly land. Consequently, they have no capital. Their skill levels being low, they get into low paid manual work and often work as marginal workers. So far as the case of BWGs is concerned, their chance of remunerative work gets bleaker even in the informal sector due to prejudice of the employers who often presume that women with disabilities would reach their place of work late, take more holidays, will frequently fall sick and would work at a slower pace. In addition, the employers hesitate to employ the disabled women considering them vulnerable and prone to abuse at work. But in reality, the blind women, who are gainfully employed, enjoy better health and are better informed about their rights as workers, as opposed to women who are dependent on others for their survival.

In order to reduce poverty amongst women in general, a number of schemes have been launched by the Government of India. After the enactment of disabilities act 1995, 3% budget on the poverty alleviation schemes has been earmarked for persons with disabilities. **The report of the Chief Commissioner Disabilities 1998-99** suggests that the budget earmarked for poverty alleviation has gone by and large unutilized, so far as persons with disabilities are concerned. The same holds true for the schemes aimed at women with disabilities. In order to make the poverty alleviation schemes work for the non-disabled women, the Government has launched the Indira Mahila Yojna (IMY) scheme with an objective to optimise benefits of these government schemes particularly for women. But, no such efforts have been made to improve the utilisation of these schemes in the context of blind or disabled women. Without recognising the specific circumstances and needs of BWGs, the schemes aimed at reducing poverty may not result in enhancing the economic status of BWGs.

Education

While education is an important link to the future for all people, but to the disabled people getting a good education can be a matter of survival. Hence, this study made an attempt to find whether the BWGs were equipped with this, instrument of survival, or if there were any barriers in their way to access education.

- 1 As per the data collected, about 99% BWGs had no access to any form of education. The rate of unemployment commensurates with the rate of illiteracy to establish that the economic opportunities depend on level and quality of education that the people receive. Hence, the 99% illiterate BWGs had no option but, to grow into illiterate women, leaving them with poor ability to exercise their rights and lead a dignified life.

As per the objectives of the study, an attempt has been made to capture the perceptions of blind women and girls about the obstacles, which impeded their chance to education. Suggestions were also solicited from them about the support required that would enable them to receive some education. The most common obstacles cited by them include:

- 1 negative attitudes of the parents by 57%,
- 1 lack of awareness about educational opportunities by 37% and
- 1 blindness disability by 10%.

Indeed, these articulations highlight the prevailing social attitudes towards females, since it is a common knowledge that while educating the boys is regarded as an investment for future economic returns, educating girls is understood to give fewer returns. But, investing in the education of a girl with disabilities is definitely seen as a bad investment since, outside the home there are hardly any opportunities available for her. While conscious efforts of civil societies, governments and international bodies have resulted in bringing down illiteracy among women in general, no such efforts have been made to improve the level of literacy and education among blind women and girls. As per the census in India, 1991, rate of literacy among women in 1991 was 32.29%, and has been improved to 50% in the year 2000, as per the NSSO. However, for the BWGs, no improvement of any degree has been recorded.

99% rate of illiteracy among BWGs is a scandal that has gone unchecked!

‘What would enable the BWGs to access education?’

The response to this question has brought forth the facts that 55% BWGs need a special school with hostel facilities and another 15% recorded a preference for a mainstream school with hostel. The group of respondents in the age range of 25 to 50 years felt that home based education through distance mode would be a viable option in their context. 10% blind women and girls were convinced of the fact that the sightless women cannot benefit from any form of education. And, 5% blind women expressed that the education cannot make any improvement in their status.

The pattern of responses expressed by the blind women and girls in the study not only suggest that a school with a hostel is of critical importance to solve the problem of their education but, it also compels us to take into account the facts related to the violence imposed on the women. Statistics reveal that in India the rate of crime against women increased by 37% between 1987 and 1991, 7.4% in 1994 and further by 5.9% in 1995, this regular increase in the rate of violence further escalated. The reported instances of violence against women include eve-teasing, abduction, rape and trafficking of women in prostitution. Most of these instances occur among those groups of women, who are vulnerable, trapped in poverty and lack knowledge about their rights. By this definition of vulnerability, the BWGs are among the ‘the high risk categories’ since they are not only poor, but lack awareness and suffer from a low self esteem, but leaving them with greater likelihood of falling prey to different forms of violence. The responses expressed in the questionnaire by 5% of BWGs indicate that education that does not promise self-reliance has no relevance for the blind.

The distance education system, however is a potent means to empower disadvantaged groups who, due to several factors could not benefit from the regular face-to-face mode of education. But distance education it has not reached the BWGs yet, who are one of the most disadvantaged in the country. In the recent past, the *National Open School and Indira Gandhi National Open University* have made some efforts for reaching out to persons with disabilities. However, the awareness about these opportunities is poor and has not reached most people yet.

The BWGs in this study articulated the need for higher education for themselves but according to 57% of them, *parental support* is critical to the reception of higher education. 30% respondents articulated the need for *financial support* and yet another 29% BWGs felt that, without *safe hostels and transport system*, higher education cannot be achieved. Similarly, high importance has been attached to opportunities for **vocational training**. 65% of the respondents documented the need for *vocational training opportunities*. 47% express that *career guidance and counselling* is needed and 15% articulated the fundamental need of *information regarding availability of range and variety of courses, admission procedures* and location of the institutes. Yet, another 30% BWGs said, that after or during the training period, *internship* is necessary for giving them practice in the real work setting.

