

“महिला हूँ लड़ सकती हूँ इतनी हिम्मत रख सकती हूँ”

## Demand Campaign with the Women Domestic Workers

### Introduction: Background

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 (SHW 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.

When it first started in 2017, the #MeToo movement highlighted several challenges to the implementation of the SHW Act, of 2013. However, there were no avenues for women informal workers (including domestic workers) to voice challenges to safety in their world of work. Supported by the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women, women domestic workers of Delhi and Haryana and MFF aim to change the status quo with #MainBhi. We seek to bring the issue of sexual harassment in the world of work of women domestic workers to the fore and create responsive, accountable, sensitive institutional responses, in compliance with the 2013 Act.

### Demand Campaign led by women domestic workers

Taking forward the objectives of the #MeToo movement to effectively implement the provisions of the SHW Act on the ground, a demand campaign was planned wherein the Women Domestic Workers (WDWs) after discussion amongst themselves prepared a set of demands which was to be submitted to the District Magistrate of 11 Districts of Delhi and Gurugram. The demand campaign is led by the WDWs who are asking questions to the District



Magistrate (DM) about the implementation of the SHW Act in their respective districts. These demands draw their source from the real-life experiences experienced by the WDWs at their workplace.

## Objective of the demand campaign

The demand campaign has the following objectives:

1. For WDWs Local Committee only exists on paper or in the statute. The campaign aims to transform this perception by bridging the gap between the members of the Local Committee (LC) and WDWs.
2. To make WDWs understand that asking questions from the district administration is their democratic right and that it is one of the ways (amongst others) to hold them accountable.
3. Nudge the district administration to make them aware that there is a community of domestic workers who through an Act of the Parliament have the right to a safe workplace and that you are legally bound to form the LC to redress cases involving sexual harassment.
4. To push the District Administration to form LC in districts where they are yet to be formed and support them in strengthening the functioning of the committee.

## Highlights from the campaign

The demand campaign in its totality aimed at mobilizing the WDWs to develop an understanding of the various facets of the SHW Act and push for its implementation by nudging the District Administration through submitting the demands framed by the WDWs. To mobilize the support of the WDWs for the demand campaign and sensitize them on the importance of being a part of it, MFF organized meetings cum discussion sessions with the WDWs at the following locations:

### Jasola Vihar

**Date:** 12<sup>th</sup> April

**Number of participants:** 125



**Women domestic workers in Jasola Vihar (South-east Delhi) voicing their rights for safe and dignified workplace during the demand campaign**

A women domestic worker during the meeting in Jasola vihar shared “लोकल समिति की जानकारी हमे पता होनी चाहिए और इसके लिए हम आज यहाँ आए हैं “ (We should know the information of the local committee and for this we have come here today)

Guddi, women domestic worker leader from Jasola vihar shared “जिला अधिकारी को हमारी मांगों को पूरा करना होगा और इसके लिए हम उनसे मिलने भी जाएंगे” (The District Magistrate will have to fulfill our demands related to safe workplace and for this we will also go to meet him)

## Gurugram

**Date:** 2<sup>th</sup> April

**Number of participants:** 25



**Women domestic workers of Harijan Basti, Gurugram signing the demand card as part of the campaign**

## Mukherjee Nagar

**Date:** 2<sup>nd</sup> May

**Number of participants:** 120 WDWs participated



**Women domestic workers of Munirka (South- west Delhi) participating in the meeting as part of the demand campaign**

## Munirka

**Date:** 5<sup>th</sup> May

**Number of participants:** 50 WDWs participated



**Women domestic workers of Mukherji Nagar (North Delhi) with their demand cards after signing them**

The demand campaign meetings were held at Jasola Vihar, Gurugram, Munirka and Mukherjee Nagar. The campaign meetings have following aspects which enabled participation and discussion amongst women domestic workers around the issue and their demands for safe workplace from the District Administration.

