

“Kabhi aisa koi game nahi khela.. Game ke madhyam se samajhna zyada asaan hai (I have never played a game like this before, it’s much easier to understand the issue through the game)”

Women domestic workers in Gautampuri and Faridabad learn about their right to safety from sexual harassment in the workplace using a participatory game

Date: 17th March and 24th March, 2022

Place: Gautampuri, Faridabad

Number of participants: 60 women domestic workers

Resource Persons: MFF Programme Staff

Introduction

#मेंभी is a program addressing the issue of sexual harassment in the world of work of women domestic workers. Led by Martha Farrell Foundation (MFF) in partnership with UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women and Girls, #मेंभी has been developed with and for women domestic workers, to strengthen and build accountable institutional mechanisms that prevent, prohibit and redress cases of sexual harassment.

In this regard, it is observed that using participatory, and game-based methods for facilitating sessions on sexual harassment at workplace is beneficial for promoting learning about this issue among domestic workers. MFF program staff have thus been using a card game called ‘चलिये मिलकर सिखें (Together, let’s learn)’ to facilitate sessions with women domestic workers, starting in the Gautampuri and Faridabad areas of Delhi-NCR.

Women domestic workers noted that a common challenge faced by them was that the Sexual Harassment at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act of 2013 uses complex terminology for provisions and concepts under it, which is not easily understandable, even within the translated Hindi Act. ‘चलिये मिलकर सिखें’ is a game thus developed in partnership with women domestic workers, and field facilitators, who expressed the need for using participatory methods to facilitate greater understanding of the issues and concepts of sexual harassment in their world of work.

The participatory game uses coloured sets of cards to provide concepts of sexual harassment at workplace, definitions of a workplace, provisions under the Act, and redressal mechanisms, among others. Using simplified, contextualised, and local language metaphors within the cards, participants in the game may then use role-play methodologies to explain these concepts to members in their groups. Women domestic workers in Gautampuri and Faridabad (who have been oriented on issues of sexual harassment) piloted the use of these cards, with the aid of MFF facilitators.



Highlights from the Conversation in Gautampuri

In Gautampuri, women domestic workers first participated in a discussion on sexual harassment in their world of work. It was noticed that it is difficult for women domestic workers to identify sexual harassment for what it is, they are more used to using words like “ched-chad” (eve teasing) or “badtameezi” (misbehaviour) other than “yaun utpeedhan” (sexual harassment). Through the session, they spoke about their experiences of workplace sexual harassment, and slowly began inducting the term ‘sexual harassment’ in their vocabulary.

Women domestic workers were then divided into three groups and different coloured sets of the game cards were distributed among the groups.

A poster with all the themes of the game cards was placed on a wall, to be viewed by all participants. Women then volunteered and blindfolded themselves to choose a theme (from the differently coloured sets of cards— on themes such as provisions under the Act, redressal mechanisms, among others) randomly from the poster.



A woman domestic worker participating in the blindfold activity of the Game Cards

Once chosen, the group with the card theme chosen had to read out the explanation written on it, following which they led a discussion around the theme.

For instance, women domestic workers from the group that read about 'Local Committees' discussed how such committees are inaccessible to women informal workers, because they did not know anything about their district's Local Committee.



Women domestic workers discussing Game Cards on Sexual Harassment at Workplace

Similarly, one group got a card on sexual harassment in the workplace. During the discussion, participants expressed that they are sexually harassed every day on their way to work, but they often would need to ignore these instances due to limited time, energy, and lack of accessible redressal mechanisms. Another observation that came to light, as revealed by women domestic workers was regarding rampant sexual harassment by men during the festival of Holi— participants noted this fact particularly as Holi was to be celebrated on the day after the session was conducted.

A participant shared -

“Behen ya bhabhi bolke, choo kar pura rang laga dete hai, paani phak dete ha. Bura na maano, Holi hai bolke unko aur himmat milti hai (they call us their sisters or sisters-in-law, and touch us wherever they want to ‘play’ Holi. They say ‘don’t mind, because it’s Holi’, a common phrase used during the festival, which gives them courage to sexually harass us with impunity)”

It was observed that mechanisms under the Law which women domestic workers have found hard to understand and retain in memory, because of the complex language of the law, were broken down and easier for women domestic workers to understand through the game.

Further, women domestic workers who could not read during the discussion were encouraged and supported by their peers, who helped them, and kept them motivated to play the game.

Highlights from the Conversation in Faridabad

In Faridabad, women domestic workers met at a Church in Gadakhor basti and participated in small group discussions to understand sexual harassment in their world of work.

A participant shared -

“Hum sab bahar wali highway road lete hai apne karsthal pe jaane ke liye. Mai omaxe mei kaam karti hun aur roz woh raasta leti hun. Woh road bohot sunsaan rehta hai aur aate jaate bike waale chedte hai”

Participants in this session expressed that they had a severe lack of time to participate in training sessions due to being overburdened with work, which posed a challenge for collectivisation. Participating in game-based sessions, however, were perceived to be much more effective in promoting women’s learning and kept them motivated to speak up about an issue that is traditionally highly silenced in the community.



Woman domestic worker from Faridabad reading out a Game Card to all the participants

Women domestic workers expressed great interest in learning the game, as evidenced by their complete silence and intentional listening while the facilitator was explaining the content of the card.

In this session, and throughout the game, it became clear that women domestic workers were now aware of the law against sexual harassment at workplace and the existence of a Local Committee.

The participatory game session, 'चलिये मिल्कर सिखें' was altogether well received by women domestic workers, who expressed positive feedback, and said that this simplified understanding of sexual harassment at workplace was very helpful for them. Women domestic workers also noted that they would like to continue playing this game with other women in their communities.

Reflections:

Complexity of language and lack of contextual relevance often come in the way of learning and motivation to facilitate change. Game-based learning has a lot of potential to simplify complex concepts and laws and create conversations, even on heavily silenced topics. Visual

and discussion-based learning are also extremely useful to promote greater retention of concepts, laws and rights.