From these articulations, it becomes clear that there is an urgent need to bring some change in the attitude of society and of the parents towards BWGs. Over the last two centuries, the consistent efforts of social reformers like Mahatma Phule, Dayanand Saraswati, Mahatma Gandhi and of women's organisations, government and international bodies have brought about some transformation in the social attitude towards women in general. But, hardly any systematic effort has been made to mould the social attitudes towards disabled women and girls. After Independence, Government of India launched several schemes to protect dignity of socially and economically backward women. Special vocational training Institutes, working women's hostels and scholarship schemes have been launched and these have certainly made improvements in the lives of marginalised women. Here, the question arises that the similar needs of BWGs have remained unattended resulting in high level of illiteracy, poverty and social deprivation among them. Therefore, provision of hostels, scholarship schemes, career planning, and vocational training opportunities coupled with campaigns for social mobilisation are of critical relevance in the overall well-being of BWGs.

Family and Marital Life

In the Indian society, marriage is a norm. Here, a girl right from her birth is considered as a 'property/ belonging of others' and her own parents are considered her mere custodians. The 'others' here refer to the husband and in-laws of the girl. This means that we almost presume that a parental home is a temporary shelter and every girl will have her own home only after she gets married. In contrast to this social system, the case of BWGs presents an atypical picture since 73% of them remain single and of the married, 20% are married to elderly males and widowers. In states like Haryana and U.P, some of them are given as a gift to the husband of the sighted sister reducing their identity to a mere commodity.

The present study probed into the reasons for the single status of the BWGs. The most common factors expressed by the respondents include: -

- a) 31% of the respondents said that '*parents didn't try*' and that '*no one cared*'.
- b) 28% women gave somewhat similar response and said that they '*didn't find someone*'.
- c) As many as 13% blind women confirmed that '*they don't trust men*' for the fear of being deserted.
- d) 13% said that they are *not interested*
- e) About 12% blind women expressed that *sightless cannot get married*.

The factors stated by the respondents of this study again confirm that the parental attitude is extremely negative towards BWGs. So, it is natural for such women to have a low self-esteem since the immediate environment reinforces a negative image. Though, it is a fact that in the traditional Indian homes, marriages are arranged and the two factors that are fundamental in an arranged marriage are a) the physical appearance of the girl and b) the financial capacity of the parents. Here, the former factor i.e. the 'physical appearance' gets compromised as blindness causes deformity of the eyes. The 2nd factor is again not in favour since 72% blind girls belong to low income families. Therefore, finding a husband for a woman with physical disparity and with a poor capacity to compensate the physical loss by handsome dowry, results in the 'single' status for 73% BWGs.

The present study not only looked into the factors responsible for the single status of BWGs but it also made an attempt to capture the **blind womens' perceptions of themselves** as wives and mothers.

Interestingly, 50% of the married respondents expressed that they *do not require any extra support in managing their household responsibilities*. However, the other 50% articulated that due to poverty they are unable to manage their daily needs. Therefore, some financial support, if provided would enable them to take care of their unmet domestic needs. Only 35% women expressed the need for help of a sighted person in *maintaining their households*. These responses definitely suggest that the blind women and girls can handle the responsibility of managing a home.

The analysis of the type of support required indicates that it is not the blindness that hampers their self-sufficiency. In fact, it is the **poor economic status** that disables them to cope with the family needs. A woman, blind or sighted, today, manages much more than her predecessors had to. Before the women joined the workforce, most of them were full time occupied with domestic responsibilities. However, the scenario changed for the woman after her joining the labour force since, now, she not only manages her traditional role in the domestic domain but also has to work outside the home as a wage earner. Education of the young ones, care of the elderly and the sick family members has always been a part of her job responsibilities. On one hand, the women around the world are struggling for an equal status by sharing the responsibilities equally with the men but the difference in the blind woman's struggle is, that she is fighting to establish that she too is a woman and can be as diverse and as dependable as her non-disabled female counterparts.

The blind women in their fight to achieve status of equality with non-disabled women though have invariably tried to show their ability to cope with the normal expectations of the society of women. However, in the present study, on probing into the question of gender roles, the responses present a very progressive and balanced outlook. The attributes that have been given almost equal preference for male and female traits include:

Male/Female Attributes

QUALITIES/ATTRIBUTES	MALE %	FEMALE %
Loving and Caring	17	18
Encouraging	15	17
Helping	25	33
Explain clearly	10	10

The qualities/attributes articulated for male and female characteristics by the BWGs definitely establish that an ideal man and woman is that who possesses the above-referred qualities. There are no specific qualities mentioned by the BWGs for men and women as such.

Children or Maternal responsibilities

Through the present study we documented the responses of blind women on the question of their **maternal responsibilities**.

- 1 While 80% of the respondents in the present study express the desire to be a mother, only 20% of them express their disinterest to have any children. On further probing the disinterested group, the study reveals that 60% of them had a *fear of passing on their blindness to their children*. And, 15% were *apprehensive about their ability to bring up a child*. 20% of them gave the typical response and recorded that the blind cannot be mothers.
- 1 80% of the BWGs who expressed the desire of being a mother were asked whether they would need any **support** in the upbringing of their children. The most common responses to this show that: -
 1. 40% of blind women can look after the upbringing of their children with some extra *financial support*.
 2. 27% of the respondents express that *after school coaching by sighted, educated person* is needed urgently to help her sighted children with their scholastic needs.
 3. Another 22% express the need for *infant care facilities* that would ensure proper hygiene and wellbeing of the young ones of sightless mothers .

These responses compel one to think that, while in a country like India, where the Government has launched a scheme to encourage parents to marry the girl child after the age of 18 years so that their maternity is deferred, yet, in the case of blind women and girls contrastingly, a marriage does not happen for a majority at all and out of those blind women who do get married, 27% cannot have children since their husbands are already old or have children from the first marriage!

The study establishes that blind mothers require support in taking care of the physical and educational needs of their young children. As a matter of fact, a majority of non-disabled working women also require assistance in similar areas. Perhaps, the provision of crèches for the children of working mothers is an outcome of the common needs of the working mothers. This certainly does not bear any stigma. So, if a blind mother is also assisted in the upbringing of her infant through a crèche or any other scheme, it should not be out of context.

