

ANNUAL REPORT

2004 - 2005

MEGHALAYA STATE COMMISSION FOR WOMEN
ADDITIONAL SECRETARIAT BUILDING
ROOM NO. 408
SHILLONG – 793 001

PREFACE

It gives me immense pleasure in releasing this Annual Report for the year 2004-05, the **first** after setting up of the Meghalaya State Commission for Women which came into being under Section 3 of the Meghalaya State Commission for Women Act, 2005, on 15.10.2004 and enacted on 2nd May 2005. This Report exhibits a full account of the activities held by the Commission including the financial status from the inception of the Commission till 31.10.2005.

With the mission to improve the status of women in the state of Meghalaya and to inquire into unfair practices affecting women and for matter connected therewith or incidental thereto, the Commission had with sense of satisfaction discharged the responsibilities with the cooperation, support, network and coordination of various government departments, the Department of Social Welfare, Govt. of Meghalaya, in particular and Non Governmental Organizations so as to create awareness, especially among womenfolk in the villages of their rights to attain the goal of gender justice and various inequalities prevailing in the society, especially with the motto of 'Reaching out to the masses', networking with the NGOs in creating awareness on women's rights.

On behalf of the Commission I take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the National Commission for Women, New Delhi, for extending all the support for the conduct of a number of programs. I also appreciate the NGOs of the State for having a strong desire to accelerate all round development and women empowerment.

(Prof. Biloris Lyndem)
Chairperson

INTRODUCTION

The Meghalaya State Commission for Women (MSCW) was constituted on 15.10.2004 extending its jurisdiction to the whole state of Meghalaya, with an objective to improve the status of women, investigation of violation of safeguards for women; such as to inquire into any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex for the purpose of or which has the effect of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment, or exercise by women of fundamental constitutional rights, or of human rights, or of fundamental freedom in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field or the infringement of any right or benefit conferred on women by or under the provisions of any law for the time being in force or the mental or physical torture or sexual excesses on women including an adolescent girl and a female child.

COMPOSITION

The Commission consists of a Chairperson, a Vice Chairperson both nominated by the State Government and four members appointed by the State Government, for a period not exceeding three years.

During the year 2004-05, the composition of the Commission was as follows:

1. Smti. Biloris Lyndem (Phd)	-	Chairperson.
2. Smti. Hasina Kharbhih.	-	Vice Chairperson.
3. Smti. Wanda K. Blah.	-	Member.
4. Dr. June Shullai.	-	Member.
5. Smti. Sophia R. Marak.	-	Member.
6. Smti. Minoti Sharma. (Advocate)	-	Member.

The Commission under Section 8(2) of the Meghalaya State Commission for Women Act, 2005, co-opted the following members to strengthen the activities of the Commission. Smt. L.Ch. Sangma, Smt. Viola S.B. Sangma both from the Garo Mothers' Union (a prominent and registered NGO of Garo Hills) and Smt. Dinoris Lyngdoh Mawlieh, Seng Samla, Khadsawphra, Mairang Women's Wing.

In addition to the above, the Commission co-opted the following members from different NGOs in order to tackle the problem of incident of rape and sexual abuse in West Khasi Hills.

1. Sr. Sylvestra Khonglah,
Principal,
St. Mary's Rangblang, West Khasi Hills district.
2. Sr. Magdalene Synnah, West Khasi Hills district.
3. Sr. Superior,
St. Mary's Convent,
Pyndengrei, Nongstoin,
West Khasi Hills district.
4. Smt. Celina Shangpliang,
President,
Greater Nongstoin Women Social Welfare Organisation.
West Khasi Hills district.
5. Smt. R. Maryka Nongtdu,
Secretary,
Mahila Mandal Khliehriat,
Jaintia Hills district
6. Shri O.V.D. Ladia, Ph.D. (Law)
Resource Person & Consultant
7. Smt. C.D. Shira,
Dy.S.P. (CID),
Member.
8. Smt. Sonachi B. Sangma,
Member.
9. Smt. Lepomonie Ch. Sangma,
Member.

