

Majlis Manch
Annual Report of Activities
April 2014 - March 2015

Trust Profile

Majlis Manch has been registered in 1991 as a Society and also as a Public Trust. In 1995 the organisation received FCRA (Foreign Contribution Regulation Act) registration from the Ministry of Home Affairs. In 1996 Majlis Manch purchased its office at Golden Valley Housing Society, Kalina which is the registered office address and where currently the Legal Centre is located. This property was bought by a special grant made under FCRA by the funding agency HIVOS. In 2003 Majlis purchased an additional property in Christina Apartment, Kalina and currently the Cultural Centre is located there. This property was bought by the local resources raised by the trust and not through any grant from an agency.

Bank account no. 47803 at Bank of India, Andheri West branch is the registered account for FCRA and all grants from foreign donor agencies are operated from this account. In this reporting period following grants have been operated from this account – Ford Foundation grant for the Cultural Centre, and grants from the IDRC (International Development Research Centre), OXFAM India and DASRA UK for the legal centre.

There is also another account, no. 47802, at the same bank and that is used by the Legal Centre for the local grants, donations and expenses. Currently a grant from EdelGive Foundation for MOHIM – implementation of Domestic Violence Act in Mumbai project is being operated through this account.

The Legal Centre operates three other accounts at Corporation Bank, Kalina Market Branch for non-FCRA transactions. The account no. 101838 is dedicated to the grant from R D Tata Trust and that grant has come to an end in January 2015. The account no. 113038 is dedicated to the grant from Azim Premji Philanthropic Initiatives that has begun in January 2015. There is also another account no. 9540 at the same bank that is operated by the Legal Centre for their general and non-FCRA transactions.

At the Canara Bank, Kalina Market Branch account no. 0116101060828 is operated by the Culture Centre for local grants and expenses. It is not dedicated to any specific grant.

The signing authority for all bank accounts is any two of the three executive body members – Secretary, Treasurer and Executive Director except for the Azim Premji Philanthropic Initiatives grant at the Corporation Bank (account no. 113038) where the signing authority is any two of - Legal Centre Director, Secretary and Treasurer. However, it will be more effective if all the non-FCRA accounts are handled by the director of each centre along with the Secretary and Treasurer.

Majlis Manch has got 80G certificate that entitles the individual donors to the organisation obtain tax exemption on the amount donated; 12A certificate that exempts Majlis Manch from income

tax obligations and registration under FCRA (Foreign Contribution Regulation Act), under Home Ministry – license to receive funds from foreign sources.

The organisation is obligated to file annual financial report to the FCRA department (only for the grants received from foreign sources) and to the Charity Commissioner of Mumbai for the entire trust.

In this reporting period the Culture Centre has received Rs. 79,54,693/- as the first installment of the Ford Foundation grant for the two years project on Digital City: Public Campaign for Universal Access to Internet.

Legal Centre funds profile for the year is:

from foreign funding agencies: IDRC Rs. 8140990 /-; from OXFAM Rs. 1000,000 and DASRA UK Rs. 412395.08. From local agencies: R D TATA TRUST Rs. 3444,000/, Azim Premzi Philanthropic Initiatives Rs. 5190,000/-.

Majlis has not purchased or sold any major asset or property in this financial year.

LEGAL CENTRE

Introduction

The Majlis legal centre has been consistent and unwavering in its commitment to its focused field of intervention i.e. providing access to justice to victims of violence and guiding and assisting them to approach the legal domain. Disseminating information about rights to women from marginalised communities, working with the state to help in implementing the laws and schemes and theorizing from the ground level experience to create a knowledge base within feminist legal discourse have been the ancillary activities feeding into this broader vision of providing access to justice to women. For the last 25 years, we have consistently occupied the litigation space in various capacities, as lawyers, support persons, filing public interest litigations, legal experts on statutory bodies, providing trainings which range from grass root communities to administrative and judicial academies and participating in national and international consultations.

We are happy to report that our efforts of strengthening the state response to victims of violence, and evolving a survival centric approach is gradually taking shape. Despite changes at the political level as well as at the executive level within government departments, we have had certain success in retaining our space, and carrying out our activities without any compromise. We are able to hold on to our position in wake of challenges that have come our way from time to time. We refrain from taking any funding from the state as a strategy to retain our autonomy.

We currently have three collaborations with the Department of Women and Child Development (WCD), Government of Maharashtra, to ensure effective implementation of various Acts and Schemes, which have helped to bring about some effective changes on the ground level.

Our collaboration with the Mumbai Police has been effective in bringing changes in the approaches of the police towards victims of sexual violence. This has been a herculean task as attitudinal changes are extremely difficult to bring about but our sustained three pronged approach of bringing out circulars and GRs at the highest level, taking this message down to the police stations through sustained training of mid-level officers, and monitoring the impact of the trainings through victims of sexual abuse, and reporting the lapses back to the senior officers have been successful in bringing about this gradual change. The results are there for everyone to see as gradually conviction rates for sexual violence are recording an upward graph for Mumbai. This is only a modest beginning and we acknowledge the need for constant vigil.

