



Findings from the evaluation of the #MainBhi (#MeToo) Project

Implemented by the Martha Farrell Foundation
Supported by the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women



**This document has been adapted from the main report titled:
Making Workplaces Accountable towards Women Domestic Workers:
Effective implementation of the Sexual Harassment at Workplace (SHW)
Act (2013). To access the main report, scan the QR code given below:**



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PROJECT BACKGROUND



Set up in 2015, the Martha Farrell Foundation envisions a world in which all formal and informal learning and working spaces are safe and gender equitable.

The Foundation, in collaboration with the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women (UN Trust Fund), implemented the project titled "Making Workplaces Accountable towards Women Domestic Workers: Effective Implementation of Sexual Harassment at Workplace (SHW) Act (2013)" from May 2021 to August 2024.

The project covered the 11 districts of Delhi, and Gurugram and Faridabad districts in Haryana, with the overarching aims to:

1. Address the pervasive issue of sexual harassment faced by Women Domestic Workers (WDWs) at the workplace.
2. Raise awareness among WDWs about their rights under the SHW Act, 2013 and
3. Improve access to redressal mechanisms, while also strengthening the capacity of institutional stakeholders such as the Local Committees (LCs), Nodal Officers, and police personnel to handle SHW complaints more sensitively and effectively.

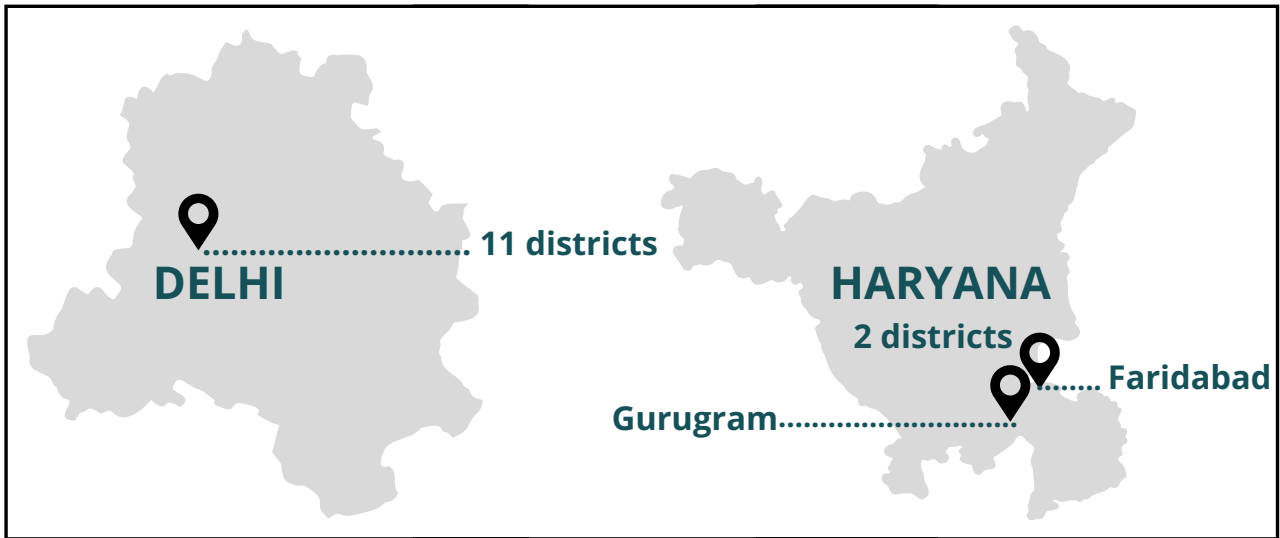
The objective of the evaluation was to review the project outcomes, the intervention strategies employed, best practices, and lessons learned. It also sought to assess the contribution of the project in building key knowledge on EAWG (especially in informal workplaces) and the integration of gender equality and human rights in a project addressing SHW faced by WDWs in Delhi, Gurugram, and Faridabad. Five districts: North Delhi, South Delhi, South-East Delhi, South-West Delhi, and Gurugram – were purposefully selected for evaluation-based on active WDW engagement and representation of all project activities.