The first session of the meeting began with a song which symbolised asking questions to the authorities for their rights; the song helped in setting the tone of the session. Few lines from the song is mentioned below:

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मेरे सपनों को जानने का हक़ रे  
क्यों बरसो से खली पड़े हैं, इनके सजने का नाम नहीं  
मेरे हाथों को ये जानने का हक़ रे  
क्यों बरसो से खली पड़े हैं, इन्हे आज भी काम नहीं

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The above line when translated into English would mean that as a citizen I have a right to know why despite after so many years, my dreams have not been fulfilled and I do not have any work to do. These lines were composed in the wider context of the Right to Information Movement which demanded that it was the right of a citizen to ask questions from the government. Since it aptly captures the essence of the demand campaign as well, the song was sung at the meeting to develop an atmosphere for the WDWs to understand the need for such a campaign. This was followed by a brief discussion of the song. One of the WDW said that

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“यह गाना में तो हमारे सारे दिक्कतों और मुद्दों का जिक्र किया गया है. बहुत अच्छा लगा सुनके”

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The song was followed by a brief introduction about the campaign and its purpose. The WDWs then discussed that the campaign was meant for them to push the District Administration to implement the provisions of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act, 2013 on the ground and in the process make workplaces safe for women to work. Since many new WDWs were attending the meeting, a brief introduction about the law, the history of the law, what is sexual harassment, the extent of the workplace and details of the local committee were discussed with the WDWs.

In the second session, the WDWs discussed how this movement is a movement of their rights to work in a safe and secure environment and how this can put pressure on the district administration to listen to their demands and act upon them. The women talked about the term " ज़िंदाबाद" (Long Live the Revolution) and they talked about its relevance to the cause of WDWs. They discussed how asking questions is central to democracy and that were exercising their rights to ask questions. Due to societal pressure and cultural norms, they have been subjugated to not ask questions, and as citizens, they have the right to ask questions in a democracy and this is precisely what they mean to do through this campaign. To make the case for demanding information more concrete and meaningful to them, a practical example of Saldi (Village in Rajkot, Gujarat) wherein an application filed under the RTI Act sought information about the supply made by the government to the PDS Dealer led to people getting their regular quota of ration was discussed. It was discussed how the demand campaign can help them in fighting for their rights and dignity with the

authorities by doing advocacy which will enable implementation of the provisions of the SHW Act, 2013 by the District authorities. Women domestic workers came together in solidarity to raise their demands of safe workplace by signing the demand cards to “Seek Answers” and "Question the Authorities" as part of their Democratic rights.

In the last session, women domestic workers made a plan with an agenda to submit the demand cards to the District Magistrate(DM) of various districts. Few things which they shared during the meeting are as follows:

- They shared that 10-15 women will come together and approach the DMs with the demand cards and get a sign on the letter as proof of submission of the demand cards. They planned to meet the District Magistrate in person and hand over the demands highlighting the graveness of the issue.
- . During the meeting, women domestic workers highlighted that they will ask the District Magistrate to give a tentative timeline within which the above-mentioned demands can be met or the team can visit the office for taking updates on the status of the demands.
- If given, follow-ups will be done by the domestic workers to ensure the implementation of the demands.

At the end of the meeting, 10-15 WDWs from each location nominated themselves to visit the District Magistrate's office for submitting their demands. A total of 3000 demand cards were signed by the WDWs across Delhi-NCR. These demand cards were signed over three months; the field animators and women domestic worker leaders took signatures from WDWs by visiting their home and organizing signature sessions at their locations.

## **Charter of Demands prepared by the women domestic workers**

The following demands have been put forward by the WDWs in front of the District Magistrate:

1. Local committee should be formed in our district
2. If a local committee is formed, then its information should be made public and awareness should be created about it.
3. It is necessary to have a nodal officer in the district under this law, the information of the nodal officer of our district should be given to us.
4. Awareness should be created in the district regarding the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013.

## Submitting the demand cards

Post the Demand card signature the WDWs went to submit the demand campaign cards signed by the WDWs to the District Magistrate of their respective districts. Team MFF accompanied the WDWs to the district offices. The WDWs went to the following locations to meet District Magistrate/ Additional District magistrate/ Sub-divisional magistrate

**South-east Delhi:** 15 WDWs met the SDM (Headquarter) who was responsible for looking after the matters of sexual harassment at the workplace and submitted the signed demand cards. They also represented 1000 women domestic workers of their district and presented the demand on behalf of all of them. They shared experiences of sexual harassment in their world of work and difficulties they face while approaching the Local committee of the district. The SDM listened to the demands of women, and assured them to make Local committee information available to all. Afterwards, The WDWs met the District Magistrate of South-east Delhi and submitted the demands to her. The demands of the women domestic workers were listened to by the DM and she assured of the constant support in the effective implementation of the SHW Act 2013 in the district.