Our grassroot work of demystifying laws, spreading legal awareness in communities and colleges has continued and this year we have forged collaborations with more NGOs working in the field and have become legal consultants to some of them to strengthen their efforts on the ground.

Structure of the Legal Centre

Internal Structure: In order to carry out these activities on a sustained basis, it was necessary for us to create a structure from within. Our efforts in this direction for the past five years were further consolidated during the current year of reporting. The three units which have been

developed, the Litigation Unit which is engaged with litigation in trial courts, i.e. in magistrate's courts under the Domestic Violence Act and matrimonial litigation in the family courts, the RAHAT Unit, which offers socio-legal support to victims of sexual violence, and the Learning Centre with a focus on trainings, research, advocacy (policy level interventions), publications and communications have evolved into well functioning units with cohesive teams. . The Admin Unit and the MOHIM Cell (for monitoring the implementation of the DV Act in Maharashtra) based in Pune, have continued to function in the same manner as the previous year.

Each unit is coordinated by Programme Managers and the different units are held together and have made rapid progress under the guidance of the Programme Director while the Director has been involved in guiding the overall strategy of the legal centre.

Apart from regular staff, we also have interns from various law and social work colleges who contribute to research and other activities.

Evolving a Cohesive Unit: The various activities which are planned across units ensure that the units functioning autonomously do not lose the broader vision of the Legal Centre, and are able to interact and contribute to the growth and development of the organization, as a whole. The regular Thursday meetings are one way of ensuring this where not only the activities of the week are shared but also contemporary issues are discussed, which may not directly concern the Legal Centre. (A few examples - issues concerning secularism, minority rights, human rights violations, death penalty, recent judgements of High Courts / Supreme Court, policy level issues, or international events, etc.) Other team building efforts have been outings with external facilitator. A staff support measure that we have introduced is to appoint a counselor to help the staff and to avoid burn out. A training in governance and finance management was provided by Oxfam to our HR team.

The Advisory Committee comprising of the unit heads and the project director meet on a monthly basis to discuss the overall growth of the organization, general direction of the Legal Centre, funding constraints and policy level interventions.

Organisational Growth: The organizational growth has been consistent and today the all women team comprising of lawyers, social activists, and interns are around 25 in number. In a climate of a high attrition rate in the NGO Sector, and the funding insecurities and the uncertainties that ensue, our team members have been consistent in their commitment to the cause of empowering women and it is this passion that drives them to face the challenges and perform to the best of their capacity. We consider this as our greatest asset.

Ethics Committee: An ethics committee comprising of scholars and subject experts across disciplines has been set up which meets twice a year to discuss ethical issues concerning the project as well as other concerns of research.

External Evaluation: We will be undertaking an external evaluation of our work in RAHAT and

MOHIM as we reach the end of the grant from IDRC in August, 2015. Two evaluators Ms. Farah Naqvi (an independent journalist-activist) and Dr. Nilima Mehta (a child rights expert and faculty of Nirmala Niketan College of Social Work) have consented to be our evaluators and preliminary terms of reference have been drawn. The evaluation is scheduled to take place in two phases, during June-July, 2015.

The MOHIM Unit

Interventions at the State Level

We started this unit three years ago in 2012 to work with the Commissionerate of the Women and Child Department for effective implementation of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (also referred to as PWDVA, Domestic Violence Act or DV Act) which was implemented with much fanfare in 2005. Though it was a well drafted and comprehensive statute which provided support and relief to a victim of domestic violence both at the pre-litigation as well as during the post litigation level and was designed in a manner that the woman would not have to enter the system through the mechanism of private lawyers but through a newly instituted office called the Protection Officers (PO) who were mandated to guide the woman to access courts and also avail of other services such as shelter, medical aid, legal aid, skill development, etc. It also provided for immediate reliefs such as protection, compensation and child custody.

But even after seven years of its enactment, when we entered the scene, the complaints were that the Act is not working for women because of the problems women faced at each level and right from the police stations to the magistrates courts, there was no difference in the way the stake holders responded to the needs of women from pre-enactment to post enactment. Most stake holders did not know their role under the Act and service providers who were given the power to take the woman to the court, after the initial set back were content to carry out with their pre-enactment role of providing counseling and effecting settlements rather than explaining to the victim the advantages of accessing the Act and obtaining protective injunctions. The women were left at the mercy of the private lawyers, who would charge exorbitant fees. But at the same time, our experience with this Act was positive and hence when the Dept. of WCD invited us to help in implementing the Act at the state level by systematic research which would help in identifying the gaps, and plugging the loopholes so that the Act could be effectively, we accepted the invitation.