The evaluation methodology employed a rigorously structured, mixed-methods approach that incorporated both qualitative and quantitative data collection to assess project impact, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, knowledge generation, relevance and coherence across multiple districts. This design was grounded in a participatory framework, adapted from the Terms of Reference (TOR) and further refined through initial consultations with project staff at MFF.

The primary methods included surveys, focus group discussions (FGDs), and key informant interviews (KIIs) with WDWs (primary beneficiaries) and various stakeholders such as Pehekars, Anganwadi workers (AWWs), civil society organizations (CSOs), and district officials.



OUTREACH



- Women domestic workers
- Police personnel
- Nodal officers
- Local Committee members
- Anganwadi workers
- Men and boys of the community
- Employers, civil society organizations, unions
- Ward councillors and district administration

IMPACT

At the end of the project, the following impacts were noted:



99% of WDWs

recognised sexual harassment as a crime.



99% of WDWs

were able to identify various forms of sexual harassment forms of sexual harassment, including verbal, visual, and physical harassment.



88% of WDWs

were familiar with the role of Local Committees (LCs) in addressing Sexual Harassment at Workplace complaints.



50% of WDWs

felt completely involved in decision-making process in the project by MFF.



62 % of WDWs

will continue to form unions/groups and talk/discuss/host meetings/advocate against sexual harassment at the workplace.



72.5% of WDWs

asserted that it is very likely that the Pehelkars (community leaders) trained by MFF will continue to support them in seeking redressal against sexual harassment faced by them at the workplace.



90% of WDWs

felt that the time spent on project activities was a good use of their time.



92% of WDWs

felt equal, respected, and responsible for the project outcomes.



89% of WDWs

across the four districts of Delhi-NCR agree that the activities of the project anchored by MFF align with their needs.



84.54% of WDWs

agree that MFF has fully succeeded in reducing safety risks at their workplaces.



84% of WDWs

across four districts of Delhi-NCR agree that MFF has fully succeeded in helping them understand their roles, responsibilities, and rights.



95% of WDWs

agree that MFF has successfully helped them unite against workplace violence and harassment.

IMPACT

“ “
Before, we were scared and silent. Now, we're fearless because we understand our rights. We can speak up, helping others do the same. It's outdated to fear judgment when discussing sexual violence. We must ignore such concerns and choose our own right and wrong. Silence only enables misconduct. With knowledge of the law and our rights, we now speak out from the start.

” ”
-Domestic worker associated with MFF

“ “
We thought that 100 complaints should be filed. We never imagined that 100 women would stand behind a woman in a police station and fight for her rights. But that happened.

” ”
-MFF team member working on the project

“ “
My husband knows I am aware now. He knows I attend these meetings, talk to other women. He knows that I have full legal knowledge. So now he says that he regrets that he sent me out to work, because I am so aware. But it is important to be aware. I am not scared of my husband anymore.

” ”
-Focus group discussion with Anganwadi workers

The kind of people who should be roped into the local committee should be driven and passionate, especially given the very high work-load that the local committee must deal with. It is critical to have the right kind of people in the committee who are passionate, really mean work and are not easily distracted. However, in spite of this, we have put a clear system in place. So tomorrow, if I am not on the local committee, somebody else can take over. There is going to be clear cut handing over and taking over.

-Local Committee member

There are no bottlenecks in the support we get from the foundation (MFF), but the problem is that a number of transitions happen at the district level. Officials keep changing, people keep getting transferred out of the committee. We had to appoint officials who were transferred out. Because of these issues we could not get the committee to actually function.

-District Official

I became a Pehelkar after learning about sexual harassment when I joined here (MFF). I now share this information with other women at home because we often don't pay attention to these issues. Now, we pay attention, and inform others about them, protecting ourselves from these problems.