During the school years, children are usually assisted by some or the other adults in coping with their homework assignments. The Indian school system is such that every child spends 2 to 2 1/2 hours on the homework. Most often the non-working mothers help the children with homework, but a large number of working mothers and uneducated mothers resort to private coaching after the school. Therefore, the blind women whose economic status is low and who, due to sight impairment cannot assist her sighted child with the academic needs, is justified in articulating a need for sighted assistance for helping her child with the educational requirements. If such arrangements are worked out that take care of the needs of blind mothers' infants and school going children, the fear to manage children and a married life would definitely vanish slowly and acceptance of Blind women in marriage may improve.

Participation of BWGs in the Self Help Movement

It is a fact that voluntary organisations of the blind and of the women have played an important role in transforming the status of persons with disability and of women in general. The improvements made in reducing the rate of illiteracy, mortality, morbidities, and poverty amongst women are significant and noticeable. No one can deny the fact that concerted efforts of women's organisations around the world have enhanced their participation in all facets of life. The women's movement has been in the forefront of drafting amendments in existing laws that have been discriminatory and even drafting new legislations such as on dowry, sex detection and pre-selection, misrepresentation of women by media. This movement has not been confined only to the urban middle class, as over the years it has spread to the rural areas and women from the socio- economic disadvantaged sections too have been organising themselves against domestic violence, land rights, water or alcoholism e.t.c.

- 1 Similarly the organisations of persons with disability have worked towards getting such laws passed which are critical to the protection of their rights and practices. However, both women's and the disabled's movement has a poor representation of blind and disabled women. The present study confirms that a meagre 20% of the respondents were associated with the organisations of the blind. Of these, 95% had no *role to play* and were just members on paper. Only 5% of them had some role though *at the periphery of the organisations*.
- 1 So far as the BWGs participation in the mainstream women's movement is concerned, the situation is even grim. While 80% BWGs express the desire to join the blind women organisations, in reality none of the respondents were associated with any group of women. The data available confirms that poor presence of BWGs in the women's movement and in the disability rights movement is a key factor resulting in poor recognition of BWGs' specific concerns. The study made an effort to elicit from BWGs the reasons for their poor participation, and what they articulated suggest that 25% of BWGs face *time constraints*, 20% said that they have *problems for commuting*, 10% felt they have *no knowledge*, 20% said that they cannot make worthwhile contributions.

From the problems stated by the BWGs, it could be inferred that, the commuting problems stated by them normally happen due to 3 reasons:

1. Poor economic status
2. Hostility in the environment against women
3. Lack of training in mobility with white cane.

The constraint of time can be appreciated since BWGs who are married and have full time jobs probably are left with little time for political work.

Self Esteem

- 1 It can also be noted that low self-esteem compels the BWGs to lead a passive life. It is natural for any one to assimilate the poor self-image of her if the immediate environment consistently reinforces that 'you can not'.
- 1 The data documented reveals that a good proportion of BWGs held their blindness as the sole reason for denying themselves of every opportunity in life e.g. *10% said they are not educated due to blindness, 20% said they have nothing to contribute to the work of organisations as they are blind, 20% are not married because they are blind, 15% not employed, 15% can't have children and 40% BWGs feel that they are not beautiful because they are blind!*
- 1 The low self-esteem and poor self-concept cannot be transformed in the absence of improvements in the attitudes of the family and the society towards BWGs. If the BWGs are to be liberated from the poor self-image then it perhaps becomes necessary to first help the parents and other family members to accept the talents and abilities of blind persons. A study conducted by Margaret A. Nosek on women with physical disabilities confirms that self-esteem in women with physical disabilities is more strongly influenced by social and environmental factors than by the fact of having a disability. Whether the woman had a severe disability or a mild disability, had ever been in special education or integrated education, it did not make much difference to their self-esteem. The study establishes that it is the women with disabilities who were not working, who were deprived of a warm and committed companionship, who had experienced physical or sexual abuse, and who had the lowest self-esteem. In the process of restoration of self-esteem and dignity of BWGs, not only parents, communities and Government are required to play a role, but also the blind women themselves ought to take charge of the situation.

‘A strong Disability Rights Movement must be based on people who have a feeling of self-esteem. With self-esteem, people can feel they have rights and deserve to have rights’.

Who should initiate the process of empowerment?

The question here is **who should initiate the process of empowerment?** Perhaps, there is no one person or institution or agency, which alone empowers women. The creation of an **enabling** environment through strong polity support, the work of voluntary organisations, women’s groups, academicians and researchers, committed bureaucrats and other support groups are among the multitude of agents who can provide support to take forward the agenda of empowerment of women. And yet, ultimately it is the woman herself who has to empower herself within the family and outside the home.

Responses of BWGs Respondents

Classification of Questionnaire

Section 1: Educational Status and Vocational Training

Section 2: Employment and Economic Status

Section 3: Family: Marital Status and Children

Section 4: Participation in organisations of the Blind and of women

Section 5: Value System Perceptions of Leadership Qualities, Male and Female Qualities

Section 6: Self-Concept and Self-Esteem.

Section 1: EDUCATIONAL STATUS AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING

It is estimated according to some studies that 2 % persons with disabilities have access to some or the other form of education. As per the study conducted by ICEVW report 1999 about 5% blind and low vision persons have access to education, however, the blind girls' share remains a proportionately low share in education.

Out of the sample of 450 of this study, only 1% had access to education. The remaining 99% uneducated respondents, articulated the following reasons for their inability to receive education:

- a) 50% of BWG held the *conservative and unsupportive attitude of their parents* as major factor.
- b) 37% of these BWG stated the reason of '*lack of awareness*' about educational opportunities.
- c) 10% BWG perceived *blindness* as the reason for depriving them of education.

1.1 Forms of Education

As there are several options available for receiving education for both blind and sighted persons, this study made an attempt to understand which form of education the BWGs would prefer to choose.

