

International Human Rights Day Report - 2025

“Walk for the Rights of Women and Children”

Event: Rally and Public Meeting for Human Rights, Equality, and Social Justice

Theme: “Human Rights: Our Everyday Essentials”

Date: 10 December 2025

Route: Masinayakanpatty – Ayothiyapattinam

District: Salem, Tamil Nadu

Introduction: A Legacy of Commitment to Justice and Dignity

The Congregation of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd has, for generations, upheld a prophetic commitment to justice, compassion, and human dignity, with a special focus on women and children who remain most vulnerable to violence, exploitation, and exclusion. Rooted in Gospel values and guided by a rights-based approach, the Good Shepherd Mission works globally and locally to challenge structures of injustice and to restore dignity, hope, and opportunity to those pushed to the margins of society. In Salem District, the Good Shepherd Mission has been actively engaged for the past twenty-five years in advancing the rights of women and children through education, protection, rehabilitation, legal awareness, livelihood initiatives, and community empowerment. The Mission’s sustained presence has enabled trust-building within communities and strengthened collective efforts to address gender-based violence, child abuse, trafficking, discrimination, and systemic inequality.

In continuation of this long-standing commitment, the Good Shepherd Sisters organized the “Walk for the Rights of Women and Children” on 10 December 2025, in observance of Human Rights Day, under the theme “Human Rights: Our Everyday Essentials.” This public advocacy initiative reaffirmed the belief that human rights are not privileges granted selectively, but fundamental entitlements that must be respected, protected, and practiced in everyday life.

Purpose of the Rally: From Awareness to Action

The rally was conceived as a platform to move beyond symbolic observance and towards meaningful action. Despite constitutional safeguards, progressive laws, and welfare schemes, violations against women and children continue unabated, particularly among marginalized communities. The purpose of the rally was to sensitize the public to the lived realities of abuse, neglect, and discrimination; to promote awareness of legal rights and protection mechanisms; and to encourage collective responsibility in creating safer and more inclusive communities. The initiative also aimed to strengthen community vigilance, promote access to government schemes, and inspire youth and citizens to become active stakeholders in social transformation rather than passive observers of injustice.

A Powerful Collective Voice for Human Rights

The rally witnessed the active participation of Good Shepherd Sisters, officials from government departments, police personnel, human rights defenders, legal professionals, civil society organizations, college students, and community members. This diverse participation

reflected a shared understanding that human rights protection requires collaboration across institutions and social sectors. The presence of multiple stakeholders strengthened the credibility of the advocacy and reinforced the message that safeguarding women and children is a collective moral and civic responsibility.

Inauguration and Public Leadership

The rally was formally inaugurated and flagged off by Mr. Muthalagan, Block Development Officer, Ayothiyapattinam Block, Salem District, in the presence of police officials, social activists, and community leaders. In his address, he highlighted the importance of administrative accountability and emphasized that government systems, when supported by active citizen participation, can effectively respond to human rights violations. His message underlined the need for convergence between grassroots movements and governance structures to ensure timely intervention, protection, and justice for women and children.

The Rally: Marching with a Mission

The rally commenced at Masinayakanpatty Bus Stop and proceeded through key public roads and junctions before concluding at the Ayothiyapattinam Block Development Office. Participants carried banners and placards carrying strong messages against violence, discrimination, and abuse, while slogans emphasizing dignity, equality, and child protection resonated across the locality. The march transformed public spaces into forums of awareness and resistance, drawing the attention of passersby and local communities to the urgent need for rights-based action. Through this visible demonstration, the rally sought to reinforce that silence and indifference enable injustice, while collective action fosters accountability and change.

Key Messages and Inspiring Voices

Mr. Xavier, Former Chairperson of the Child Welfare Committee (CWC), emphasized that human rights are fundamental, universal, and applicable to all, without exception. He highlighted key legal provisions related to the protection of women and children and stressed that safeguarding these rights is the shared responsibility of families, communities, institutions, and the State. He strongly advocated that social change should be approached as a sustained movement rather than a one-day event, calling for follow-up actions, continuous advocacy, and internal transformation that leads to long-term societal impact.

Sr. Aruna George, Correspondent of Good Shepherd Matriculation Higher Secondary School, Chennai, invited participants to critically reflect on their own understanding and practice of human rights. She spoke about the pervasive nature of discriminatory practices rooted in caste, gender, class, and social power, and challenged the gathering to develop alternative narratives grounded in justice, equality, and respect. She emphasized that true human rights activism demands courage to speak out against injustice whenever and wherever it occurs. Addressing college students in particular, she urged them to introspect, assume leadership, and commit themselves to building a society where every individual is valued beyond all social divisions.

Mrs. Jayam, Director of Salem People Trust (SPT), highlighted the continuing struggles faced by women and children even after seventy-five years of India's independence. She spoke about

the increasing prevalence of domestic violence, abuse, and systemic neglect, and stressed the urgent need to break the cycle of victimization through unity, persistence, and collective advocacy. She emphasized that lasting change requires consistent engagement at the community level, legal awareness, and strong support systems for survivors.

Press Meet and Media Engagement: Reinforcing Constitutional Values

Following the conclusion of the programme, a **press meet was conducted in the presence of local media and news channels**, ensuring that the core messages of the rally reached a wider audience beyond the immediate participants. During the press interaction, **Mr. Xavier, Former Chairperson of the Child Welfare Committee (CWC), and Sr. Arockiamary, Project Director, Good Shepherd Convent, Salem**, addressed the media on the importance of protecting and promoting the rights of women and children.

They emphasized the **significance of Human Rights Day** as a reminder of the inherent dignity and equality of all persons and reiterated that the purpose of the rally was to create awareness, mobilize communities, and inspire collective responsibility. They strongly highlighted that **upholding human rights is not only a moral obligation but also a constitutional duty**, rooted in the values enshrined in the **Indian Constitution**—justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity. They called upon every citizen to **abide by and act upon these constitutional values in daily life**, stressing that a rights-respecting society can be built only when individuals, communities, and institutions consciously practice these principles.

The media coverage significantly amplified the advocacy message of the rally and reinforced the call for sustained action in support of women's and children's rights.

Beyond the Rally: Sustaining the Movement

The “Walk for the Rights of Women and Children” was envisioned not as an isolated event, but as part of the Good Shepherd Mission's broader strategy to promote a culture of human rights and social accountability. The rally reinforced the importance of continued awareness programmes, youth engagement, community-based protection mechanisms, legal literacy initiatives, and collaboration with government and civil society. The organizers expressed sincere gratitude to government officials, police personnel, civil society partners, volunteers, students, media representatives, and community members whose collective participation strengthened the impact of the event and amplified its message.

Conclusion: Walking the Talk for Justice

The rally concluded with a renewed sense of commitment and collective responsibility among participants. Beyond the physical act of walking, the initiative symbolized a deeper resolve to challenge injustice, confront discrimination, and uphold the dignity of women and children in all spheres of life. It reaffirmed the conviction that human rights are not acts of charity but matters of justice, and that justice demands consistent action, solidarity, and courage. The Good Shepherd Mission remains committed to continuing this journey—walking alongside the marginalized, advocating for systemic change, and building a society where the rights of women and children are respected, protected, and celebrated every day.



