

5 THINGS/ Ushering change

"NEN completes 25 years this year."

ANURITA P HAZARIKA traces the journey of this organisation.

1 The beginnings

Way back in early 1990s, two young women marched up and down across several districts in different states of North East India. They were Dr. Monisha Behal and Dr. Roshmi Goswami. They started talking to women and soon realised that the emerging concerns of north east women were compounded by socio-political and cultural settings in which they exist. Soon several women from the grassroots, activists, academic, women's organisations and others were mobilised to participate in the 4th World Conference on Women which was held in Beijing in 1995.

2 Feminist voice

The North East Network (NEN) was established in 1995. NEN was one the earliest feminist voices of north east India, with the vision that local activism was linked-up with global forums and strengthened the organisation on professional footing by building capacities of the team across three states. Under the able mentorship of Monisha Behal, NEN sees the second rung of leadership in Meghalaya, Assam and Nagaland who are committed to carry forward its mission for several generations to come.

3 Empowering women

NEN strongly believes in understanding the intersecting social identities and right of every woman as crucial, irrespective of their race, colour, ethnic origins, disability, religious belief, sexual orientation, marital/civil status, gender, family status,



age or social grouping.

4 Milestones achieved

In Assam, NEN initiated the process of creating grass-root women leaders who would articulate a rights language and ensure that state entitlements reach the last woman in the district. Soon Gramin Mahila Kendras were established, which are led by community women in select districts. These Kendras have become safe spaces for survivors of domestic violence as well as a creative learning space for the youth and children in the community.

5 Instrument of social change

Through NEN's sustained engagement with community women, in building their leadership, training and mentoring them, we see more empowered women today. Women were able to secure their right to equal wages, to be represented in the village decision making bodies and be heard.

(As told to Indrani Raimedhi)