



## **16 Days of Activism: Report**

*Martha Farrell Foundation*

November 25 - December 10, 2020

### **Background**

Across the world the 16 Days of Activism is observed by governments, NGOs, non-profit organizations, civil society, citizens and more to create awareness about and advocate for ending gender-based violence against women.

The COVID-19 pandemic-triggered responses of nations going into lockdown, the fall of economies, and the additional burden on physical and mental health, also caused an increase in cases of violence against women. A shadow pandemic of domestic violence became a common, recurrent theme across communities and nations.

Along with these challenges, this year, the 16 Days of Activism also shed light on the status of informal women workers, and the prevalence of gender-based violence in their world of work, due to the lack of regulation and legal protection available to them.

### **Context**

The Martha Farrell Foundation has been focused on building gender positivity, creating safe spaces for all, and countering gender-based violence across communities, institutions and in public spaces over the last five years.

The organisation's particular focus is on training adolescents and young adults in gender safety, understanding concepts of safety and violence, and countering the same effectively. Another area of focus for the organisation has been prevention of sexual harassment in formal and informal workplaces, through thorough, meaningful, behaviour-led approaches to complying with the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act 2013.

Over the last few years, the organisation has worked with government bodies, departments, informal domestic worker communities, corporates and other organisations; facilitating training sessions on the Act, gender sensitivity, building safe spaces, and rights of people at workplaces, among other programs and projects.

The Foundation has historically committed to the cause and call of the 16 Days of Activism, since inception.

### **16 Days of Activism with Martha Farrell Foundation**

This year, over the 16 Days of Activism, the Martha Farrell Foundation worked with a range of different stakeholders, within India and internationally; at school level, at



university level, in organisations, grassroots level workers, informal women workers, government departments and embassies.

Over the 16 Days, the Foundation created spaces for path breaking conversations with women from all walks of life on the way forward to create safer spaces for all. Below is the complete list of events, training sessions and conversations:

### **ACU Fellowship 2020**

Across the world, there's a glaring issue of safety on university campuses. Sexual harassment of students, teachers, staff, administration, and more continue to be a persistent issue, bolstered by the silence around it, and compromising the quality of education that students deserve.

Through the Martha Farrell Memorial Fellowship, Martha Farrell Foundation (MFF) and Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) have come together to create safe college spaces, by building capacity among select Fellows to be able to realise Dr. Martha Farrell's vision of a safe, equal, equitable and harassment-free world for women, globally.

The Martha Farrell Memorial Fellowship draws on the Foundation's expertise on prevention of sexual harassment and GBV to offer staff members from the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) member universities in Asia and East Africa training and support to enable them to institute an effective anti-sexual harassment initiative at their home university.

This year, during the 16 Days of Activism, three deserving candidates were awarded the Fellowship and trained on methodologies and strategies to prevent sexual harassment on their respective campuses. Meet the 2020 Martha Farrell Memorial Fellowship awardees:

#### **Dr. Georgina Yaa Oduro**

Georgina Yaa Oduro (PhD) is the current Director of the Centre for Gender Research, Advocacy and Documentation (CEGRAD), University of Cape Coast.



#### **Dr. Fatmatta Taqi**

Dr. Fatmatta Taqi (nee Cole) is an academic and an advocate who is passionate about the empowerment of women and girls and strongly believes that education and relevant knowledge are key 'changers' of any situation.



**Dr. Scholastica A. O. Omondi**

Dr. Scholastica Omondi is the Associate Dean, School of Law, Kisumu Campus, University of Nairobi, Kenya. She previously worked as a State Counsel, Magistrate and Judge in Kenya. She is a researcher and consultant in socio-legal issues. As a lecturer, she teaches courses such as gender, criminal law, children rights, evidence, victimology, criminal justice and human rights amongst others.



Over the 16 Days of Activism, all three Fellowship Awardees submitted their plans and strategies to create safer university campuses in their places of work, after completing the Fellowship training and orientation.