Special Committee constituted to examine the different cases in the Commission

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| 1. Dr. Biloris Lyndem | - | Chairperson MSCW |
| 2. Dr. O.D.V. Ladia | - | Legal Adviser |
| 3. Smt. C.D. Shira | - | Dy. S.P. (CID) Member. |
| 4. Smt. Minoti Sarma. | - | Member. |

Dr. Ladia assisted the Commission in legal matters, acts and bills passed by the Government and the District Council from time to time with relevance to women issues. Dr. Ladia also assisted the Commission in examining the Lineage Bills passed by the Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council and observations have already been transmitted to the Council in this regard.

Powers of the Commission.

- (1) The Commission shall, for the purpose of any inquiry under this Act have the same powers as are vested in a Civil Court while trying a suit under the Code of Civil procedure, 1908 (Central Act 5 of 1908), in respect of the following matters, namely:-
 - (a) summoning and enforcing the attendance of any witness and examining him/her;
 - (b) requiring the discovery and production of any document;
 - (c) receiving evidence on affidavit;
 - (d) requisitioning any public records or copy thereof from any public office;
 - (e) issuing commissions for examination of witnesses.
- (2) Any proceeding before the commission shall be deemed to be a judicial proceedings within the meaning of sections 193 and 228 of the Indian Penal Code (Central Act 45 of 1860) and the Commission shall be deemed to be a court for the purpose of section 195 of the Code of Criminal Procedure 1973 (Central Act 2 of 1974).

FUNCTIONS OF THE COMMISSION

- (1) Subject to the proviso of the Meghalaya State Commission for Women Act 2005, the Commission shall perform all or any of the following functions, namely;
 - (a) inquire into unfair practice, take decision thereon and to recommend to the Government the action to be taken in that matter.
 - (b) investigate and examine all matters relating to the safeguards provided for women under the Constitution of India (herein after referred to as the Constitution) and other laws and recommend steps to be taken by the State Government for effective implementation of such safeguards for improving the conditions of women in the State;
 - (c) present to the State Government annually and at such other times as the Commission may deem fit reports upon the working of these safeguards.
 - (d) review from time to time the existing provisions of the Constitution and other laws affecting women and recommend amendments thereto so as to suggest

remedial legislative measure to meet any lacunae, inadequacies or shortcomings in such legislations;

(e) take up the cases of violation of the provisions of the Constitution and of other laws relating to women in the State with the appropriate authorities;

(f) look into complaints and take suo moto notice of matters relating to –

(i) deprivation of women's rights;

(ii) non-implementation of laws enacted to provide protection to women and also to achieve the objective of equality and development;

(iii) non-compliance of policy decisions, guidelines or instructions aimed at mitigating hardships and ensuring welfare and providing relief to women, and take up the issues arising out of such matters with appropriate authorities;

(g) call for special studies or investigations into problems or situations arising out of discrimination and atrocities against women and identify the constraints so as to recommend strategies for their removal

(h) evaluate the progress of advancement of women in the State.

(i) inspect or cause to be inspected a jail, police station/lockup, observation home, children's home, rescue home, shelter home, or other place of custody where women are kept as prisoners or otherwise and take up with the authorities concerned such matters for remedial action as may be necessary.

(2) The State Government may consult the Commission on policy matters affecting women.

(3) The Commission shall present to the State Government every six months and at such other times as the Commission may deem fit reports of its activities together with its recommendations and the State Government shall cause them to be laid before the State Legislature as soon as possible along with a memorandum explaining the action taken or proposed to be taken on the recommendations and the reasons for non-acceptance, if any, of such recommendations.

- (3) It shall be the duty of the Commission to furnish comments and recommendations on any report of the National Commission for Women on any matter with which the Government is concerned as the State Government may call for.

ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMISSION DURING THE YEAR 2004-05

The endeavour of the Commission for the last one year was mainly to create awareness of the rights of women in the Society and then to sensitize the different traditional bodies to allow more space for women to participate at the grassroots level as well in the other decision making bodies. The Commission with the assistance from the National Commission for Women, New Delhi has been able to conduct Seminars/Consultations with different NGOs to have a better participation of women in all developmental programmes. The active participation of the members of the Commission has strengthened the activities undertaken during the year under report. The Commission also appreciates the support extended by the Directorate of Social Welfare from time to time.

1. The Chairperson, soon after assuming the charge along-with its members have visited the Government Hospital for mentally retarded to assess the facilities provided by the government, especially to the sick women and children with regard to their health, security, privacy, medical assistance, etc. The Commission, in this regard had approached the concerned department to improve the existing facilities and bring in more efficiency.