-Pehelkar (community leader) associated with MFF

KEY FINDINGS



- **Increased awareness of rights:** At the baseline, only 16% of WDWs knew sexual harassment was a legal violation. By the endline, 99.44% recognized it as a crime, and 98.73% could identify its various forms, including verbal, visual, and physical harassment.
- **Empowerment and behavior change:** The project shifted WDWs' perception of sexual harassment from passive acceptance to active rejection of victim-blaming narratives. Participants gained confidence to assert their rights, reject normalised abuse, and raise awareness in their communities.
- **Leadership and advocacy:** The project nurtured community leadership among WDWs, empowering some to become Pehekars (community representatives) who led advocacy efforts, conducted safety audits, and lobbied district authorities on SHW cases.
- **Community-wide impact:** The project extended its influence beyond WDWs to other informal workers like Anganwadi workers and male community members, raising broader awareness of workplace rights and sexual harassment protections.

- **Increased engagement with legal mechanisms:** By project end, 88.01% of WDWs understood the role of LCs in addressing SHW complaints, with many aware of the complaint filing process. LCs also reported higher engagement from WDWs, reflecting success in connecting marginalized workers with legal systems.



- **Empowerment of WDWs:** WDWs have transitioned from identifying as "servants" to recognizing themselves as workers with rights. Over 99% are now aware of the SHW Act, advocating for fair wages, safe working conditions, and addressing harassment through collective action.
- **Cultural shift on sexual harassment:** Sexual harassment, once taboo, is now openly discussed, with WDWs relying on peer networks for support and collective advocacy.
- **Expanded workplace definition:** WDWs now view their workplace as encompassing transit routes, communal spaces, and other work-related areas, empowering them to act against sexual harassment in diverse environments.

- **Local Committees (LCs):** While established in all districts, LCs face resource shortages, limited outreach, and high turnover, limiting their effectiveness.
- **Police engagement:** Improved in severe cases but inconsistent for harassment that is considered routine, necessitating continuous sensitivity training.
- **Training and awareness:** Awareness of the SHW Act among institutional stakeholders has increased, but systemic barriers hinder consistent implementation.



- **Contribution to global knowledge:** The project contributed valuable knowledge to the global discourse on ending violence against women and girls, particularly in informal labor settings. The evaluation also revealed that the project has led to notable unintended outcomes, such as the expanded role of Pehelkars in community mobilization.
- **Sharing of best practices:** The project documented several emerging good practices, including the use of visual aids to raise awareness among non-literate WDWs and peer-led advocacy approaches that empowered marginalized women to take leadership roles.