- a) 55% of the respondents expressed the preference for *a special school for the blind with hostel facility*.
- b) 15% BWGs expressed their preference for *home based study* opportunities.
- c) 15% BWGs prefer *regular school with hostel facility*.

1.2 Higher Studies

An attempt has been made to seek the views of BWGs on higher education. Questions were framed to document the BWG's understanding of problems in the process of acquiring higher education. And additionally the critical support that, in their view, would enable them to pursue higher education. 58% BWG responded strongly in favour of pursuing higher education.

Support for Higher Studies

- a) 57% of the BWGs feel that the *support by families* is a critical area for higher education.
- b) 30% BWGs expressed that *financial support/scholarship* is needed by them.
- c) 29% BWG articulated that *transport facilities and hostels* are needed.
- d) 10% of BWGs feel that *braille books and audio books* are of critical necessity.
- e) 15% BWGs feel the *support of sighted readers and writers* critical to higher education.

1.3 Vocational training

165% of the respondents expressed a need to undertake vocational training courses.

On asking what support they needed, following pattern of responses came forth.

- a) 47% BWGs said that they require *career counselling and guidance*.
- b) 30% of BWGs expressed *hostel and financial support* critical to their pursuing vocational courses which are located away from house.
- c) Another 30% stated that *internship or opportunity for practical training* after completing the vocational course is necessary.
- d) 15% of the respondents said that they require *information regarding location of training institute, range & variety of courses* available and admission procedure and criteria.

Section 2: EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC STATUS

Many studies have shown high correlation between disability and poverty. Understandably, several causes of disability occur due to poor economic status since the economically deprived sections have inadequate access to nutritious diet, good sanitation facilities and hygienic living and working conditions. Above all, dwindling health facilities in public sector and privatisation of medical care have further perpetuated physical disabilities among poor people.

The present study has also brought forth such findings, which only reiterate the above mentioned assumptions that disability and poverty are closely interlinked. The study has revealed that majority of the BWGs belong to the lower strata of society.

2.1 The family income graph depicts that:

- a) 41% BWGs belong to families having a monthly income of less than Rs.1000/- (US \$22)
- b) 31% BWGs belong to families having monthly income between Rs. 1000/- and 2000/- (US \$22-45)
- c) 15% BWGs belong to families having monthly income between Rs. 2000/- and 5,000/- (US \$45 to 110)
- d) A mere 8% BWGs belong to families having a monthly income between Rs. 5,000/- to Rs. 10,000/- (US \$ 110 to 220)
- e) A nominal 5% of BWG belong to families having above Rs. 10,000 (US \$ 220) monthly income.

2.2 Personal Income

Unemployment and underemployment among women with disabilities in general and blind women in particular is in disturbing magnitude.

The **UNESCAP** report entitled 'Hidden Sisters' states that the poorest among the poor are women with disabilities who drag the compounded burden of their gender disability and poverty. The present study indicates that about 99% blind women do not have independent source of income. Out of the 1% who are employed, majority of them are underemployed.

This study also brings forth the levels of **personal income** of the blind women who are engaged in organised and unorganised sector of employment. The graph depicts that:

- a) 19% BWG's income is below Rs 500/- per month. (US \$ 11)
- b) 21% BWG 's income is between Rs. 500/- and 1000/- p.m. (US \$ 11-22)
- c) 33% BWG's income is between Rs. 1000/- to 2500/- p.m. (US \$ 22-50)
- d) 22% BWG's earn between Rs. 2500/- to 5000/- p.m. (US \$ 50-110)
- e) Negligible 3% earn above Rs 5000/- per month. (US \$ 110)

Levels of personal income

It is evident from the data that average BWGs belong to economically backward section of the society as the income of their families and their own earning capacity is extremely low.

2.3 Options

This study made a modest attempt to understand perceptions of the blind women and girls of the *options* they would prefer to choose for their *economic independence*.

51% respondents articulated an urgent need for becoming economically independent.

60% would prefer to join *organised sector* and 40% would prefer engaging themselves in *self employment* ventures in *unorganised sector*.

The BWGs express the following inhibitions for opting for self-employment ventures.

- a) **25% women feel that due to blindness they cannot manage private enterprise.**
- b) **15% women said that they lack knowledge about running the enterprise.**
- c) **14% express that they lack confidence in managing a self employment venture.**
- d) **13.3% women have fear of being cheated due to vision impairment.**

BWGs inhibitions for opting for self-employment

From the findings, it is clear that BWGs particularly give higher preference to employment in the organised sector for the purpose of safety and security as fear of being cheated and lack of confidence in managing a private enterprise has been expressed by a high percentage of BWGs.

Section 3 : FAMILY : MARITAL STATUS AND CHILDREN

In the Indian society, marriage is a norm. Here, a girl right from her birth is considered as a 'Paraya dhan' (property/ belonging of others) and her own parents are mere custodians. The 'others' here refer to the family she is married into.

The findings, which this study has brought forth regarding the marital status of blind women, are in sharp contrast with the reality for women in general. Through this study, a merely 27% of the BWGs were found married across the rural and urban areas in all the three zones.

Married

The pattern of the marital status of BWGs in the whole country appears to be the same with a marginal difference as is shown below

South zone	25%
West zone	26%
North zone	29.5%

Note: (In all of the three zones the three age bands that were reached in the study were

Age Bands

- Band 1: 15-18 years
- Band 2: 18-30 years
- Band 3: 30+ years

For the purpose of this section of the study, the girls in the age band of 15-18 years were excluded since they haven't yet attained the marriageable age.

3.1 Reasons

The research also attempted to seek the reasons for the married and unmarried state of the women in marriageable age and above.