Based on our background of representing women in court, and after holding consultations with all stakeholders to understand gaps and challenges, we set ourselves the task of preparing a Handbook for stake holders. The aim was to clearly lay out the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder as stipulated under the Act and also to bring about a convergent model. The greatest achievement in preparing this handbook has been that it has helped us grasp the functioning of the government, and the minute technicalities involved in bringing to the grassroots level an Act enacted by the Parliament, with ownership and commitment from each stakeholder named in the Act at the state and district level. This has been a great learning experience for us. The current reporting period, witnessed the final stage of our three year

project with the WCD Commissionerate in Pune as many of the activities we had initiated reached a culmination.

Release of Maharashtra State Handbook on Domestic Violence: The Domestic Violence Handbook, which we have been developing over the last two years was finally released by the Minister, Women and Child Development, Smt. Varsha Gaikwad on 26th August, 2014 during the Ahilybai Holkar Award ceremony in Dharavi. The Handbook contains Protocols, Best Practices and Reporting and Monitoring Formats to be followed by all stakeholders including the protection officers, police, public health functionaries, shelter homes, service providers, legal aid and the judiciary.

The Handbook was approved by the Chief Justice of the Bombay High Court, Minister Women and Child Development and the Principal Secretaries of the Home, Medical and Women and Child Development Department. It contains a forward from the Chief Minister, thus providing it a cross department validation on the best practices and protocols to be followed by all stakeholders under the Act.

As mentioned in our earlier report, it maps the working of the Act through various departments and the duties and responsibilities of different stakeholders in a capsule. It helps to clarify doubts and ensures smooth implementation of the Act. The protocols, guidelines and reporting formats outlined in this manual have been framed with the objective of laying out, in clear terms, the specific roles and responsibilities for each stakeholder, as well as the best practices. It also outlines a model for effective convergence and monitoring systems which, we are confident, will help in better implementation of the Act. We consider this not as a final product but just the beginning of our new phase of implementation.

Dissemination of the Handbook: 5000 copies of the Handbook have been distributed to all stake holders. We have ensured that each stakeholder issues circulars and GRs regarding the guidelines and provisions for the respective departments. The Dept. of WCD has done it for POs, Shelter Homes and Service Providers (SP). The Judiciary has sent its guidelines and the Handbook to all the magistrates' courts and family courts. Soft copies have also been circulated for easy reference.

Monitoring and Evaluation: Monitoring formats have been laid down for different stakeholders which are to be submitted by them periodically. Our team members visit the district regularly to ensure that the reporting format is followed and the reports are submitted in time. Currently, the reports of Protection Officers and District Officers are monitored. Their reports generally include:

- **Protection Officers:** Details of filled and forwarded DIRs, cases heard and disposed off, activities performed when women approach them and details of referrals (when needed), court assigned tasks, details of visits and meetings attended;

- **District Officers:** Their reports contain activities regarding other service providers, shelter homes and counselors working under the WCD, etc. These reports have to be submitted to the Sukanu Committee.

We scrutinize these reports, give feedback, answer queries, clear the confusions and guide the concerned officers as and when they need help. We are hopeful that once the MIS begins to function, it will be possible to collect and process information about all other stake holders and the same can then be easily monitored.

Resource Directory: For effective implementation of the DV Act, we facilitated the creation of a district wise resource directory where the various services provided by stake holders in each district are mapped. The resource directory has proved to be extremely useful to the Protection Officers and other stakeholders while implementing the Act. The directory contains important details (address, phone No. type of service etc.) about the services available such as the hospitals, police, NGOs, POs, service providers, shelter homes, special cells for women and children.

Appointment of Permanent Protection Officers: When the DV Act was enacted Protection Officers were designated from the finance department. But the Tehsildars and NayabTehsildars were not effective in helping the women and discouraged women from filing cases. The first task of the MOHIM cell was to change the designation from Tehsildars to Child Development Project Officers (CDPO). Since CDPOs were responsible for running anganwadis they had a close contact to women in the community. They also had a robust team of supervisors, mukhya sevikas, etc who could reach right down to the woman in the village facing domestic violence and bring her issue upward to the concerned authority. Our aim is to strengthen this network.

As an outcome of a PIL filed by a Pune based lawyer, 216 new permanent POs were appointed during the year who will be based at the Taluka level. We assisted the WCD in framing questions for their entrance exams, laid down selection criteria as well as designed their trainings. The trainings focused on providing the PO an exposure to their role under the Act and helped them to improve their skill in performing these roles. Subsequently, we have been guiding them regarding the problems they face in court, with the police, and other stake holders. Through constant interaction, we are able to gauge the impact of the training upon their day to day functioning.

Judicial Trainings: Judges are the vital link for the correct interpretation of any statute and its timely implementation. This is all the more relevant for PWDVA, since it is a relatively new and is of critical importance to women facing domestic violence. In accordance with the guidelines issued by the High Court to iron out contradictions and confusions and to convey a clear message to judges about their roles and responsibilities under the Act, we have streamlined the trainings conducted at the Maharashtra Judicial Academy and have been closely associated with imparting the training.

