

The Influencer bulletin

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Your support to the Influencers journey is ensuring women and girls freedom from violence and discrimination, access to legal justice, grassroots leadership, rights and entitlements and freedom from economic dependence. In this issue, we bring you updates from *I Witness*, a field visit initiative wherein representatives of the group visited Girls Resource Centres operated by our NGO partner Vacha. Read about the various perspectives on the recently passed Triple Talaq bill and join us in celebrating the work and journey of our grassroots coalition partners Jan Sahas and KMVS.

Insights from the grassroots: A day of insights and inspiration

I Witness - the Influencers field visit

It was an eventful Saturday on July 27th when representatives from the Influencers group met with the confident and cheery girls of one of our NGO partners, **Vacha**. Vacha operates Girls Resource Centres in *bastis* (slum areas) across Mumbai, Thane and Palghar which are safe spaces for girls aged between 10-18 years where they access life skills such as communication, negotiation and English proficiency. Sushmita and Ishani Kacholia, Vinay Raizada (from team Sankalp) who was accompanied by his wife Sonal, and Vidya Shah interacted with the girls at Juhu Galli and Gilbert Hill Centres in Andheri; heard from them about the Social Action Projects they had successfully implemented. It was insightful and inspiring to hear the girls talk about how their experiences and achievements in petitioning of the authorities for a bi-weekly garbage pickup, re-enrolment of children in school after conducting a community survey for identifying dropouts and raising concerns on girls' safety while accessing public toilets.

#IWitness



Access to legal justice

The Supreme Court of India registered a suo motu PIL on the rise in cases of child rape and the corresponding lack of infrastructure. We are glad to report that despite the taboo against reporting rape cases, the highest number of cases of child rape reported, the peak number of disposals in a shorter period coupled with conviction; was found to be in Madhya Pradesh - our partner **Jan Sahas'** main region and theme of intervention. Jan Sahas also works in Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh which accounted for 38% of the cases reported, 63% of which were reported to have been disposed.

In addition to this, Jan Sahas conducted a speak out survey in 2018 which revealed that 74% respondents had faced sexual violence in their lifetime. 78% shared that they encountered it as minors but of them only 32% had reported the event. In this light, the increase in the reportage of cases is an encouraging trend which hints towards the breaking of social constructs of shame around victims of rape.

Milestone by Jan Sahas

"16 successful rescue operations in 11 districts across three states by Jan Sahas"

Through rigorous work and efforts in the field over the past one year, Jan Sahas has intensively focused on castigating customers to choke the demand of commercial sexual exploitation of children. We are happy to report that it has successfully rescued 50 girls and gotten 54 customers arrested and charge sheeted across Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan. In the coming year, Jan Sahas aims to get a minimum of 200 customers arrested and convicted as a step forward towards safeguarding the children engaged in sex work.

#NoToRape

Reclaiming Spaces



Kutch Mahila Vikas Sangathan's (KMVS) intervention in Kukma village led to the Panchayat deciding to honour women who have attained higher education by naming the village streets after them. The initiative was announced in March and the Panchayat has started the process with 435 women participating in the same. KMVS believes in enabling an ecosystem that prioritises women's safety through collaborative efforts between the Judiciary, civil society groups, community, district level service providers and other ethnic groups. The local panchayats, as key stakeholders, are involved and sensitized on their responsibilities towards ensuring a safe environment for women and girls in the villages.

#ReclaimingSpaces

In the News

The recent The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill, 2017 which criminalises triple talaq and renders the errant husband liable for three years' imprisonment, has seen mixed reactions. While one faction views the Bill as a victory and redemptive machinery for Muslim women, an opposing segment believes the Bill may further marginalise the plight of Muslim women.

Sayeeda Shehzadi, Executive Board Member, National Council for Promotion of Urdu Language HRD Ministry looks at the Bill as a liberating machinery for Muslim women who were given "instant talaq when wife asked him for vegetables." On the other hand, Flavia Agnes of Majlis voiced her dissent stating that it would serve as a convenient way out for husbands without paying maintenance for the duration of the trial, as the issue of abandoned women continues to remain unaddressed in the bill. Jameela Nishat, founder of **Shaheen Women's Resource and Welfare Association** shared her apprehension towards the Bill which may prod men to choose polygamy over talaq which adds to the misery of the women. **AALI** looks at this step as a liability that would add to the social and legal burden of the women who seek remedial measures for restoration of their rights; rather than involvement of the police in complicating matters further.

#TripleTalaq



*Representational images