The following circumstances were stated responsible by the unmarried BWGs for their single status:

- a) 31% said that '*parents didn't try*' and that '*no one cared*'.
- b) 28% women gave the response that they '*didn't find someone*'.
- c) Another reason that got substantiated by as many women as 13% through out India is that '*they don't trust men*'. When the response is probed more in depth, the women seem to have developed this distrust due to precedents or instances, of violence, desertion, bride-burning, e.t.c. that they observed in family or friends or neighbours.
- d) 13% said that they are *not interested*
- e) 12% said that they feel that they can't get married because they are *blind*.

Since about 27% of the participants in this study were married. Therefore, the married sample of BWGs was asked to give their reasons for opting for marriage. Zone wise responses are as follows:

- a) While 40% BWGs in *south* and 55% in *west* said they got married because they *needed company or family, and 'didn't want to live alone'*, only 21% in North stated this reason for marriage.
- b) Instead, 68% women in North stated that they got married because *the parents pushed*. Blind women in other zones also gave this response but in less number i.e. 22% in west and 42% in south.

The study has also shown some very dark cases where blind girls were pushed to marriage along with a sighted sister to the same man.

3.2 Children

The married blind women were asked if they have children, in response to which the data reveals that 73% have children and 27% do not.

Further, on asking these 27% BWGs if they would like to have children, the response 'yes' was given by 80% women and 20% said a 'no'.

3.3 Reasons

The probing for the reasons for not wanting a child by the 20% brought forth these reasons:

- a) 60% BWGs said a 'no' for *scare* of passing her own blindness to the progeny.
- b) 20% feel that *blind women can't be mothers*, mainly in the rural and backward areas.
- c) 15% gave the response of '*can't take care*', perhaps again owing to their perception of their own disability of **blindness**.

However, looking at the various reasons for a 'yes' for wanting a child,

- a) 58% BWGs want a child because they feel that '*the child will help*'.
- b) 42% BWGs want a child *for the experience of motherhood* and for *their liking for children*.

3.4 SUPPORT REQUIRED

The research aimed some questions to find support required by blind women and girls in the **area of managing home and children**.

a. Support for Managing Home

50% of women said that they need help in managing home and 50% said that they don't.

Areas of Support - Home

- a) 39% BWGs said that they need *financial support* in running their homes.

- b) 35% BWGs feel a need of *help in household chores* like cleaning e.t.c.
- c) 16% BWGs expressed a problem in *outdoor mobility* like shopping and need help there.

DO NOT COPY

Type of support required for managing home

b. Support required for children

- a) 40% BWGs require *financial support* for bringing up of their children.
- b) 27% BWGs feel the need of an *after school coaching* help by a sighted, educated person for their child.
- c) 22% BWGs need help in taking care of the infant's *hygiene and cleanliness*.

Section 4 : PARTICIPATION IN ORGANISATIONS OF THE BLIND AND OF WOMEN

All the 450 respondents in the present study responded to the questions focussed on seeking their role in the organisation of blind as well as of women. Only 20% are members, while 80% are not members of the organisations of the blind.

A meagre 1% BWGs are members of women organisations.

95% are ordinary members and only 5% are senior members.

Out of those who are at present not associated with any organisations I.E. 99%, 75% express a willingness to take active part in the organisations of blind, whereas 70% BWGs also express preference for organisations of women. The average 30% women prefer working both for organisations of blind and of women.

4.1 Reasons for joining the organisations of the blind that are most frequently stated by the BWGs are in the following order:

- a) 70% *want to help*.
- b) 50% *will get help*.
- c) 40% want to join the organisations for *sharing* with other blind.
- d) 20% feel that they *would gain knowledge* by participating in the work of organisations.

4.2 Women's Organisations

70% BWGs want to participate in women's organisation.

30% do not want to participate.

The **constraints** expressed by women for not joining the organisations of the blind and of the women.

- a) 25% said they have *no time*.
- b) 20% said that they have *commuting problems*.
- c) 20% said that they have *nothing to contribute*.
- d) 10% women stated that they *do not have the knowledge* to become active in organisations.

Constraints for not working organisations

The reasons for wanting to join the women's organisations that the BWGs gave are:

- a) 40% want to join *for sharing* with other blind women.
- b) 20% want to join women's organisations because they feel *safety* among women.
- c) 17% women *want to help other blind women*.

Reasons for working to join organisations
Section 5: VALUE SYSTEM PERCEPTIONS OF LEADERSHIP QUALITIES, MALE AND FEMALE QUALITIES

5.1 Perceptions of Leadership Qualities

The study made an attempt to understand perceptions of BWG about the qualities of a leader, of a male, of a female. The respondents have articulated the following qualities:

- a) 34% BWGs coded *helping and serving nature* as the most important qualities in a leader like in Mother Teresa, Mahatma Gandhi.
- b) 20% BWGs attach importance to *honesty and truthfulness* in a leader.
- c) 10% attach importance to the *ability to communicate well in speech and writing*.
- d) 7% women express that the leaders should be *bold and courageous*.

It's a pleasure to mention here that 64% BWGs find the present Prime Minister Sh. Atal Bihari Vajpayee as an ideal leader.

Leadership Qualities in Self

Interestingly, the respondents who attribute helping and serving nature, good communication skills, honesty, boldness and confidence as qualities of good leader, when describing their own abilities which would make them into effective leaders, gave the following responses: -

- a) 18% BWGs perceive their own *communication skills* as a quality to become a good leader.
- b) 15% say that they can be leaders because they are *inspiring and motivating*.
- c) 12% look at their *honesty and sincerity* as qualities for being a good leader.
- d) 10% BWGs feel that they can be good leaders because they have *helping and serving*.
- e) 10% feel *confidence in self* can make them a good leader.

5.2 Areas of Support required

The women when expressing the areas of support required by them in becoming effective leaders came up with the following responses.

- a) 25% need help in *building confidence*
- b) 23% need *knowledge and information*
- c) 10% training in *communication skills*

5.3 Perceptions of Gender Roles

Due to low participation of BWG in education, employment, social, cultural and political life, many who are associated with the organisations of the blind often felt that perhaps BWG have a very orthodox and conventional outlook to the roles men and women play in society. Through this study an attempt has been made to understand the perceptions of the BWG about the qualities of males and of females.