**Women domestic workers from various locations of South-east Delhi at the District Administration's office in Lajpat Nagar for submitting their demands**

**North Delhi:** 8 WDWs met the District Magistrate of North Delhi and submitted their charter of demands. They told the District Magistrate that the distance of the LC is very far from their basti and they can hardly think of coming to file a complaint because of the transportation cost. They asked the DM to display information of LC members and Nodal officers with their contact numbers in the form of posters or banners in their basti.



**Women domestic workers from North Delhi at the district administration's office in Alipur, for submitting their demands**

**Gurugram:** 7 WDWs met the POSH officer of the district and apprised her about the demand campaign and the charter of demands put forward by the WDWs. The team then met the Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) of Gurugram who acknowledged the demands put forth by the WDWs. He directed the POSH Officer to enlist the apartments visited by the WDWs for domestic help, the place where WDWs live, and the path taken by WDWs to reach these apartments. After enlisting, the district administration in partnership with MFF will create awareness about the issue and the Act and hold awareness cum training sessions with the Residential Welfare Associations (RWAs) of various apartments where WDWs go for domestic help.



### **Women domestic workers from Gurugram at the district administration's office, for submitting their demands**

**South Delhi:** Women domestic workers met the District Magistrate and submitted the charter of demands regarding awareness of the Act and the Local Committees. The District Magistrate told the women that they have put all the necessary information related to LC in the premises of the District Administration office. However, they have not conducted any awareness sessions in the communities. After the meeting, DM assured that they will direct the Local Committee to organise a training session with the ASHA and Anganwadi workers so that they can reach out to the women at the grassroots level.

### **Impact of the demand campaign**

- The demand card campaign supported the movement of women domestic workers for creating a safe and dignified workplace by effective implementation of the SHW Act 2013.
- Over the course of months, their efforts have initiated discussions in the District Administration office amongst the officials and Local committee members about the issue of sexual harassment at workplace with informal workers.
- In Gurugram the District Administration agreed to organize a training cum awareness session on 16th June (International Domestic Workers Day) with the RWAs and WDWs in partnership with the Martha Farrell Foundation. This was a direct result of the continuous advocacy undertaken by the WDWs of Gurugram with the Additional Deputy Commissioner and PoSH Officer

- In South Delhi the District Magistrate (DM) agreed to organise a training session with ASHA and Anganwadi workers for the awareness at the grassroot level. This was also a direct result of the demands put forward by the WDWs and constant interaction with the chairperson of the Local Committee to ensure compliance of the act in the district.

### Charter of Demands presented to the District Administration by Women Domestic Workers

आदरणीय जिला अधिकारी,

मैं आपके ज़िले की महिला घरेलू कामगार हूँ. मैंने और कई महिला घरेलू कामगारों के साथ मिलकर पिछले साल एक स्टडी की और हमने ये पाया कि मेरे साथ-साथ स्टडी में हिस्सा लेने वाली अन्य महिला घरेलू कामगारों (100 %) ने किसी न किसी रूप में अपनी काम की दुनिया में यौन उत्पीड़न झेला है.

कार्यस्थल पर महिलाओं के साथ यौन उत्पीड़न (रोकथाम, निषेध और निवारण) अधिनियम, 2013 के तहत हम असंगठित क्षेत्रों में काम करने वाली महिलाएं भी कामगार है और एक सुरक्षित कार्यस्थल हमारा अधिकार है. हर ज़िले में लोकल समिति का गठन करना ज़िला अधिकारी की ज़िम्मेदारी है पर हमें हमारी लोकल समिति का पता मिल ही नहीं पा रहा है.

जिले में इसे सुनिश्चित करने के लिए जिम्मेदार प्राधिकारी के रूप में हम आपके समक्ष ये मांगें रखते हैं

- हमारे ज़िले में लोकल समिति का गठन हो
- अगर लोकल समिति गठित है तो उसकी जानकारी पब्लिक की जाए, उसके बारे में जागरूकता की जाए
- इस कानून के अंतर्गत ज़िले में नोडल ऑफिसर का होना ज़रूरी है, हमारे ज़िले की नोडल ऑफिसर की जानकारी हमें दी जाए
- कार्यस्थल पर महिलाओं के साथ यौन उत्पीड़न (रोकथाम, निषेध और निवारण) अधिनियम, 2013 के विषय में ज़िले में जागरूकता की जाए

आभार

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