Seminar on Prevention of Sexual Harassment Within the Workplace

Martha Farrell
PRIA, New Delhi
March 2010
Sexual Harassment in the Workplace

• Even though there are more women in the workplace, it still remains a male centric area

• Discrimination exists in all forms and sexual harassment is one of the most severe

• Organisations seem determined to treat sexual threats, aggression and intimidation as trivial issues and often as a figment of a woman’s imagination
Sexual Harassment in the Workplace

- Why are women not enraged at these incidents?
- Is the fear of reprisal and further victimisation and intimidation keeping a lid on a growing problem?
- Why do they not find the environment of the organisation supportive in making complaints?
Organisations have low commitment towards gender issues

Mere presence of women in the workplace is assumed to indicate their representation and inclusion of their voice

Committees will be constituted only when there is a case of sexual harassment
Women have dealt with the issue by either ignoring the same or quitting their jobs or life.

Sexual harassment is viewed as harmless fun by male colleagues which includes abusive language, lewd jokes, looks and gestures.

Women must develop a “thick skin”, be “less emotional”, “bold” in order to survive.

Organisations are smaller spaces to affect change and initiate action against harassers and create spaces for women to speak up.
Ways Forward

- Why are we here today?
- To deliberate on the role that we all can play as
  - Individuals
  - Representatives of organisations
  - Collectives and networks
- To use our collective experiences to create effective mechanisms for
  - Effective implementation of the Vishaka Guidelines
  - Advocacy for the passage of the Bill
  - Build capacities and raise awareness on this issue
Thank you