

## **A Note on IAWS Task Forces 1981-1990**

Task Forces have been set up by IAWS from time-to-time in preparation for small workshops on relatively neglected areas so as to identify needed action and research strategies.

Those participants of the First National Conference of Women Studies who were economists formed a group called Economists interested in Women's issues Group. This Group organized four workshops mainly to have a constructive analysis of the traditional statistical system in order to remove its gender blind structure and methodology. The four workshops initiated discussion on ways in which women's contribution to the economy could be made visible by focusing discussion on women's work, women and poverty, impact of technological changes on women's work participation and occupational diversification of women workers.

The first official task force was formed at the end of the Second National Conference of Women's Studies in 1984 at Trivandrum, which had identified a great lacuna in information on Women's Role in the Freedom Struggle. The Task Force identified research strategies and approaches on this theme and persuaded some funding agencies to support research on this theme. With support from the Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR) and Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) selected universities and scholars were commissioned to work on this theme. The result was a large number of doctoral theses and post-doctoral research on women in the nationalist movement. Twenty-five of such papers were presented under the sub-theme Women and Indian Nationalism at the Third National Conference of Women's Studies that was held in Chandigarh in 1986.

The Executive Committee of IAWS appointed in 1987 two more Task Forces to examine the implications of the Education for Women's Equality section of the National Policy on Education 1986. The first of these Task Forces organised a number of small diagnostic studies in different parts of the country to look into the issue of access to education for the large majority of girls and women deprived of this privilege. These studies analysed the existing programmes of elementary, adult, and non-formal education, training and reorientation of teachers to identify needed areas for intervention by educational institutions and voluntary organisations committed to gender equality. The findings and recommendations of the study groups were publicised.

The second of these Task Forces examined the role of Science and Technology in girls education. It undertook critical investigation of the discrimination in girl's access to science education in six selected states and in the field of provisional education in science-based areas at the university level. The Indian Institute of Science at Bangalore held a workshop in 1988 to discuss the findings of this Task Force. A large number of women and men scientists came together to bring this exercise to fruition and to sensitise senior scientists to the structural and institutional biases against women's access to science education.

Once again in 1989 the Association appointed two new Task Forces. The first prepared an approach paper to women's studies in India, particularly at the tertiary level, outlining its conceptual framework, social perspective and methodologies in order to link teaching with research and action. The second participated in the review and planning exercise under the aegis of the University Grants Commission on the achievements and problems experienced by the UGC supported centres for women's studies established in some universities and

colleges in the 1980s. This task force helped to design the review exercise and participated in the workshop of coordinators and directors of all such women's studies centres. The workshop identified the lack of interest on the part of the general faculty of the universities and the constraints in linking research to teaching and action as the two main problems and suggested some ways of overcoming these problems.

The work of the second group was stretched further when it got involved in 1990, a year marked as the year of the girl child, in bringing all the 22 women's studies centres in a joint research project on this theme. It was this Task Force of the IAWS that carried out the entire planning, mobilisation, training, and the scouting-for-funds exercise for the joint project, originally conceived by the UGC. In the course of funding this project, the Department of Women and Child Development of the Government of India developed a long-term relationship with the Association.