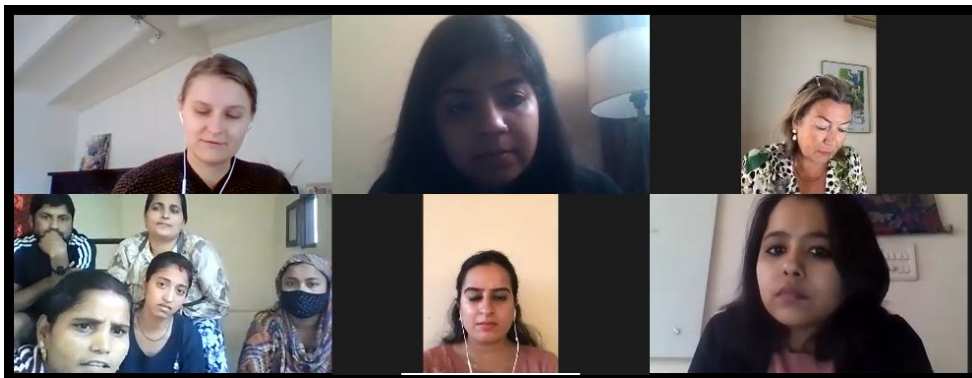
*Find out more about the Fellowship [here](#).*

## The Dutch Deputy Chief of Mission Meets Domestic Workers in India

In the aftermath of the lockdown in India, the Martha Farrell Foundation facilitated the distribution of smartphones to domestic worker communities and school-going girls in Delhi-NCR region. Through the discussion facilitated during this distribution, the Foundation learned about the critical role that smartphones can play in securing women (informal workers) against instances of gender based violence.

To find out more, the Dutch Deputy Chief of Mission Mrs. Anneke Adema, requested a direct conversation with the women and girls who had received mobile phones via MFF's distribution program. On December 1, Mrs. Adema, Ms. Ilona Domanska Second Secretary, and Ms. Karanpreet Kaur, Senior Policy Officer with the Netherlands Embassy, met with the following women:

- Sarita, Neetu, Ambia and Bharti, domestic workers living in Sector 53 in Gurgaon
- Jyoti and Laxmi, two school-going girls living in Sector 53 in Gurgaon
- Charu, Soni, Gulista, Amisha and Aasma, school- and college-going girls from Sector 4 in Dwarka, New Delhi



The discussion, facilitated by the Martha Farrell Foundation, revolved around the role of mobile phones in the lives of the women and their safety in their homes, workplaces and the streets; their thoughts and contributions to the 16 Days of Activism campaign; and how they're coping with violence in the aftermath of the lockdown.



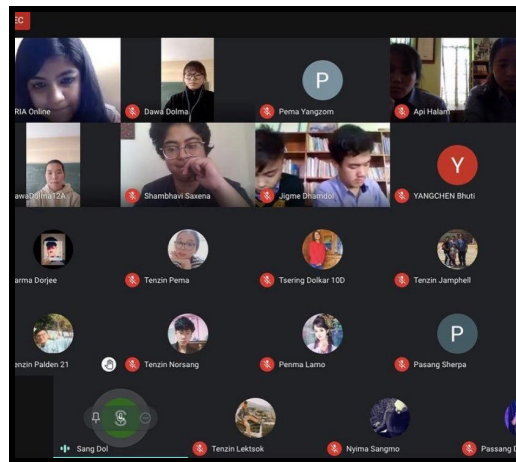
*Find out more on the conversation [here](#).*

## Fight Girl: Film Screening

The Embassy of the Netherlands in India, in collaboration with the Martha Farrell Foundation also organised the screening of the Dutch film ‘Fight Girl’ for adolescents. The film is directed by Johan Timmers, and tells the story of 12-year-old Bo, her parents’ messy divorce and her passion for kickboxing. Through Bo-s journey, the film debunks several stereotypes around gender, especially those faced by adolescents across cultures and communities, and subtly deals with the question of gender-based violence and the power dynamics involved in such instances.

The film screening was held on December 5th and 6th, following which the Martha Farrell Foundation organised and facilitated three Reflection Circles to understand the viewers’ (school children’s) understanding of gender stereotypes and gender-based violence from the film. The Reflection Circles were held with:

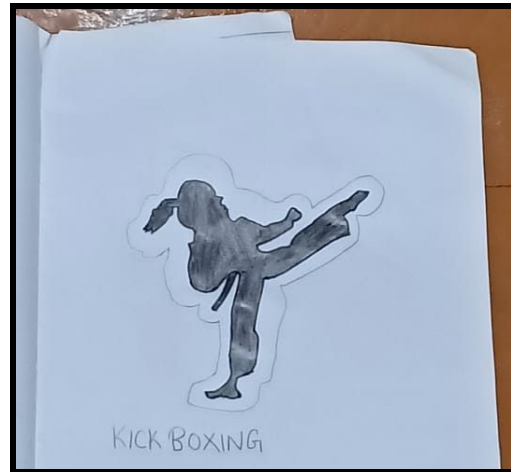
- Nearly 20 students from schools in Tibetan settlements across India