While describing the **qualities of a male**, the most frequented responses reveal that

- a) 17% idealised the men who are *affectionate, loving and caring*.
- b) 25% BWG said men of *helping nature* are ideal
- c) 15% liked men who are *encouraging*.
- d) 10% like those who *explain things clearly and nicely*.

The responses of BWGs on the **qualities of female** reveal that they accord importance to almost similar set of behaviours and values among females as that in case of males. The pattern of responses is as follows:

- a) 33% women give high importance to *helping and serving quality* in women.
- b) 18% opt for *affectionate, loving and caring* women.
- c) 17% go for *encouraging* women.
- d) 10% like a woman who *explains well*.
- e) 7% look for *courage* as an ideal quality in a woman.

Section 6 : SELF-CONCEPT AND SELF-ESTEEM

The BWGs have a relatively low self-esteem, which could be seen in the projections of the study. In order to understand the self concept of BWGs and their levels of self esteem, all the BWGs contacted in the study were asked if they they were beautiful in their own opinion. The responses to this question show a similar pattern through North and South Zone with an exception of the West Zone.

While In **North and South, 50% BWGs** thought that they were **not beautiful** and 50% said they were, in **West** as many as **80% BWGs think that they are beautiful.**

The research also probed into the reasons for which the BWGs feel ‘ **not beautiful**’.

The pattern of the responses is as follows :

- a) *30% BWGs* don't think they are beautiful because of their *complexion and physical features.*
- b) *27%* said they were not beautiful because of their *blindness.*
- c) *20%* BWGs said that they think they are not beautiful because *the others tell them so.*
- d) *10%* said that they *feel* they are not beautiful:

Recommendations by Respondents

In this section we have presented the areas of support expressed by BWGs that they have perceived as critical to their participation in economic, social, cultural and political systems.

Throughout the study, effort has also been made to capture the perceptions by the BWGs regarding the obstacles that they feel have hampered their right to lead a full and dignified life. It is essential on the part of government and non-government organizations and society to systematically remove the barriers impeding the chance of BWGs to lead a full and dignified life. It would be most appropriate to provide BWGs the type of support that has been articulated and prioritized by them in various parts of this study.

Areas of support prioritized by the blind women and girls (BWGs)

1. School education

For us of education required :

- a) 55% BWGs expressed the need for a special school with hostel facility.
- b) 15% require hostel facility along with a regular mainstream school.
- c) 15% blind women and girls prefer home-based education.

2. Higher education

For excess to higher education :

- a) 57% expressed that family support is critical to receive higher education.
- b) 30% expressed financial support vital for the reception of higher education.
- c) 29% felt that hostels near the colleges would help them purchase their goal of education.
- d) 15% require sighted readers and writers for which payment should be provided by the government by way of readers' allowance.
- e) 10% BWGs immediately need Braille and audio books for pursuing higher education.

3. Vocational training

In the area of vocational training:

- a) 47% said that they need career counseling and guidance so that they take up courses leading to economic independence. Career guidance for BWG also includes information about the vocational training centers, the admission criteria, etc.
- b) 30% respondents articulated the need for opportunities of practical experience in the real work setting for atleast 1-2 years after completing the training. Therefore, govt. and NGOs should offer scheme of stipends to interns.
- c) 30% respondents expressed that financial support and hostel facility near the vocational training center is a must.

4. Employment

Regarding employment:

- a) 60% blind women recorded preference to join organized workforce whereas 40% women would prefer to pursue self-employment as a career.
- b) Majority of the respondents articulated the need for training in managing a small enterprise.
- c) Training in micro financing and project planning and preparation has been expressed as an area of support by a large number.
- d) Information about financial loans and schemes for getting shops, kiosks, PCO booths and schemes aimed at economic empowerment of women has been felt critical.

5. Family life

In order to meet the family and domestic requirements

- a) 39% BWGs expressed that financial support is needed, income being less than Rs.500/- month (US \$11 per month). Therefore, a scheme to provide financial assistance to families headed by blind women having income less than Rs.1000/- per month should be extended.
- b) 35% BWG require financial support to services of a sighted lady to help them with shopping and other outdoor chores, and maintaining hygiene and cleanliness of their home environment.

- c) 27% women who are blind need financial assistance for hiring a sighted tutor who would help their sighted school going children with the homework and other scholastic assignments. Therefore, a scheme can be implemented for providing after school coaching to the school going children of blind mothers and another scheme for providing helping hand to a blind sister for 1 day in a week to take care of outdoor domestic responsibilities can also be implemented.
- d) 22% blind mothers expressed the need for assistance in ensuring hygiene and physical well being of their infants. A scheme aimed at providing home based part time services of a sighted female for at least 1 hour a day could be of great help.

6. Participation in the Voluntary Organisations

The barriers and problems expressed by the blind women in their poor participation in the organization of the blind and the women include:

- a) 20% say that problems in travelling prevents them from taking active part in the voluntary organizations. If NGOs would earmark some funds to compensate the travelling cost, blind women's participation in NGOs could increase.
- b) Another 20% respondents feel that they have no contributions to make in the organization of the blind and of the women. Projects aimed at empowering the blind women need to be initiated with a view to provide them with opportunities to play a meaningful role.
- c) 10% women stated lack of knowledge as a reason for their inability to play an active role. Govt. and NGOs can initiate training programmes for blind women in the area of legal rights; knowledge about schemes and programmes; methods of using rights, schemes and programmes; communication skills; entrepreneurship; running a cooperative; health care; family planning; self grooming; self defence; assertiveness; facing interviews, media, court hearing; planning projects; organizing self help groups; etc.

Training in the above areas would be instrumental in equipping the BWG with knowledge, skills and competency to become independent and effective leaders at various levels.