Multi Stakeholder Training: Though the Act envisaged a convergent model of implementation to provide a victim a holistic support, we noticed that this mandate had been shelved and each stake holder had been working in isolation and the Dept. of Women and Children, though designated as the nodal agency, lacked the necessary outreach across different stake holders to bring it about. We have given this issue serious attention and have been consistently working on developing a convergent model, both at the district as well as the state level. Though this scheme has been spelt out in the Handbook, we tried it out in Thane district which is a vast rural district, in collaboration with the District WCD Office. The daylong deliberations brought together all major stakeholders under PWDVA ie. the Police, newly appointed Protection Officers, Medical officers and staff of Government Hospitals, etc. Rather than focusing on awareness regarding the Act, we focused on the modalities of implementation and patterns of convergence. The training was greatly beneficial to the stakeholders and helped them to gain clarity regarding their roles and the need to coordinate with each other, to protect and serve better the interests of victims of domestic violence.

The MOHIM Helpline: Most victims of domestic violence seek help from outside the family only when they face a serious threat. In such situations, when she approaches or is referred to POs, they may not always know how to guide her or how to strategise to get her the required reliefs under the Act. POs were already in regular touch with us, to seek guidance on specific aspects like applying for orders, etc. With growing awareness about the Act, the number of domestic violence cases that were referred to them grew, and with them the complications, doubts and confusions. They needed a constant handholding. To deal with this demand, we began the MOHIM helpline to help stakeholders reach out to us for guidance from our team of lawyers when they faced challenging situations or were confused about the proper course of action. Majlis lawyers were able to provide them with legal advice and strategies to be adopted in individual cases. Through this approach our outreach has multiplied many times over, as now a large number of women in district towns and villages are able to reach the courts through the intervention of the POs.

Savitri Management of Information System (MIS): This mapping and tracking system, which the Dept. of WCD is planning to evolve, will be able to track the cases of domestic violence which have been reported to the Protection Officer or to any other stake holder and bring in continuity in the support provided to victims of domestic violence and will ensure that they don't fall through the net. Majlis has been assisting the vendor by providing the reporting formats for the system. We have also been working on the work flow of how the case will be tracked at various levels. This will help in better monitoring the cases, and will also increase our outreach. Using limited resources, we will be able to closely monitor how the domestic violence cases are panning out in courts across the state and carefully study the blockages and suggest remedial processes.

The Sukanu Committee: The Sukanu committee is the State steering Committee for the implementation of PWDV Act in Maharashtra. It did not have representatives of all stakeholders and did not function effectively as per the requirement of the Act. As this would be detrimental to the effective implementation of the Act, we set out to change the composition of the committee. This committee now has representation from all stake holders under the Act - the Director General of Police, the Mumbai Police Commissioner, the State Legal Services Authority, the WCD Commissioner and the MOHIM Cell, of which Majlis is a partner, all of whom are important stakeholders under the Act. All issues concerning non-implementation of the Domestic Violence Act or the problems faced at the district and taluka level regarding implementation are to be discussed at this high level committee.

Publications and Posters: Going against the popular notion that books on law are boring, full of legal jargon, and women do not like to read them, we have designed publications to demystify laws and help women at the grassroots understand their rights which are simple and easy to follow. In collaboration with the WCD, we have brought out a booklet, to support victims of domestic violence by explaining their rights, and means of accessing the law. The aim is to create awareness and clarity among women on the provisions and role of all stakeholders under the Act. The booklet is an important resource which is used in training and to spread awareness about the laws pertaining to domestic violence.

With a view of disseminating information about the Domestic Violence Act, we have effectively used posters to communicate the rights and remedies under the DV Act. and the various ways in which a woman victim can access them. The poster explains the different types of the type of violence which women are subjected to and the existing channels for accessing rights.

Support to Protection Officers – the Project in Mumbai: After we had set out the entire system and convergent model at the state level, it was necessary to follow it up with actual implementation and test the efficacy of the scheme, within a geographical area which we could closely monitor through a pilot project. We decided to carry out this sustained activity in the area under the jurisdiction of the Kurla Magistrate Court, an area with which we are familiar with and which has vast pockets of slums and has a high population of Muslims and other marginalized communities who do not usually have access to courts and lawyers. There are many NGOs which are located in this area, CORO, SNEHA, Apanalaya, etc. and many public hospitals. The Mumbai Suburban District Office is also located in this area. So it had all the right components.

Support and Guidance to Local Level Protection Officers (PO): There is one independent Protection Officer who has been appointed for this area who is located within the office of the District WCD Office in Chembur. In addition there are nine Pos with additional charge and five supervisors who report to them. As part of the pilot project we started visiting the office of the PO on a weekly basis to provide the necessary help and guidance.

The PO Handholding project was initiated in 2014 to help them perform their social, legal and

managerial roles and to create a one stop help centre for women in the local area to avail all services under the DV Act, i.e. convergence among stakeholders under the Act.

