

“I was called a liar when I complained about sexual harassment at my workplace”

My name is Sita (name changed) and I migrated to Delhi from my village a few years ago in search of employment opportunities, to earn a living for my family. I began working as a domestic worker in a high-rise building near the informal urban settlement in West Delhi, where I was living. My tasks included cooking meals for the family.

Initially, I was comfortable at my place of work - my employers treated me well, and I had no complaints. A few days into the job, however, I began to notice that there was something wrong with one employer's behaviour, a 20-year-old boy, who lived in the same house.

While working in the kitchen one day, the employer came to me and asked for a glass of water. I took the glass of water to his room and returned to work in the kitchen, where I was cooking food. Before I knew it, he returned to the kitchen and stood very close behind me. I immediately turned around and asked him what he was doing. He replied saying he was just looking at the food I was cooking.

As the days passed, the employer began repeating his behaviour. He would stand close behind me and watch me cook. Whenever I asked, he would say the same thing - *“I am looking at the food.”*

I felt very uncomfortable, but I needed the job, so I just ignored my discomfort. I didn't like how close behind me he would stand.

A few days later, I was sweeping the floor, when the employer came and touched me inappropriately. I immediately turned around and slapped him. I decided to complain to his mother. When I complained, he denied doing anything inappropriate, and suggested that I should be fired immediately. Instead of getting justice, I was branded a liar for speaking up.

Sita is among millions of women domestic workers in India who are forced to keep silent about their experiences of sexual harassment in the workplace. Migrant status, desperation to earn and lack of strong legal mechanisms to prevent and redress such instances in their workplace make it harder for them to open up about their experiences. With #MainBhi, Sita has joined hands with the Martha Farrell Foundation, supported by the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women, to strengthen institutional mechanisms and response to their experiences of sexual harassment in the workplace. Find out more about the project [here](#).