7. Attitudes

Abstacles to education mainly attitude :

- a) Negative attitudes of the parents have been stated as a major obstacle by the BWGs since 50% of BWGs could not access education due to unsupportive and negative attitude of parents.
- b) 57% express parental support vital in receiving higher education.
- c) 31% say that their parents did not make any effort for their marriage.

In order to make any improvement in the lives of BWGs change in the parental attitude seems essential. Therefore, media, NGOs and government must make systematic efforts to portray a positive image of BWGs. Successful blind women should take the lead in conducting discussion sessions with the parents of blind girls. Most importantly, a regular Television and Radio programme on blind and disabled women would spread the message far. Government should initiate schemes to encourage the parents of blind girl child to enroll her in the school programmes and to properly immunize her.

8. Financial constraints

Financial constraint has been one of the main obstacles depriving BWGS from getting education, vocational training, having a married life and even denying them motherhood.

- a) 30% require financial support in pursuing education.
- b) 30% need funds to pursue vocational courses.
- c) 39% need extra financial support to cope with domestic needs.
- d) 40% of BWG require financial assistance in ensuring hygiene and well being of infants and to meet educational needs of their sighted school going children.
- e) 20% women can become active provided their travel cost can be taken care of by the organizations of the blind and of the women.

9. Poor Self Concept:

Through the study it got established that BWG have a very poor self-concept.

- a) 10% hold blindness as the cause for being uneducated.
- b) 25% women feel due to blindness they cannot have an independent source of income.
- c) 12% think blind can't get married.
- d) 40% think blind can't be beautiful.
- e) 20% believe blind cannot contribute in the organisational work.

These articulations confirm that the blind women have assimilated a very negative image of themselves since they live in an environment, which constantly reinforces worthlessness. Therefore govt., NGOs, media and society at large need to create educational opportunities, vocational training and employment opportunities available to the blind women so that they themselves get the evidence that "they too can" rather than "they cannot".

Conclusion, Recommendations of TVGO Forum

The members of NGO Forum on the Status of the Blind Women are of the firm belief that blindness alone does not create insurmountable barriers. The problem becomes complex when compounded with poverty, negative attitudes of families, low self esteem of women and in the absence of systems to empower the blind women.

We, therefore, recommend

- a) Review of all the existing schemes particularly aimed at eliminating poverty with a view to ensure gradual improvements in the economic status of blind and disabled women.
- b) Earmark budgets for the establishment of modern infrastructure, necessary to impart educational training and management skills to blind women and other women with disabilities.
- c) A training and research institution in gender and disability needs to be established with an aim to provide training to blind women and their organisations resulting in their empowerment. Systematic data collection and research is of critical importance for planning policies and schemes, relevant in the context of blind women and other women with disabilities.
- d) Review of programmes and schemes implemented by the govt. and non-governmental institutions meant for women and girls with disabilities is imperative so that efforts for their modernisation and upgradation are planned and implemented.
- e) For the empowerment of women living in remote villages and hilly regions outreach programmes through trained grassroot workers can yield good results. Though, special institutions also need to be created so that the women could be emancipated from the negative atmosphere of their homes.
- e) Government must ensure integration of blind and other women with disabilities in all the programmes and schemes aimed at education, empowerment and development of women and girls. Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Department of Women and Child, Ministry of Urban Affairs, National Commission for Women, Office of Chief Commissioner, Disabilities and CAPART should collaborate and form a task force to suggest ways and means for the integration of the blind and disabled women in govt. policies, programmes and schemes.

Post Coding List

2.	15-20	1
	21- 25	2
	26- 30	3
	31- 35	4
	36- 40	5
	41- 45	6
	46+	7
5b.	Hostel	1
	1-2 km	2
	2-5 km	3
	5-10km	4
	10+	5
6a.	Financial	1
	Unawareness of schools	2
	Treatment	3
	Parents conservative	4
	Wanted to be home	5
	Don't want to study	6
	Got married	7
	Blindness	8
	Didn't get admin.	9
	Commuting	10
7a.	City	1
	Home	2
	Village	3
	Abroad	4
7b.	Guidance/ Moral	1
	Financial	2
	Reader/ Writer	3
	Cassettes	4
	Braille books	5
	Equipment (Comp./ Typing)	6
	Transport	7
	All	8

	Parent's support	9		
	Hostel	10		
8a	Home science	1	Cooking	1b
	Short hand/ Typing	2		
	Operator	3		
	Knitting/ Tailoring	4		
	Music	5		
	Handicraft	6		
	Teacher	7		
	Computer	8		
	Chair caning	9		
8b.	NIVH, Doon	1		
	BRA, Delhi	2		
	NAB, Delhi	3		
	BBY.	4		
	BLR.	5		
8c.	Information about 'where all'	1		
	Counselling — 'which'	2		
	Commuting	3		
	Admissions/ opportunity	4		
	Good Teacher	5		
	Hostel	6		
	Financial	7		
	Computer	8		
	Cassettes/ Books	9		
	Hostel	10		
	Training	11		
	Parents support	12		
	Equipment	13		
8d.	Job	1		
	Interest	2		
	To learn	3		
	Independence/ Self reliance	4		
	Want to help Blind	5		
	Want to help society	6		
	Occupy Self	7		
	Better job/ promotion	8		

9a.	Teacher	1
	Music	2
	Lawyer	3
	Operator	4
	Tailor	5
	Typing	6
	Handicrafts	7
	Chair caning	8
	Packaging	9
	House maid	10

9b.	> 500 p.m.	1
	500- 1000	2
	1000- 2000	3
	2000- 4000	4
	4000+	5
	Pension	6

9d.	Typist	1
	Chair caner	2
	Operator	3
	Tailor	4
	Tel. Booth	5
	Music	6
	Handicraft	7
	Admin.	8
	Peon/ Helper	9
	Teacher	10
	Govt. Job	11
	Shop	12
	School	13
	Cook	14
	Any	15