We observed that the POs lack the capacity and skills to fulfill their roles, in providing pre litigation advice, in filling a Domestic Incident Report (DIR) and other applications. The magistrates also asked us to provide the necessary help to the Protection Officers as they were not able to assist the court as required.

In preparation for the training, prior meetings with existing POs were held to understand their work and structure of their office. The need based trainings were then carefully planned to be relevant and effective to the POs. We realise that they usually filled up only the Domestic Incident Reports (DIRs) with little or no follow up. Bearing this in mind, the training module evolved had some practical exercises. This initial training resulted in more involvement of the POs in their court cases, including receiving orders from court, filing economic reports of the respondents, making referrals and guiding the victim to seeking medical assistance, etc. After the success of this pilot project, we decided to extend it to the POs in the entire suburbs.

During our interaction with various stakeholders, we identified lack of convergence between them as a major hurdle for the effective implementation of the Act. To address this gap, in a first, we organised a networking meeting of all stakeholders in Mumbai. We have had three successful meetings till now- 26th June 2014, 8th January 2015 and 11th March 2015. Each of these meetings were attended by more than 100 participants, representing different stakeholders under the PWDVA.

Orienting the Mumbai Police on their role under the DV Act: Women are not aware about the existence of the new office that has been created under the PWDVA and continue to approach the police when they are beaten or driven out of their homes. The police stations continue to be the first point of approach for many women victims of domestic violence. But after the PWDVA was enacted the police used to wash their hands off as they felt they had no role to play under the Act. The fact that they have a significant role to play had not been emphasized during the earlier trainings.

During our training we emphasized the two important roles that the police have been assigned under the Act – first to act as a referral and refer the victim to the PO in their local area and second, to help the PO to implement the court order and file a criminal complaint if the order is violated, under S. 31 of the Act.

In our interaction with the police we realised that they were not aware of this important legal provision. This section awards the police the authority to file a FIR in case of a breach of a protection order. We felt the need to address this lacuna immediately.

During our training of 250 the police officers, we highlighted the role of the police under S.31 of the Act and received a positive response from the participants. Subsequently, many of the participants have tried to follow our instructions with positive results. One of the biggest outcomes of this training is that many police stations now have Mahila Help Desks, which are exclusively set up to help women.

The initial trainings were followed up with the other support activities:

- Conducted a study on the awareness of the role of police by interviewing officers in Police stations: In order to gauge the awareness levels among the police about their role under the DV Act, we designed a questionnaire that was filled in by police officers from different areas in the city;
- Ensured interaction between POs and Police Officers in their area: Given the importance of interaction between the police and POs, we connected two stakeholders so that the support to a victim is well coordinated and there is no delay;
- To remedy the lack of accurate knowledge about handling complaints under the DV Act, we drafted a circular which was issued by the Mumbai Police on the role of police when filing cases under 498A as well as the role of police under the DV Act.

In addition to the above, we are presently in the process of:

- Drafting the SOP for response of police in DV cases
- Designing awareness posters on role of police and placing them in all police stations
- Creating a helpline where police can call us to discuss cases of DV where they have to intervene.

Public Hospitals as Stake holders under the D.V. Act

Doctors in public hospitals are entrusted with the duty of identifying cases of domestic violence when women approach the hospitals for treatment. They are duty bound to inform women about their rights under the Act and then refer those who need help to the Protection Officers in their local area. If a Domestic Incident Report (DIR) has not already been filled, they need to fill the same. Women experiencing violence mostly seek legal action only after the violence has escalated beyond their bearing and more often than not, they do not have any documentary evidence. In this regard, the medico legal certificate issued by the doctor forms important evidence in court. We have worked with a number of hospitals on cases of domestic violence that come to them.

We also provide legal advice to DILAASA, a centre at Bhabha Hospital that meets victims of domestic violence as well as SNEHA, an NGO providing support to victims in Sion Hospital. With a view to assist more women victims, we are in the process approaching the MCGM hospitals to conduct trainings for doctors on the DV Act. We are also prevailing over them to make a proforma for recoding MLCs

The RAHAT Unit

The Rahat Unit was set up in 2012 to systematically follow cases of sexual offences against women and children, as a collaborative project with the Department of Women and Child Development, Government of Maharashtra. We were entering a terrain with which we were not

familiar with, that of the criminal courts as support persons, and we had no models to follow as no one had this work on a systematic basis, before us. The interventions had mainly been sporadic, just following an occasional case, which even Majlis had done. Now we were venturing to do this on a systematic basis.

While providing support to individual victims, our aim was to monitor the system and bring in effective measures to remedy the same. In 2013 we forged another alliance with the Mumbai Police so that all cases of sexual offences which are registered across 95 different police stations are referred to us for providing support to victims. Through a questionnaire designed for the initial interview, we are not only able to immediately respond to the needs of the victim but also get accurate information about the lapses at the initial investigation level. We are also able to scrutinise documents and ensure that all the necessary procedures are complied with, and there are no lapses in investigations.

