Taking MeToo past the confines of social media

A perspective piece by Flavia Agnes, women’s rights lawyer and co-founder Majlis

"Why now? At that time, there were no internal complaints committees and the idea of approaching the police was scary. Does this mean that the incidents did not occur? The lesson learnt is that women have to stake a claim. They will not be given their rights on a platter. They have to snatch them from a patently patriarchal system of corporate governance."

Read the full article here.

When we welcomed you to the Influencers journey to empower the disempowered, we had promised that your support and voice will enable millions of nameless, faceless women to access social justice and equal opportunity. This issue, in the milieu of the #MeToo illustrates the criticality of giving a voice to women in vulnerable situations and brings you stories of hope and triumph at the last-mile from our grassroots coalition partners Ibtada, Jan Sahas and Sanjog.

Our partner NGO in West Bengal, Sanjog works for the community-based rehabilitation of survivors of trafficking and builds their leadership potential to advocate for their rights. This group of survivors, christened Utthan (which means to rise) participated in a National Consultation on the Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection and Rehabilitation) Bill 2018 in Delhi. Here, they spoke with 3 MPs, and addressed the media seeking early passage of the Bill in the Rajya Sabha. They have further scaled the momentum of their advocacy by writing to the PMO and 10 women MPs of India as well.

#antitraffickingbill

Enabling grassroots leadership

Ibtada, our partner NGO whose work is facilitating educational, skill building and entrepreneurship opportunities for women and girls from the conservative Meo Muslim community in Alwar, Rajasthan believes that only community-owned and driven change, can be sustainable. It works with and builds capacities of Village Right Committees (VRC) to advocate and act positively for women empowerment, including leveraging Government machinery in their favour.

Villagers in this committee who were earlier apprehensive or even fearful of engaging with Government functionaries participated in a day-long training, as part of which they also interacted with Block officials. They came back ‘feeling confident’ with their ‘hesitation reduced’; a positive development we hope will influence their future interactions with the officials.

#grassrootsleadership

Our partner Jan Sahas alongwith the Madhya Pradesh Police Department organised a state-level training on sexual violence against women and children for 150 police personnel at the Police Training Academy, Bhopal which were chaired by the District Collector and District Superintendent of Police.

The importance of collaboration with Government departments, in the words of Ashif Sheikh Director, Jan Sahas

“Every one girl out of two faces sexual assault. One of five girls face it in a very severe form and has to undergo consequences of social stigma attached to it. They all are in need of protection. We sensitised stakeholders of respective districts and built their capacity to intervene such cases effectively around the same issue. The objective of conducting workshops and seminars in collaboration with government departments like Women and Child Development, Education and Social Justice is to sensitize the stakeholders working with children closely and to strengthen their knowledge with respect to the laws and acts protecting children’s rights. Child rights are as important as civil rights, but usually there is wide ignorance around them. The second objective of such programs are to strengthen the coordination amongst the local government departments that are working with children.”

#accesslegaljustice

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