

**Centre for Women’s Developments Studies**  
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**Report of the VMMF supported Five Regional Workshops on**  
**“Envisioning Change: Reading *Towards Equality* in the Global Era with**  
**Students”**

**September-November 2025**

**in collaboration with**

**Dr B.R. Ambedkar University, Marathwada, Aligarh Muslim University,**  
**Aligarh, Avinhashilingam University, Coimbatore, Guwahati University,**  
**Assam, and Utkal University, Bhubaneswar.**

The five regional workshops organized under the aegis of the Vina Mazumdar Memorial Fund (VMMF) and the Centre for Women’s Development Studies (CWDS) on the theme “**Envisioning Change: Reading *Towards Equality* in the Global Era with Students**” collectively emerged as a significant Women’s Studies and interdisciplinary academic and pedagogical initiative aimed at revisiting the continuing relevance of the landmark *Towards Equality* Report (1974) in contemporary India. Conducted across the Eastern, Western, Northern, Southern, and North Eastern regions, the workshops successfully fulfilled the core objective of the programme by creating intergenerational spaces where students, young researchers, academics, and grassroots practitioners critically engaged with both historical and emerging gender concerns.

A major contribution of the workshops lay in their effort to connect the foundational concerns raised in the *Towards Equality* Report with present-day realities shaped by globalization, neoliberalism, technological change, migration, identity politics, and digital transformations. Through student research presentations, thematic discussions, and feedback sessions, the workshops demonstrated that many of the

structural concerns identified fifty years ago — including unequal access to education, invisibilization of women’s labour, violence, underrepresentation in decision-making, and patriarchal control over women’s mobility and autonomy — continue to persist, though often in altered and more complex forms. The programme thereby succeeded in showing that *Towards Equality* remains not merely a historical policy document, but an enduring analytical framework for understanding contemporary gender inequalities.

The workshops particularly achieved their objectives through active student participation and region-specific research presentations. Students presented papers on themes such as education, labour rights, migration, media representation, digital exclusion, political participation, caste and gender discrimination, LGBTQ concerns, women’s health, informal work, and feminist activism. These presentations reflected a strong engagement with local realities and demonstrated how feminist scholarship is increasingly becoming intersectional in its approach. The regional diversity of the papers also enabled comparative reflections on how gender inequalities operate differently across socio-cultural and political contexts while remaining structurally connected.

An important analytical contribution of the programme was the emphasis on linking theory with lived experiences. The inclusion of grassroots activists, tea plantation workers, self-help group members, ASHA workers, and women from marginalized communities ensured that the discussions moved beyond academic abstraction. This interaction between students and grassroots practitioners deepened participants’ understanding of how caste, class, religion, ethnicity, region, and labour intersect with gender in shaping women’s everyday lives. The workshops therefore functioned not only as academic exercises but also as spaces of feminist consciousness-building and experiential learning.

The feedback sessions across regions played a crucial role in strengthening the analytical depth of the programme. Resource persons consistently encouraged students to move beyond descriptive narratives toward deeper structural and policy-oriented analysis. Participants were guided to engage more critically with feminist methodologies, intersectionality, labour relations, digital transformations, and institutional structures. The feedback process also highlighted the importance of

grounding empirical observations within broader feminist theoretical frameworks and connecting research findings to contemporary policy concerns. This pedagogical engagement significantly contributed to nurturing a new generation of feminist scholars and researchers.

Another important achievement of the programme was its reaffirmation of the role of Women's Studies Centres and feminist institutions in sustaining critical discourse and democratic dialogue. The workshops highlighted the continuing relevance of Women's Studies as an interdisciplinary field that not only documents women's experiences but also challenges dominant narratives, questions institutional inequalities, and contributes to policy advocacy. At a time when higher education spaces are increasingly shaped by market-oriented approaches, the workshops reinforced the importance of feminist academic spaces for critical inquiry and social transformation. All the five regional workshops demonstrated that while women's visibility and participation have increased over the decades, structural inequalities rooted in patriarchy, caste hierarchies, economic exclusion, media commodification, and institutional discrimination continue to shape women's lives across India. By combining student-led research, academic deliberations, grassroots experiences, and critical feedback processes, the programme successfully achieved its objective of re-reading *Towards Equality* in the context of contemporary challenges and future pathways for gender justice. The workshops ultimately underscored the need for sustained feminist engagement, intersectional policy frameworks, and stronger collaboration between academia, civil society, and grassroots movements to advance substantive equality and social transformation in India.