2. The Chairperson along-with the members have also visited few hospitals in the State Capital for making assessment of the facilities provided, especially in the Gynecology department and also the Shillong Jail, particularly the cell where women prisoners are kept, which was found to be very congested. The Commission had taken up the matter with the concerned department for all round improvement.

3. Two meetings were already held to discuss at length of frequent incidence of rape, molestation and sexual abuse against women and children in certain districts of the State and one awareness camp was conducted in West Khasi Hills. The focus was early dating/elopement and teenage pregnancies vis-à-vis STD/HIV diseases. Understandably, the reason for such manifold social issues in the rural as well as urban areas is due to the lack of adequate and proper care from parents, and un-awareness amongst the younger generation. The Camp held at Jaintia Hills district under the Deputy Commissioner called for a collective effort to tackle the issues by drawing Action Plan on 'Short Term' and 'Long Term' basis, which is under process. With the objective for prevention of such social imbalance, a joint effort involving NGOs, Church Leaders, etc. is inevitable. Awareness Camps for imparting Moral Science and Sex education at the School level has already been initiated in few districts, with the Motto 'Catch them Young'.

4. The National Commission for Women, New Delhi had sponsored a Seminar entitled 'Women Reservation in Durbars and Local Council (as per quota of 33 per cent participation)'. With the basic objective of emphasizing women's participation in local legislatures and other constituted bodies, the Khasi Cultural Society in collaboration with the Meghalaya State Commission for Women had organized the Seminar which focused

that women should have a place to participate actively in the traditional forums. In this context, the men present in the Seminar were sensitized and the Commission looks forward that the traditional attitude will undergo some changes. More Seminars and Workshops are proposed to be held at different districts to sensitize the village headmen to allow more room to women in the matter of policy decisions and executive enactments at the grass root level.

A similar Seminar was conducted at Tura by the Garo Mothers' Union. The women of Garo Hills are concerned on this and also resolved that more women should be given a chance to participate at the village councils.

5. The Chairperson while participating the meeting of the constituted State Law Commission expressed concern over frequent cases of harassment of women in work places, family maintenance, grievances not getting proper legal redress, and the perpetrator of assault, kidnapping and rape, out on bail with little hope of punishment, because of the delay in dispensing justice. The Law Commission was appealed to initiate inquiries about the reported rape cases, the nature of such cases, in which Police Station they have been filed and slow progress of the investigation. Suggestion was made for holding frequent Seminars for creating awareness about women's rights. In this regard, the Commission has taken up a number of counseling programs during the period under report to avert indulgence of court cases, etc. The Commission also persuaded a number of cases, which are already in the Court of Law for speedy judgment.

6. The Commission, during the period under report has identified some of the main problems faced by women and children in common in the Garo Hills district. These are :

1. Unemployment : Only 1 to 2% women are employed as School teachers and nurses.
2. Education : Women literacy in Garo Hills is around 50% only. There are many school drop outs due lack of motivation, inadequate and proper guidance from parents, easy life style, etc.
3. Health : Lack of knowledge on public health, hygiene, sanitation and dreaded and contagious diseases, immunization, etc.
4. Garo Customary Law : A young girl less than 18 years old can also be given to an old man by the clan if the old man's wife dies. This customary law is known as 'ON-RIKA'.

An Action Plan is being worked out by the Commission in this regard.

7. The Chairperson participated in a Seminar on 'Status of Women and Customary Laws among Tribal Population of North East India' as Guest of Honour during the period under Report. The Seminar focused on:

1. to understand the status of women in major tribal societies of North East India governed by Customary Laws in the changing socio, cultural, economic and political scenario;
2. to deliberate on the applicability, relevance and efficacy of Customary laws in terms of protecting interest of women in tribal societies in the present context;

8. In a yet another seminar organized by the National Institute of Public Co-operation and Child Development, Regional Centre, Guwahati, which was attended by the Chairperson along with noted Anthropologists, Scholars and examined the existing Customary laws of the tribal of North East India which governed by the 6th Schedule and how it influences the life of the tribal women relating to marriage, sex, relations, kinship inheritance, settlements and disputes, etc. were focused. Considered from a gender perspective, the general perception is that customary laws in tribal societies render justice irrespective of the sexes. The Seminar sounded for the need for codification of customary laws of the tribes.

With the objective to **disseminate information on various issues related to women**, the Commission is all set to publish a **quarterly bi-lingual (in Khasi & Garo) News Letter**. The first edition is likely to be released shortly.