- 18 Students from the Martha Farrell Foundation’s Kadam Badhate Chalo (KBC) Fellowship Program

Bo	Dani
 <p>depressed, गुस्सा, no self-control, frustrated, हिम्मत , जिद्दी, जुनूनी, चिंतित, short tempered, उसका सपना अन्य लड़कियों से अलग था, आत्मनिर्भर, motivates people</p>	 <p>मासूम, low confidence, अकले रहने वाला, डरा हुआ, शर्मीला, अच्छा singer, डरपोक</p>

- 15 Students from Camellia School in Darjeeling

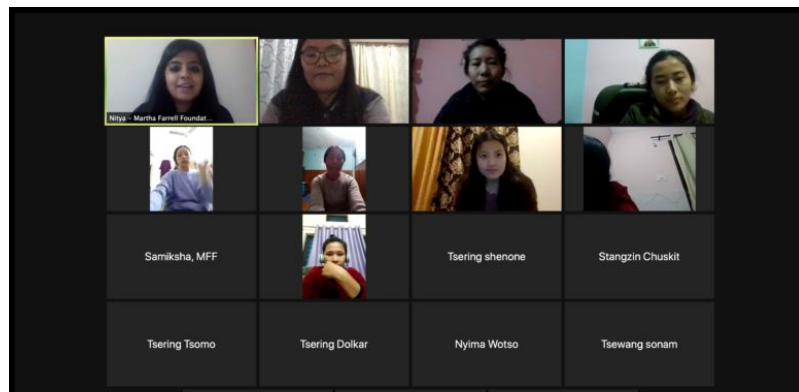


Find out more about the reflections [here](#).

### Safe Campus Program: Students from Tibet in Indian Universities and Colleges

Since the pandemic triggered a nation-wide lockdown in India, the movements for safety and countering gender based violence across the breadth of the nation has been set back by several decades. During the 16 Days of Activism 2020, which fell on the cusp of organisations, governments and educational institutions opening up, the time was apt for a conversation with college students of the Tibetan community in India, and taking stock of their status of safety and security in their university spaces.

The Martha Farrell Foundation and the Central Tibetan Administration would jointly share their recommendations with the Association of Indian Universities (an apex inter-university organisation tasked with the growth and development of higher education institutions in India) to secure the rights and safety of every student on Indian campuses.



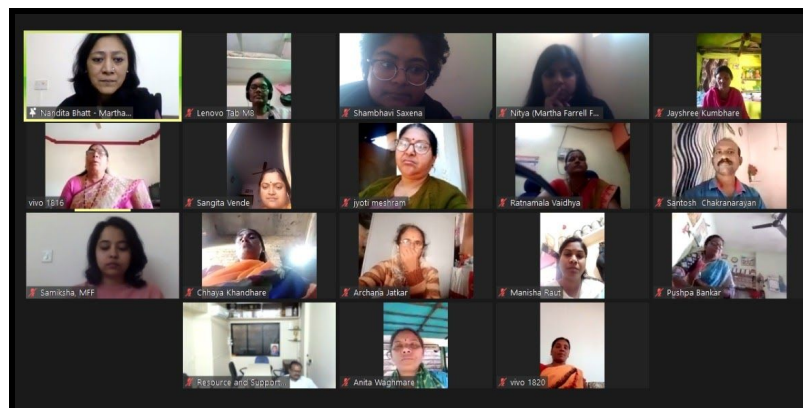
The Safe Campus Program with Tibetan students in India kicked off with a two hour conversation with 14 college students for the first round of discussion on December 7, 2020. The key themes of discussion were as follows:

- Create a culture of safety and safe spaces on campus by regularly training students, faculty and administrative staff on creating safe, inclusive spaces for all, including personal steps they must take to ensure they don't encroach upon other people's safety and comfort.
- Draw out more conversations on racism and identifying instances of racism and behaviours that perpetrate it, to counter the normalisation of the behaviour.
- Authorities in the Indian as well as Tibetan governments must provide information on the laws and policies in place to ensure the safety of students of Tibetan origin on campuses.
- The UGC Guidelines to prevent sexual harassment on campuses are not being followed on campuses. Several students remain completely unaware of the existence of Internal Committees to take their grievances to. This must be countered by ensuring and establishing proper mechanisms, not just for redressal of grievances, but also for prevention and prohibition of instances of sexual harassment in campus spaces.
- Students must have equal and easy access to information about the Internal Committee set up for their protection through mandated display of the contact details of committee members across the campus spaces.
- Gender sensitisation and training to end the culture of violence and sexual harassment within the Tibetan community, as well as the Indian community is essential to counter gender disparity and lack of safety on campus spaces.
- More conversations on safety and security need to be held to break the heavy silence surrounding topics of violence, harassment and sexual and gender-based violence among students of the Tibetan community residing and studying on Indian college campuses.