Over the next three years, this turned out to be one of our major flagship programmes. We have been aided by broader events such as the gruesome Delhi gang rape which was followed by nation-wide protests which resulted in an increased awareness about rape victims, the enactment of a law specifically meant to deal with child sexual offences, i.e. Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012, and the Criminal Law Amendments post the Verma Committee report in 2013. The international media attention as well as the questions raised at UN gatherings, regarding safety measures for women in India, which caused embarrassment to a government which was claiming to make rapid economic strides in the global market, helped in the police and the courts, welcoming our efforts of providing support to victims.

Challenging Popular Perceptions that all rape cases are false – Importance of Consultation meetings between stake holders

The greatest challenge has been to counter the popular misconception that all rape cases are false, a common refrain during all our interactions with the police. At the other level, the complaint from community based groups and our NGO partners was that the police do not register cases and humiliate victims when they approach them. At our first consultative meeting between police, prosecutors and medical professions, the first of its kind, in May 2012, we did not have sufficient data to counter the adverse police propaganda.

There appeared to be an underlying presumption that all acquittals are 'false' cases though the reasons for acquittal are varied, and primary among them are lapses in investigations and absence of a viable victim support programme. However, misconceptions could be challenged only with hard data and real life stories. But this is easier said than done as information regarding rape complaint is confidential, rape trials are held *in camera* (behind closed doors), and the victim herself is extremely reluctant to talk about the incident. Since we were placed at the vantage point of providing support victims and in the process were able to observe the system at close quarters, we took it upon ourselves to systematically document the experiences of women and children and bring these to the subsequent consultations. The aim was not put out sensational stories in the media which would be counterproductive, but evolve a carefully crafted strategy to change the system from within.

The trend of victim blaming continued during the next consultative meeting held in August, 2012, which was organised in collaboration with the Maharashtra Judicial Academy, and was held at the High Court premises, and was presided over by High court judges and attended by trial court judges, prosecutors and the police. By then, we had a better grasp over the subject, and were able to put out convincing arguments, backed by a few case histories. The RAHAT model of providing support to victims was welcomed by trial court judges and prosecutors.

By the third consultation meeting which was jointly organised by the Department of Women and Child Development, Government of Maharashtra, and held at Sahyadri, the official state guest house, in September, 2013, the Nirbhaya rape case, as well as the criminal law amendments had taken place and rape had become a major issue for the media. The image of the city had been dented due to the adverse publicity given by the media to the Shakti Mills rape case. The Mumbai Police had already set up the Crime Against Women Cell and our interactions with the police had strengthened. The Mandohairya scheme of warding financial support to victims, which we had been struggling to bring about, had already been approved and was to be launched from 2nd October, 2013. The meeting was attended by high ranking officers from all concerned departments, and the importance of convergence between the various state departments to resolve the difficulties and challenges faced by each from the other, in order to evolve a comprehensive victims support was the main focus of this meeting. The adverse propaganda about 'false' cases had receded to the background.

The fourth consultation meeting, a state level consultation of all stake holders under the POCSO Act, was organised jointly by the Dept of WCD and UNICEF. It was inaugurated by the Chief Justice of the Bombay High Court and was attended by key functionaries from every department. There were focussed discussions with all stake holders under POCSO to provide integrated support to victims of sexual offences as prescribed under Act. Apart from the judiciary, prosecutors, the police, the health department, there were others such as the Maharashtra State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (MSCPCR), representatives of statutory bodies such as the Child Welfare Committees and Juvenile Justice Boards, Wardens of Shelter Homes, and child right NGOs. By then no one was talking about 'false cases' and discussion revolved around evolving comprehensive support mechanisms. The Chief Justice set the tone for the deliberations by declaring, "we are not stake holders but duty bearers, the stake holders are the children and we have a duty to protect them."

So the convergent meetings facilitated by us have played an important role in bringing about attitudinal changes not only within the police but across different stake holders and the need to work out strategies adopting a convergent model has been duly underlined during these consultations.

Following up nearly 400 cases (2012-15) and analyzing around 140 judgements of trial courts for the period 2011-12) to ascertain trends in rape trials.

