"Main construction site par kaam kar rahi thi aur maalik mujh par kachara phenk rahe the(khaali gutke ka packet, moongphalee ke chilke). Maine saahas kia aur use sabke saamne bola ki tum izzat se baat karo mujhse aur dobara aise mati karna warna tumhein beissat karne mein time nahi lagega mujhe”

(I was working at a construction site and while talking the owner was throwing garbage at me (empty Gutka packets, peanut shells). I took courage and said in front of everyone that you speak to me with respect and don't talk to me like this again, otherwise, it will not take me time to disrespect you the same way.)

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

Date: 24th January, 2023
Participants: 130 women domestic worker leaders
Location: Church Hall, Gautampuri
Resource Persons: Program Staff, Martha Farrell Foundation

Introduction

Martha Farrell Foundation, in partnership with women domestic workers in Delhi-NCR is working towards strengthening mechanisms under the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 for women domestic workers; to enable effective prevention, prohibition and redressal of experiences of sexual harassment in the world of work of domestic workers. With support from the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women, this project is aimed at creating a safe and gender-just world with and for women domestic workers.

The issue of safety in the world of work for women domestic workers is a multi-layered challenge. 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 female 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.
The field facilitators have been in close contact with women domestic workers in all of the communities where they have worked, they have formed a strong bond with them. The team realised that as field facilitators found a point of contact to mobilise women domestic workers for an interaction, these focal points could be effective agents of change in the community. They would be experts in reaching out to others, interacting with them, and building sensitivity around the issue of sexual harassment at work because they are members of the community and women domestic workers themselves.

In this initiative to strengthen mechanisms under the law for a safer, dignified and violence-free world of work, women domestic workers from Gautampuri, South East Delhi, and neighbouring areas of B.I.W, and Indira Camp undertook a Participatory Training Workshop on understanding the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act of 2013.

**Insights**

Participants were aware of the different types and forms of sexual harassment and shared that although they know that sexual harassment is wrong and illegal, they were still prone to ignoring it because of their economic and social vulnerabilities, backlash from their families and communities, and the fear of losing their incomes. However, learning about the law and its provisions was something they were deeply interested in.

- When women domestic workers were asked if they had ever experienced sexual harassment at work, nearly all of them said they had.
- Domestic workers discussed victim-blaming, women’s empowerment, and gender-based violence.
- Women domestic workers were made aware of the redressal mechanisms available under the Workplace Sexual Harassment Act.

![Women domestic workers sharing their perspectives on their understanding of the law.](image)
A puppet show was organised for the women domestic workers to help them understand the gravity of sexual harassment in the workplace.

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.

A participant shared -

“Mujhe khud mein bohot badlav dekhne ko mila hai aur maine thaan lia hai ki mai zyada se zyada gharelu kamgaar mahilaon ko unke adhikaaron ke baare mein bataungi”

(I have seen a lot of change in myself and I have decided that I will tell more and more women domestic workers about their rights.)

In the coming months, women domestic workers have decided to take part in the ‘Demand Campaign’ as a part of International Womens 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.