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'Empowering women critical'

Staff Reporter

— Photo: K. Murali kumar



Exhibiting talent: Children performing at the World Habitat Day Celebrations in Bangalore on Monday.

BANGALORE: "I take back with me an inspiration. When I get back, I will work towards extending engineering and construction training programmes, that thus far have been limited to men, to the women in the Home Guards," Jija Hari Singh, Director-General of Police (Home Guards), said here on Monday speaking at a function observing "World Habitat Day".

The event was organised by Habitat for humanity, a non-governmental organisation, which also launched its "women build" programme at the event. The programme aims at providing homes for single mothers, widows and dependent women living in rural Bangalore.

Delivering the key-note address, Ms. Harisingh said that in the context of the floods that have ravaged 15 districts in coastal and north Karnataka, such initiatives were critical for development. "Even as I was coming here, I received the news that two more bodies were found in Karwar (where landslips occurred due to the rain). Just thinking about the plight of those people and their families is devastating," she said. For women, who suffer most during such calamities, it is particularly difficult, she added. "Empowering the woman is extremely important. And while basic amenities can be worked towards, providing them with the security and shelter of a house is the first and most important step."

The event included folk song and dances performed by children that the NGO works with. Managing director of Habitat for Humanity Felix Fernandes said that he wanted to bring together a cross section of society to join hands towards helping women who live in distress across the country.

Recounting the success stories that have been thrown up over 25 years of the NGOs presence in India, Mr. Fernandes said that about 29,000 houses have been constructed and over 145,000 people had benefited by the volunteer work performed by the NGO in different pockets of the country.