This has been our major achievement as such in depth analysis of rape cases from FIR to trials had never been done before. Our key findings are

- Around 50% victims are below the age of 18 years

- Girls between the age of 10-18 are the most vulnerable
- Most victims belong to marginalized sections and come from poverty stricken backgrounds. Many victims are 'out of school' children. The incident of rape serves to push them several notches down the social ladder as there are no mechanisms for victim support. Several of these cases end in acquittals as the NCRB rate of conviction is only 25%.
- Cases of fathers and step fathers raping daughters are as high as stranger rapes. Young girls trapped in such situations are the most vulnerable as there is no 'safe' space left for them.
- Despite this, post 'Nirbhaya' our national resources are spent in street lighting, public toilets, CCTV on public transports and promoting private vendors, cashing in on the feeling of insecurity experienced by young women, adopting an approach of 'make hay while the sun shines' have come out with various gimmicks such as mobiles apps and pepper sprays as safety measures for women. Many NGOs have also participated in some of these exercises, while rape cases continue to rise and convictions continue to be all time low in 2014 as per NCRB data.
- The conviction rate in cases where we have provided support is very high, around 80%.
- The Manodhairya scheme of financial support, which we strived very hard to bring about, is helping victims across the state to overcome the trauma. This is only a first step, but what is needed is long term support beyond the trial. There are very few hostels where the victim can stay for a long time after the trial and pursue her studies or develop her skills.
- The high profile cases such as the Shakti Mills rape case, instead of helping the victims cause additional trauma as the focus of the police is only to secure conviction and not victim support. In fact there is scant respect to the needs of victims and concerns of privacy and confidentiality. The unprecedented media glare adds to the trauma.

Confidential Reports on the functioning of the Special Courts to Chief Justice: Since the rape trials are confidential spaces and the victims deposition held behind closed doors to ensure confidentiality, there is an underlying presumption that judges follow all the protective guidelines stipulated under the act. However, this has not been the case, and we were able to carefully document the lapses and place them before the Chief Justice of the Bombay High Court for remedial action.

The POCSO Act and CLAA have several beneficial provisions relating to the manner in which a trial shall be conducted. These include in-camera trial, establishment of Special Courts, an informal atmosphere within court rooms, protective measures for conducting the trial, etc. However, despite the statutory beneficial provisions, presiding judges and prosecutors were not conducting the trial in accordance with these provisions. Based on our observations while providing legal assistance to victims and the feedback we received, we submitted a report on the Functioning of the Special Courts in Mumbai to the Chief Justice of the Bombay High Court. We can see some improvements following these reports. We plan to periodically submit such reports to effect change in a subtle manner, without invoking the media.

Guidelines for functioning of Special Courts for Vulnerable Witnesses: While providing legal support to victims during the trial, we realised that there were several important elements that the Judge and Prosecutor must keep in mind, while recording the evidence. These important aspects had not been covered by the law and therefore it was imperative to ensure that specific guidelines to this effect were provided. After observing the special child friendly court set up in Delhi and after studying the U.N. Guidelines, we prepared a draft for a model *Special Court for vulnerable witnesses* and submitted the same to the Chief Justice of Bombay High Court. These guidelines provide a step by step guide on the precautions to be taken, such as the position of each stakeholder during the victim's deposition, human resource requirements, designation of waiting area / room. After systematically following up this issue for nearly two years, and after holding several consultation meetings, these guidelines have been approved by the High Court. It is now mandatory for all Special Court trying sexual offences against women and children throughout the State of Maharashtra to follow these guidelines.

Focused Skill Training to Police Officers: As part of Rahat programme we have trained around 2000 mid level and junior officers, particularly investigating officers, those who record the FIR and the constables who interact with victims when they approach the police. After training officers, we continue to monitor the work of these officers in cases of sexual violence when the officers trained investigate a case, record statements, etc. we provide feedback. In case of lapses, we written complaints to the high authorities for redress. So far around 20 such letters have been sent and the action taken in some of them has helped to send a clear message down the ranks.

Without going into the details of each of these trainings, we only wish to highlight a very specialized training that we conducted.

Training of 100 Women Police Officers on recording of victim statement: The amended law stipulates that women officers shall record the statements of women and child victims of sexual violence. However, these women officers have never been trained on how such statements should be recorded or the significance of this statement. They are also relatively new in the police force, most belong to rural areas, and lack confidence. They also have cultural barriers regarding asking (or recording) minute details about sexual offences. Usually the generic terms such as *gandha kaam*, *galat kaam* or touched the body (*aangavar haath phirala*) are used. Their own constraints matched with that of the victim and her mother, results in not recording the most relevant details about the incident of sexual violence due to which the case ends in acquittal despite the best efforts on our part as well as that of the police.

These young women officers have never been to court and never witnessed a criminal trial. Hence they do not have any idea about the seriousness of the work they have been assigned. So we decided to address this issue and provided intensive training to 100 women police officers about the significance of victim statement and the accurate way of recording the same. The women officers were also trained on how to interact with a victim while recording her

statement thereby ensuring that the victim is comfortable at all times and her dignity is not violated. They were also trained about the nuances of recording a statement so as to present a strong piece of evidence for the prosecution.

The 100 women that we interacted with over a two day training programme felt extremely honoured that they have been singled out for this specialized training and felt empowered through it. It is these women we keep meeting as our team follows up the cases on the ground. So apart from training, it was an important exercise in rapport building.