PUBLIC HEARINGS ORGANIZED

9.1. The Commission organized the **first Public Hearing** on the 'Health facilities to the women and children' on the 13th May, 2005, at Mairang, West Khasi Hills district with the financial support from the NCW.

The Public Hearing recommended that imparting training to health volunteers, providing more medicines and strengthening the primary and community health system are the steps to be initiated immediately.

Sanitation is one of the important aspects of living healthy life. Due to ignorance or otherwise the people who do not adopt sanitation become victims of various diseases. Holding of awareness camps at community level and village level is the only and formidable task to over come this crisis and for achieving the goal gradually.

Consumption of tobacco, a cause for concern in the health sector also brings down the productivity of users. More camps and awareness programmes are the need of the hour to inculcate in the minds of the people about the menace.

The heinous crime of sexual abuse seems to be flourishing on both women and children. The location of the abuse in many cases is the home, neighborhood, work place, school, hospital and such places where the woman and girl child are closely related and knows the abuser. While the crime of sexual assault on child causes lasting psychic damage to the child and as such it is essential to prevent sexual abuse of children through stringent provisions.

Population control, growth in literacy rates, higher levels of income, increased awareness, more penetration of media are the few components for the growth of Health Care system in sustaining the growth and development. Health care is essential for every age group and for rich and poor.

Inadequate medical facilities, staffing and scarcity of essential drugs and medicines faced in the rural areas which is a critical issue. The major reason for such a situation is probably due to paucity of funds as the modern medical facilities are costly and unaffordable.

9.2. The Commission organized the **second Public Hearing** on Health facilities to the Women and children on the 22nd October, 2005 at Khliehriat, Jaintia Hills district, with the financial assistance from NCW.

Observations & Recommendations:

On the spot inspection by the members of the Commission along-with the officials revealed that the C.H.C. was in a bad state of affair, even **Incinerator** was unavailable in many CHCs/PHCs. The Commission called for immediate attention to ensure quality of service in preventive, protective and curative health care. Health delivery is most effective when centralized to State, District and Local levels, with communities taking leadership and responsibility for health and development.

As of now, the health facilities in the State of Meghalaya need improvement in all respect. The Commission recommended that the Health Department is to strengthen the monitoring and evaluation Cell to enhance the functioning of all the CHCs/PHCs and Sub-Centres in the State. Secondly, so far as health facilities of the people are concerned, the Health Department should improve the coordination between different other departments in the State to bring in better results oriented output. It is understood that after the Public Hearing a Village Health Committee was formed to look into the functioning of the CHCs/PHCs. To-day, many villages have the Village Health Committee.

9.3. The Commission organized the **third Public Hearing** on ‘Women in Agriculture (Potato Growers) in East Khasi Hills district’ on the 20th October, 2005, with financial assistance from the NCW.

Observations & Recommendations:

It was observed that there is lack of initiation on the part of the Government for recovery of money due to be received by the farmers under the Crop Insurance scheme in spite of all preliminary investment by the B.D.O. and the bank. It is learned that there is also lack of coordination between the district authority and the Agriculture Department. The officials represented the bank expressed the views that the matter is pending with the Government and the Insurance Company.

The Government should expedite settlement of claims with Insurance Company so that due compensation governs under the scheme reaches to the affected farming community in time. To avoid the delay Government may make specific rules so that the B.D.O. can conduct the inspection without reference to the Deputy Commissioner and submit directly to the Director of Agriculture for proper evaluation of the damages. It is suggested that in such damage of crop negotiations may be made with the financial institution to conduct a separate enquiry for the damages. This will enable the Government to make further negotiations with the bank to consider deferment of the payment of loan availed by the farmers or subsidy or total waif of the loan for the benefit of the farmers. Public Hearing extended an opportunity to the women farming community to know the schemes offered by different financial institutions; such as Banks, NABARD, Kisan Credit Card, etc. for better support system and economic status.

10. The Meghalaya State Commission for Women also had conducted a Legal Awareness Program at Umsning, Ri-Bhoi district in collaboration with Ri-Bhoi Area Welfare Association to create awareness about the health hazards including HIV/AIDS, RCH, deprivation of nutrition to girl child, etc. The Commission already had meetings with the Health and Social Welfare departments for an integrated approach.