*Read more about the session and conversation [here](#).*

### **Mahilaon Ke Liye Surakshit Panchayat**

On December 8th 2020, the Martha Farrell Foundation organised and held discussions with women elected representatives in Panchayat in Maharashtra to spark conversations about safety and security among women in positions of power in government, across India. The conversation was organised in partnership with the Resource and Support Center for Development (RSCD) and their Mahila Rajsatta Campaign for inclusion and safety of women elected leaders.



The objective of this discussion was to arrive at recommendations to ensure the safety of women elected representatives in Panchayats across Maharashtra, so they would be able to carry out their responsibilities without fear of repercussions. The conversation was divided into two halves:



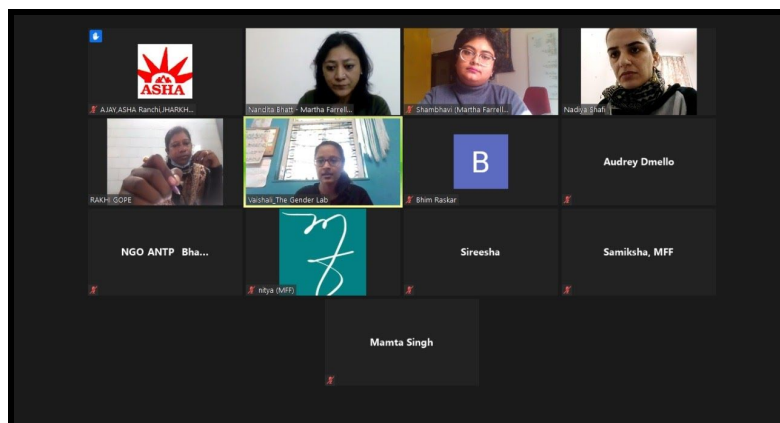
experience sharing and culling out of recommendations to counter the instances of threats to personal safety among women leaders. Here are the key recommendations to emerge:

- Elected women representatives should be trained in the Panchayat on their rights at the workplace and the policies that are meant to secure them
- Panchayats should organise safety audits in every village on a regular, annual basis, based on which security plans and strategies should be developed for women at every level, profession and community
- Gender sensitisation programs such as 'Jyoti by Jagriti' must review their processes and be made more effective to create safer public outlook towards women and other genders
- The 'Women's State Power Security Bill' created under a campaign by the Women's State Power Movement should be effectively implemented by the government in all Panchayats
- Internal Committees in all government departments and at the district level should be strengthened and capacity building must be initiated among members to ensure effective prevention, prohibition and redressal in cases of instances of sexual harassment against women leaders in Panchayat, under the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act 2013.
- Office hours of Panchayat should take into consideration the duties and responsibilities of women outside of the workplace
- More women should be a part of the Panchayat, for greater safety and more responsive measures to create safer spaces
- Facilities such as safe, functional toilets and areas for women elected leaders to breast-feed their children should be instituted in all Panchayat offices
- Panchayat Mahila Sahayata Kendras should be present in every village where women sarpanch or other women panchayat members can go and file a complaint easily in case of instances of violence and harassment

*Read more about the session and conversation [here](#).*

## **MFA Winners' Roundup**

Over the last five years, the Martha Farrell Foundation has been recognising the phenomenal work done by individuals and organisations to counter sexual and gender-based violence in different streams of life.







With the restrictions caused by the COVID-19 triggered lockdowns, civil society organisations had to take several steps back in their work with different communities. Domestic violence in particular, has loomed large through this period of the pandemic.

With the awardees of the Martha Farrell Awards over the last five years forming a ready network of committed individuals, the Foundation held a forum with the women during the 16 Days of Activism to find out the status of domestic and gender-based violence across workplaces, communities and more, as it stands today, and to sketch out a plan for the upcoming year, where this network could work together to end such instances of violence.

The discussion addressed these three major points, answered by the attendees:

- How have you addressed GBV through your work during the pandemic?
- What major challenge has impeded your work in the last 10 months?
- What are your recommendations for the way forward?