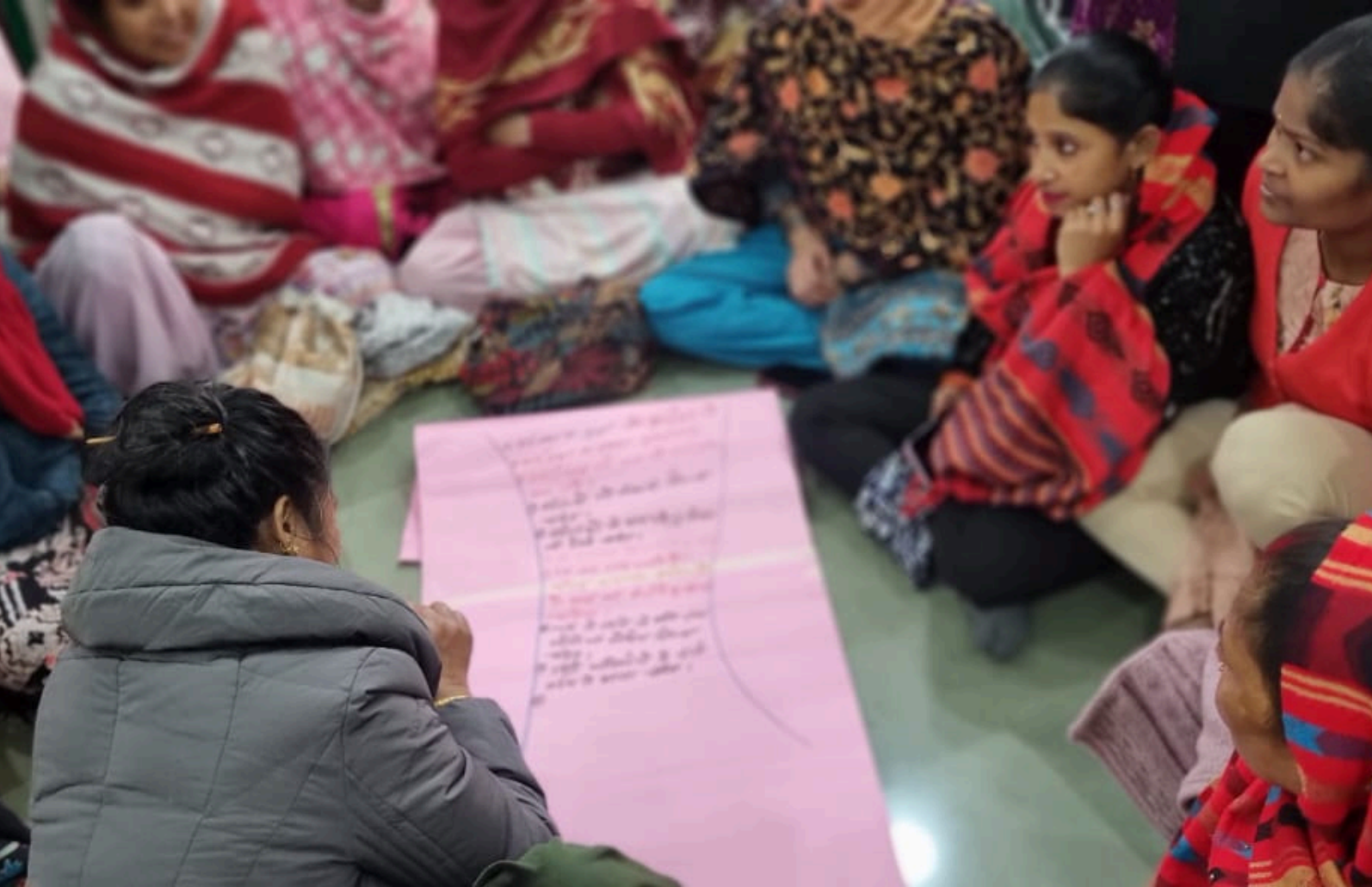


- **Empowerment and self-identity:** The project shifted WDWs' self-perception, enabling them to see themselves as dignified workers deserving respect, which is essential for demanding fair treatment and labor rights.
- **Awareness of rights:** MFF's educational initiatives have equipped WDWs with knowledge of the SHW Act, empowering them to recognize and challenge mistreatment confidently.
- **Expanded workplace definition:** MFF broadened WDWs' understanding of "workplace" to include all work-related spaces, enabling them to address harassment wherever it occurs.
- **Willingness to discuss sexual harassment:** MFF's approach normalized discussions on sexual harassment, fostering solidarity and making it easier for WDWs to report incidents without shame.
- **Collective mobilization:** Legal awareness has empowered WDWs to mobilize collectively, strengthening their bargaining power and visibility in advocating for better working conditions.
- **Community-based redressal:** Inconsistencies in formal support led WDWs to rely on community networks for grievance redressal, promoting resilience and mutual support.

- **Responsive redressal mechanisms:** MFF's collaboration with LCs and police has improved institutional responsiveness, fostering accountability and accessible justice for WDWs.
- **SHW procedures implementation:** The project's work with authorities has embedded SHW protections, ensuring sustained support and promoting workplace respect for WDWs.



- **Policy and legal coherence:** The project was well-aligned with national policies, including the SHW Act, 2013, and ongoing labor rights initiatives. It complemented existing legal frameworks by providing a practical mechanism for WDWs to access redressal mechanisms that were otherwise underutilized.
- **Synergies with civil society efforts:** The project forged strong collaborations with CSOs, leveraging their networks and expertise to strengthen community outreach and advocacy. This multi-stakeholder approach ensured that the project's interventions were coherent with broader civil society efforts to promote women's rights in the informal sector.



