“Pehle ghar ke andar hi pade rehte the toh sabki sunte the aur kuch maloom bhi nahi tha, ab ghar se nikalna shuru kia, iss sanstha ke saath jude toh apne adhikaaron ke baare mein pata laga. Ab nahi sunte hum kisi ki”

(Earlier, staying inside the house, I used to listen to everyone and didn't even know anything, now I have started coming out of the house, got associated with this organization and came to know about my rights. Now, I don't listen to anyone anymore.)

Highlights from a participatory training workshop on sexual harassment at workplace with women domestic workers of Mukherjee Nagar, Delhi

Date: 19th January, 2023
Participants: 67 women domestic worker leaders
Location: Holy Cross Social Service Centre, Mukherjee Nagar
Resource Persons: MFF Program Staff

# is an initiative to strengthen institutional mechanisms under the 2013 Law for the protection of women from sexual harassment in the workplace, led by women domestic workers and the Martha Farrell Foundation, funded by the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women.

According to a study conducted by the Martha Farrell Foundation (MFF) in collaboration with women domestic workers in Delhi-NCR, 100% of 1939 women domestic workers had experienced sexual harassment at work, with another 77.2% experiencing it in their direct workplace (home of their employers). However, none of them were able to file a complaint under the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act of 2013. The Act is one of India's few pieces of legislation that addresses domestic workers as a group. Sexual harassment in the workplace of female domestic workers is an urgent issue due to its high prevalence.

Over the course of a year, field facilitators worked with various communities in different districts of Delhi to collectivise, mobilise, and collect information on women domestic workers' understanding and experiences of sexual harassment at work, as well as the law that prohibits it. Throughout this process, field facilitators have built strong relationships with the communities of women domestic workers and identified leaders among the groups who can spread the word about the issue of sexual harassment at work and the existence of a nine-year-old law prohibiting it.

A refresher participatory training session on the issue and the law was facilitated in Mukherjee Nagar, a small community in North Delhi, which is home to many women who work as domestic workers in houses in the neighbouring areas of Gopalpuri, Nandlal Basti Village and Timarpur. Belonging to migrant families who moved to Delhi in search of work, most women in the area work to supplement their family income and ensure they
can make ends meet. Ages of women domestic workers in the area vary, but across the board, challenges of low wages and lack of paid time off persist in their professional lives, adding to their vulnerability.

The session was designed to start conversations on these issues, their linkage to the issue of sexual harassment at workplace, its forms and types and the rights of women to safe and dignified workplaces.

**Insights**

The most significant challenge identified in the baseline participatory study of sexual harassment at work faced by women domestic workers was that, due to increased vulnerabilities following the pandemic, as well as a lack of financial and social security, women domestic workers are almost never able to speak up about all types of workplace harassment they face. Incidents and experiences of sexual harassment at work are thus routinely silenced due to fear of job loss, fear of retaliation from family and community, and the stigma associated with the issue of sexual harassment.

Since this was a refresher training for community members, women domestic workers could easily distinguish between different types and forms of sexual harassment, as well as what constitutes sexual harassment of women at work. Through various art-based methodologies, they discussed arguments on victim-blaming, women empowerment, and gender-based violence amongst themselves and were made aware of the redressal mechanisms available under the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act. Taking this a step further, participants were taught about the complaint mechanism in a Local Committee, as well as how to write a descriptive complaint report with in-depth details.
Art-based participatory approaches to workplace sexual harassment training was well-received by women domestic workers during the training workshop and allowed for women to express themselves.

In the coming months, women domestic workers have decided to take part in the ‘Demand Campaign’ as a part of International Women's Day and will go to the District Magistrate's office in their respective districts with their demands for more information on the Local Committees set up to address sexual harassment complaints in the district.