The recommendations that came out through the conversation are as follows:

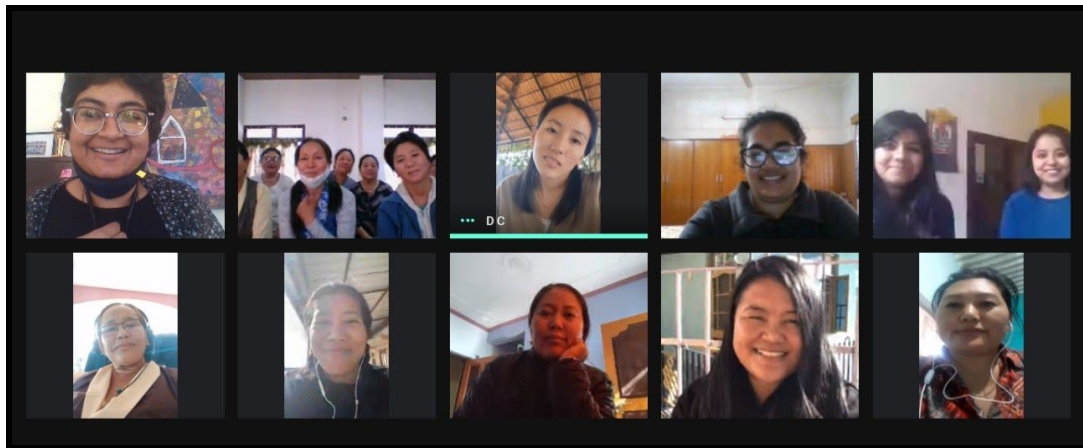
- The network to collaborate for multi-state case studies on the Shadow Pandemic
- Capture more platforms to exhibit and visibilise each organisation's work
- Create a resources pool for Forum work
- Instead of national policies, focus on implementation of existing anti-GBV measures (e.g.: Domestic Violence Act)
- Advocacy and lobbying work
- Identify implementation gaps at the state-level and offer guidance to officials as well as hold them accountable for delivering schemes and programmes
- We should not remain "happy corners", but create an identity for the Forum with membership
- Plan national-level consultations
- Collect stories from the ground

### **Safety Circle for Tibetan Barefoot Counsellors**

On World Human Rights Day, and the last day of the 16 Days of Activism against gender-based violence, the Martha Farrell Foundation held a Safety Circle with 15 Tibetan Barefoot Counsellors from the Karnataka's TDL Bylakuppe settlement.

The Barefoot Counsellors are trained grassroots women leaders who use counselling as a tool for social change and promote positive living, reaching out to women in vulnerable situations. A large part of their work revolves around counselling women who are survivors of domestic violence.

The objective of the conversation was to gauge the prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence in their world of work, the challenges they face in performing their tasks as counsellors, and using a participatory approach, develop recommendations on a safer, more secure future of work for them.



The key recommendations to emerge from the conversation are below:

- Each counsellor must be trained to read and write, and given resource support and expertise to be able to offer solutions and ways forward to the women they counsel.
- Each counsellor should be trained on refined communication skills to be able to conduct sessions properly.
- Counsellors should be trained thoroughly on the laws that can help protect them in cases of instances of sexual and gender based violence in their world of work.
- Counsellors should be provided safe spaces where they can counsel the women without interruption or threat.
- Counsellors should be trained on being able to ensure continued protection of the women they work with, even after their counselling session is over.
- Counsellors must be given a set of clear guidelines and framework for reference in their world of work, so that they are able to support the women better, avoid putting their clients in danger and keep themselves out of risky situations, as well.

*Find out more about the conversation [here](#).*

### **Conversation with Domestic Workers**

On World Human Rights Day 2020, the Martha Farrell Foundation also held a discussion on the prevalence of sexual harassment at the workplaces of domestic workers in an informal settlement in Gurgaon.



The objective of the conversation was to discuss and deliberate on such instances and share information on the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act 2013.

Through a guided conversation, the domestic workers discussed the additional challenges of the lockdown triggered by the pandemic on their financial status, and their increased vulnerability to instances of gender based and sexual violence at the workplace.

The conversation closed on a determined note, with domestic workers taking up the responsibility of informing, sharing information with and mobilising their peers to demand safer workplaces over the coming year, and putting up a united front against abuse and discrimination at the hands of their employers.

### **Next Steps**

The conversations that the Martha Farrell Foundation held with different stakeholders during the 16 Days of Activism 2020, outlined a clear path to take forward efforts to counter sexual and gender-based violence faced by women across the region. Over the coming year, the Foundation aims to take forward each conversation with defined next steps.

If you or your organisation would like to partner with us in any of the upcoming initiatives, drop us a message on our Instagram/Facebook/Twitter.