10a.	Didn't want to live alone	1
	Financial stress	2
	Found someone nice	3
	Needed attention	4
	Better future	5

Parents pushed	6
Woman needs it	7
Age	8
To prove	9
Contri to society	10

NO

Still studying	1
Not the right age yet	2
Career first	3
Parents didn't push	4
Not interested	5
Didn't find someone	6
Phys./Pers. Problem	7
Ageing	8
Don't trust	9
Elder sister yet to marry	10
Blindness	11
Want to stay alone	12
Financial	13
Widow	14
Handicraft	15
Family probs.	16

10c.	Scared	1
	Not interested	2
	Blindness	3
	Want to stay alone	4
	Don't trust	5
	Finan. Constraint	6
	Parents not interested	7
	Age	8

11a.	0-5 yrs.	1
	5- 10 yrs.	2
	10 +	3

11c.	Teacher	1
	Chair caner	2
	Typist/ Operator	3
	Tailor	4

	Telephone operator	5
	Music	6
	Peon	7
	Labourer	8
	Shop owner	9
11d.	> 500 p.m.	1
	500- 1000	2
	1000- 2000	3
	2000- 4000	4
	4000+	5
12a.	No marriage	1
	Can't take care	2
	Doesn't like	3
	Scared	4
12b.	will help me	1
	To fulfill my ambitions/ financial	2
	Feels good	3
	Want Family	4
	Matter of pride/ to be a mom	5
	Like them	6
15b	Good nature	1
	Talks/Explains well	2
	Helping	3
	Co-operative	4
	Encouraging	5
	Simplicity	6
	Sincerety	7
	Sacrifice/ Serving	8
	Talented	9
	Leadership	10
	Patience	11
	Loving/ Caring	12
	Confidence	13
	Frankness	14
	Expressions	15
	Boldness	16

16a.	Good nature	1
	Talks/Explains well	2
	Helping	3
	Co-operative	4
	Encouraging	5
	Responsible	6
	Leadership quality	7
	Loving	8
	Talented	9
	Truthful	10
	Expression(Speaking/writing)	11
	Serving	12
	Pers. Achievement	13
	Simplicity	14
	Patience	15
	Worked for country	16
	Helped Children/ Women	17
	Brave	18
	Principles	19
	Determined	20
17a.	Served the nation	1
	helped the people	2
	genuine	3
	truthful	4
	Sincerety	5
	Expression(Speaking/writing)	6
	Personality	7
	Bold/ Courage	8
	Worked hard	9
	No discrimination	10
	Leader ship	11
	Sacrifice	12
	Tact of handling people	13
	Loving	14
18a.	Ordinary	1
	Senior	2
18b.	Employment for blind	1
	guidance/ help	2

	Education/ Training	3
	Moral Support	4
	Information	5
	Social work	6
19a.	Want to help/ serve	1
	For Information	2
	Will get help	3
	Want to learn	4
	Want to encourage	5
	Solve their problems	6
	To share/ interest/ one of them	7
	Want to teach	8
	Morals	9
	Socialise	10
	To spread awareness	11
19b.	Can't go out	1
	Not interested	2
	No time	3
	Satisfied with home/job	4
	No results	5
	Don't like	6
	Unawareness	7
	No confidence	8
20a.	Women need help	1
	Being a woman, can/ must help	2
	Rural women-needy	3
	To claim their rights	4
	To help each other	5
	Can understand/ share	6
	Safe	7
	Will get help/ protection	8
	Can learn	9
	Interest	10
	To bring awareness	11
20b.	Women claim to be equal	1
	They don't need help	2
	Don't want	3

	No time	4
	Content already	5
	No results	6
	No knowledge and resources	7
	Not interested	8
21a.	Communication skills	1
	Can make people listen	2
	Can guide people	3
	Confident	4
	Knowledge	5
	Educated	6
	Serving/ helping	7
	Behaviour	8
	Honesty	9
	Power	10
	Courage	11
	Experience	12
	Hardworking	13
	Understanding	14
	Sincerety	15
	Patience	16
	Organising abilities	17
21b.	Can't speak well	1
	Scared	2
	Not Confident	3
	No time	4
	No ability	5
	Not interested	6
	Blindness	7
	No education	8
22a.	Can manage people	1
	Understand accounts	2
	Management Knowledge	3
	Prod./ Mktg. Knowledge	4
	Business Knowledge	5
	Confidence	6
	Speaking Skills	7
	Honesty	8
	Adjusting	9

	Money	10
	Hardworking	11
	Ambition	12
	Time keeping	13
	Talented	14
22b.	Can't understand accounts	1
	No time	2
	Content as it is	3
	No knowledge / ability	4
	Not interested	5
	Lack confidence	6
	Studies	7
	Financial support	8
	Blindness	9
	No social work	10
	Want to do other work	11
	Scared for losses	12
23.	Put in the bank	1
	Shares	2
	Help the poor	3
	Buy necessities	4
	Shop/ Business	5
	Education	6
	Donate	7
	To parents	8
25a.	Character	1
	helping nature	2
	People tell me	3
	Good habits	4
	Values	5
	God made me	6
	Education	7
	Thoughts	8
	Looks	9
	Feel it	10
25b.	Blindness	1
	Physical features	2
	People told me	3

	No self confidence	4
	Don't feel	5
26.	Eyes	1
	Make up	2
	Good clothes	3
	Knowledge	4
	Communication skills	5
	Behaviour	6
	Thoughts	7
	Phys. Fitness	8
	Cleanliness	9
	Goodness of heart	10
	Satisfied	11
	Happiness	12
	Achievement	13
27.	Sighted girl	1
	Sighted boy	2
	Bird	3
	Tree	4
	Rich	5
	Professional	6
	Singer	7
	To help	8
	Animal	9
	Be with nature	10