

Hyderabad, 12th May, 2016

‘Social Norms Enabled Transformation’ – a 2-day Consultation has been organized jointly by the Ms Seema Kumar from UNICEF Hyderabad field office and Dr Gyanmudra, Professor & Head, Centre of Human Resource Development, National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR). The Consultation was inaugurated by Dr W.R. Reddy, IAS, Director General, NIRDPR and Ms Ruth Leano, Chief UNICEF Field Office Hyderabad on 12 May 2016.

The 2-day Consultation on 12th and 13th May, is divided into four thematic panels, which cover Social Norms in communities that impact human rights and development and protection issues; practices related to climate, festival, occupations related to children’s rights; and finally the role of the media in shaping and perpetuating Social Norms.

“Anyone who does not understand the importance of social norms cannot deal with development issues in this country,” said Mr Somesh Kumar, IAS, Principal Secretary, Tribal Welfare Department, Government of Telangana while chairing a technical session at the consultation.

Social norms are defined as (unwritten) rules a social group uses to define appropriate and inappropriate values, behaviors, beliefs and attitudes, enforced usually informally through social interactions. People want to conform to the customary practices of their reference group because they will be stigmatized if they fail to do so. There are many damaging practices in many communities in India, from open defecation to child marriage, to violence against women and children. No amount of legislation, policies or resources will be able to bring about change, if social norms do not change.

The Consultation has brought together a group of academic professionals such as anthropologists, sociologists, development communication experts, NGO chiefs, social researchers as well as programme practitioners from across the country. Among some of the speakers are Dr Kancha Ilaiah of Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Hyderabad, Mrs K Lakshmi of the Andhra Mahila Sabha, and Mr Ramachandra Murthy, Editorial Director, Sakshi Media Group, Hyderabad.

The deliberations are expected to result in identification of Social norms and strategies to influence them, specifically in the 3 states of Telangana, Andhra and Karnataka.