- **Long-term empowerment of WDWs:** Evidence suggests that the project's outcomes will be sustained beyond its official end. WDWs have demonstrated ongoing mobilization efforts, with many continuing to collectivize and advocate for workplace rights through peer-led initiatives such as Pehekars.
- **Institutional continuity:** Local Committees, trained during the project, continue to function effectively, although ongoing support and capacity-building will be required to maintain their responsiveness. WDWs reported confidence in continuing to access LCs and other formal mechanisms for redressal.
- **Risk of regression:** Without continued financial and logistical support, there is a risk that some of the project's gains—particularly around institutional accountability—may regress. WDWs' engagement with legal mechanisms, while significantly improved, remains fragile, requiring consistent advocacy and support.

RECOMMENDATIONS



- **Strengthening institutional mechanisms:** Continue capacity-building efforts for Local Committees, Nodal Officers, and police personnel to ensure they remain responsive to SHW complaints. Regular refresher training, particularly on trauma-informed approaches, should be integrated into government and institutional workflows.
- **Sustaining WDWs' mobilization and leadership:** Provide ongoing support to WDWs, particularly through Pehelkars, to ensure that their collective power and advocacy efforts are maintained. Facilitating cross-district exchanges among WDWs could also help sustain motivation and shared learning.
- **Expanding the model to other regions:** Given the project's success, the approach should be scaled up to other districts across India, particularly in states where informal workers face similar vulnerabilities. The replication of key strategies, such as peer-led initiatives and participatory safety audits, will ensure broader impact.



- **Legal and policy advocacy:** Advocate for stronger enforcement of the SHW Act, 2013, and for the inclusion of domestic workers in broader labor protections, such as minimum wage and social security. National and state-level policies should also recognize domestic work as formal labor, thereby extending legal protections.
- **Ensuring financial and logistical sustainability:** Develop a long-term sustainability plan, including funding mechanisms and partnerships with local governments and private sector actors. Engaging employers in discussions around workplace safety could also increase private sector accountability in implementing SHW Act provisions.
- **Monitoring and evaluation systems:** Establish ongoing monitoring systems to track the progress of WDWs' engagement with Local Committees and the sustained impact of the project. Future projects should include longitudinal evaluations to capture long-term outcomes and changes in the socio-economic conditions of WDWs.

ABOUT THE FOUNDATION

Established in 2016, the Martha Farrell Foundation (MFF) is committed to creating a gender-just society by eliminating sexual and gender-based violence. We believe that all individuals, communities, and institutions have the will and ability to facilitate change and invest in self-empowerment and growth.

To this end, MFF's programmes integrate holistic, participatory approaches to foster safe, empowering spaces where every individual can learn and work safely without the fear of sexual and gender-based violence or discrimination. Our initiatives are designed to work in harmony on three levels - individual, community, and policy - engaging diverse stakeholders to enable meaningful change.

ABOUT THE #MAINBHI PROGRAMME

Empowering women informal workers to demand for their rights to a safe and harassment-free workplace and hold their employers and government institutions accountable

The right to a safe and harassment-free workplace is a right for all women, as noted in the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, Redressal) Act 2013 (SHW Act). Understanding that a majority of Indian women are employed in the informal sector, the Act also covers informal workers, including domestic workers.

Women informal workers experience sexual and gender-based violence in every sphere - private, professional, and public. Economic instability, a culture of patriarchy, and the fear of backlash from family and community prevent them from speaking about it, seeking justice, or taking action.

Martha Farrell Foundation's Making Workplaces Safe programme is one of the few programmes in the country focused on countering sexual and gender-based violence in the world of work of women informal workers. Given their contextual challenges, this programme has been co-designed with informal worker partners, and is being implemented with and by them.



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