SEMINARS ORGANISED

The Commission organized two separate Seminars of one day each on the topic 'Marriage and Family Ties'; one among the Garos on the 4th June, 2005 at **Tura, West Garo Hills district** and the other among the Khasis on the 11th June, 2005 at Shillong.

The objective of both the Seminars was to create awareness among the youths with regard to the importance of **legalization of marriage amongst the tribes** and to persuade the government so that the unhealthy trend prevailing in the society, such as teenage pregnancy, co-habitation and unwed mothers could be arrested to a certain extent and build a stronger tribal society.

The men folks are addicted to alcoholism due to frustration and various other reasons and women are the brewers of the local stuff/drinks for economic stability, but as a result many women become widows.

11.1. The Seminar dealt at length the existing system of succession and inheritance, marriages and family ties, divorce and other legal protection etc., and recommended as follows:-

1. Garo Society is governed by matrilineal laws of succession and inheritance, so this is a unique in itself and deviation from this will lead to confusion. Therefore, it is recommended that the existing system to remain for the time being.
2. Since most of the marriages are un-registered, the legal protection and monetary maintenance for the divorcee/mother and children are deprived in the present scenario. It is urged upon that the marriage should be registered either in the traditional way with the Nokma (Headman) as a witness or in any other form so that the stability and protection of the family is guaranteed. For this, the Nokma (Headman) should be empowered to work out the modalities.
3. The Nokma is also to ensure that no marriage shall be considered legal and registered unless the boys and girls attain 21 years of age and 18 years of age respectively. This would ensure responsible parent-hood.
4. Documentation of Customary Laws and legalization of marriage after that the codification will be processed.
5. It is seen that due to non registration, non legalization of marriage a large amount of ability of the children are wasted, which leads to juvenile delinquency, child labour, dropouts and other anti social activities.

11.2. The **second Seminar** discussed at length the existing system of family ties/divorce and legal protection for the women in a matrilineal society and recommended as follows:-

1. Khasi society is governed by the matrilineal laws of succession and inheritance. The social institutions are therefore unique and different from the patrilineal customs of succession which is universal among nearly all the races of people in the globe. The system of kinship and succession among the Khasi, therefore centre round the mother.

a) In view of the matrilineal customs that are in vogue adoption of mother's clan name by the children male or female of the family as violation of it may lead to any kind of complication as such confused notions, in not using the correct mother's title, have affected society during the late years. Adoption of mother's clan name in fact is a standing usage.

2. The Seminar recommended that adequate protection to be given to women affected by divorces of their husbands, thereby to enabling them to receive compensatory protection that is in respect of the wife and her children as per the prevailing usages.

3. To empower Durbar Shnongs (local Durbars) to register marriages within their respective confines to ensure proper steps to sustain marriages and prevent them from being easily breakable and prevent households from being single parentage or one side's desertion.

4. Durbar Shnongs further are to ensure that no boy and girl to get married before 21 and 18 years respectively of age that is on the basis of registration of births and other kind of documentation for verification to be made available by the local authority.

5. It also recommended to urge upon his Excellency the Governor of Meghalaya to kindly give his assent to the Will system Bill passed by the Autonomous Khasi Hills District Council since 1997. Assent of this Bill into an Act will be very helpful to transfer parts of self acquired property of parents to sons apart from daughters as should become a good nucleus to raise investments and start business enterprises on the part of males.

6. The Bill on Registration of Marriage is helpful to curtail loose and wasteful marriages and regularize marital connection on a firmer footing. The child shall be registered immediately after birth and shall have the right from birth to a name, the right to acquire a nationality and, as far as possible, the right to know and be cared by for his or her parents. In the similar line, registration of marriage may also be made mandatory. Many renowned NGOs emphasized the need to enact the bill for Compulsory Registration of Marriage.

In this regard, after the deliberations the Commission had requested the Council (KHADC) to envisage measures in Registration of Marriages and understandably, steps have been taken in containing the irregularities prevailing in the marriage system. It is understood that the assent of the Hon. Governor of Meghalaya is yet to be sought on the bill.

12. The North Eastern Regional Workshop held on 19th & 20th November 2004 on Women Power Connect organized by Women Power Connect and the Meghalaya State Commission for Women discussed about the Women's reservation in the Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha. The matter still remains in cold storage.

13. The Chairperson participated at the North East Consultation meet organized by Ministry of Women & Child Development on 17th & 18th February, 2005 in collaboration with the Directorate of Social Welfare, Govt. of Meghalaya, relating the Health issues of women, girls and children.

14. Organized the Anti Dowry Day on 26th November, 2004 at Women's College, Shillong sponsored by the Directorate of Social Welfare. Prof. Sujata Miri, NEHU, Prof. Y.N. Karma, Head Sociology Department, Principal of Women's College threw light on the evils of dowry and its practices. The Deputy Superintendent (Crime) also attended the meeting and informed that the number of cases received though very small, but still there is a need to create awareness among the people in the city. Students from various colleges of the city and members from the Sarada Sangha (Rama Krishna Mission) Mahila Ekta Samiti and other NGO members attended the programme.

15. The Chairperson attended a One day National Convention on 'Review of the Dowry Act, 1961, as the Guest of Honour – and also presented a paper – from 22nd to 24th November, 2005.

FINANCIAL POSITION DURING 2004-05 AT A GLANCE

The Government of Meghalaya, Department of Social Welfare has allocated a total sum of Rs.8.37 lac for the establishment of the Meghalaya State Commission for Women, out of which an amount of Rs. 1.25 lac pertained to Recurring nature of expenditure and Rs.7.12 lac towards Non Recurring nature of expenditure.

In addition to the above, the National Commission for Women had sanctioned a number of Programs in the form of Public Hearing as well as Seminar for which financial assistance has also been accorded. The details of the accounts furnished below pertains to the specific grants received by the Meghalaya State Commission for Women from the National Commission for Women, New Delhi, which have been audited by an external auditor and furnished to the funding agency as per requirement.

<u>Name of the Program</u>	<u>Allocation</u>	<u>Grant received</u>	<u>Expdr. incurred</u>
1. Public Hearing on Health facilities to Women & children at Mairang, West Khasi Hills district held on 13.5.05	Rs. 20,000/-	Rs. 20,000/-	Rs. 31,186/-
2. Public Hearing on Women in Agriculture (Potato growers in East Khasi	Rs. 40,000/-	Rs. 36,129/-	Rs. 36,129/-

Hills district) held on
20.10.05

3. Public Hearing on Health facilities to Women & children at Khliehriat, Jaintia Hills district held On 22.10.05	Rs. 40,000/-	Rs. 36,001/-	Rs. 36,001/-
4. Seminar on Marriage & Family ties among Garos held at Tura, West Garo Hills district on 4.6.05	Rs. 50,000/-	Rs. 49,916/-	Rs. 49,916/-
5. Seminar on Marriage & Family ties among Khasis held at Shillong, East Khasi Hills district on 11.6.05	Rs. 50,000/-	Rs. 49,196/-	Rs. 49,196/-

Total Rs.200000/- Rs.191242/- Rs.203193/-
[NB : The excess expenditure of Rs.11,186/- over & above the allocation against item No. 1 was made good by the respective MLA of the Constituency where the program was held]

CONCLUSION

Fifty eight years ago when India woke up from freedom, it was widely acknowledged that the struggle for liberation was as much by men and women. In fact, the move of the homes into the public arena started for our women in different ways in the course of twentieth Century. The trajectory of the movement is usually traced from the social reforms movement of the 19th Century, when the issues regarding the status of women were addressed initially by men.

The Women Movement emerged in India in the second half of the twentieth Century. Gandhiji's call all the women of this country to join what shaped into the freedom struggle gave a fillip to the fledgling organizations.

The Women's Movement is one of the efforts at seeking justice and freedom from shackles in which the women of this country have been bound for millennia. Their collective dream of an apex national Women's Organization was crystallized in the form of National Commission for Women in 1990.

The state also followed suit and almost all states have their own Commissions. Together they form a country wide Organization collecting information on various issues concerning women, reviewing the laws and provisions meant for their protection and advancement, monitoring and implementation of different programmes, spreading awareness about their rights and redressing their grievances.

Meghalaya is the home of the Khasis - Pnars and the Garos. A matrilineal social order prevails in the State of Meghalaya. It is perhaps a system characterized by a relatively better status that a woman is accorded in the society. In comparison to her counterparts in patrilineal and patriarchal societies, she enjoys a better position and is looked at with more respect.

(B. Lyndem)
Chairperson,
Meghalaya State Commission for Women,
Shillong.