A shift in referral to Nagpada Police Hospital to MCGM hospitals: When we started our project, it was routine for all police stations across the length and breadth of the city to take the victim to the Nagpada Police Hospital despite the fact that it has no amenities to provide treatment to victims. This norm was followed because the police were comfortable in this space as it is a ‘police hospital’ and it was relatively easy to contact the concerned medical officer during the trial for deposition in court.

We identified this problem in our research of past trial court judgments and brought it up at our stake holder consultations held in September, 2013, where challenges faced by each agency in providing support to the victim were discussed and the MCGM assured that one stop centers would be started in major teaching hospitals in the city and they assured the police that they would provide all support and timely treatment to a victim brought to them for medical examination by setting up a ‘one window support’. We followed this up with a circular by the Commissioner of Police and reiterated this during our police trainings. During the first year there were many hiccups as the process was new but we acted as the via-media between the police and the hospitals and helped to iron out the obstacles. Now, two years after taking up this issue, we can clearly see a change in the trend as the police are getting used to the pattern of taking victims to the nearest public hospital. In 2015, so far in our data, only one case has been referred to the Nagpada police hospital as the following table reveals.

Year-wise trend in hospital referrals

Nagpada	26	33	27	28	23	1
Rajawadi		5	3	4	40	9
J.J.	0	1	4	3	42	10
Sion		2	1	1	24	22
Cooper	0	0	2	0	12	11
Shatabdi			1	1	11	13
Bhabha		1	1	1	11	8
Nair	1		1	1	7	9

Popularising the Concept of “Zero FIR” and Issuance of the Circular for first 24 hour police response: The harrowing experience of 11 year old Dipti, who was shunted around for the entire day from Vakola to Turbe to record a complaint of abuse by father, and where instead of recording the complaint, the father was called to the police station to reprimand her, led us to approach the police to issue a clear circular to be issued to all police stations about filing a Zero FIR. The Commissioner advised us to draft a more comprehensive but concise circular which would include the statutory duties of the police within the first 24 hours of receiving a complaint of sexual violence which would provide clear guidelines to the police.

The simple two page circular drafted by us, was translated into Marathi and was issued under the seal of the Commissioner of Police, Mumbai and was sent to all 95 police stations. The fact that they have to record an FIR on receiving information about an incident of sexual violence, irrespective of which police station has the jurisdiction to investigate the crime, was clearly stated in this circular. We emphasised this point during our subsequent trainings. We also relied on this circular during our visits to the local police stations and pointed out the same to officers who refused to record a zero FIR. After going through it, the officers would be left with no choice in the matter. We also circulated the same to other organisations which offer support to victims of sexual abuse. Our partner organisation, The Childline Foundation, whose social workers regularly visit police stations, have found the circular to be extremely beneficial.

Standard Operating Procedures to be Followed in Cases of Sexual Violence: Based on our experience of interacting with victims and stakeholders, RAHAT conceptualized and drafted the Standard Operating Procedures for the police. The same was released on 30th March 2015, by the Hon’ble Chief Minister of Maharashtra and the Commissioner of Police., Mumbai. This booklet contains: Important provisions of law, a checklist and standard operating procedures, a flow chart of a case at a glance and Information in cases of sexual violence such as details of shelter homes, Manodhariya scheme, Child Welfare Committees, etc. Copies in English and Marathi have been distributed to all police stations in Mumbai and we have received feedback from investigation officers that they have found it to be extremely useful while investigating sexual offences.

While we can write reams on this subject, we wish to end this chapter with a success story which brings to the fore the relevance of a victim support programme.

The case concerned a raped by her father. Under family pressure she had come to court to retract. But when the PP asked some probing questions she broke down and told the truth. The judge asked our support person present in court to help her. Thereafter the child deposed as per her initial FIR and the father was convicted. The girl was studying diploma in engineering in a prestigious college. We intervened and ensured that her college fees and mess fees are waived and she is given free hostel accommodation. Her dream is to enter a degree college and we are hoping to support her to materialize her dream. For after all her family has cut off support only because she had the courage to depose against her own father.

We are looking for support from our well wishers to help her to realise her dream.

The Litigation Unit

Representing Women in Cases of Domestic Violence and Matrimonial Disputes

This has been our most well established programme. For well over two decades, it used to be the primary activity of our lawyers with a few training programmes thrown in to keep abreast with ground reality. Over the last five years, the legal centre has been able to reinvent itself and this activity is reduced to one of the many that we are engaged with. Our outreach is far wider than providing support to a few individual victims. In addition to providing support to individual victims we have moved on to bringing in systemic changes which are of long lasting nature and the benefits of our interventions can extend not to the few who are able to contact us but to impact policies and frameworks that impact the lives of thousands of women across the state. It is our hope that in coming years, we will be able to take our model of bringing policy level changes which help victims and survivors of domestic and sexual violence to many other districts in the state and even beyond. So it has been a deliberate design in the new vision of the Majlis Legal Centre.

To increase our outreach in the community this year we started **legal aid camps**. The legal aid camps help us reach to communities who otherwise would not have any access to knowledge about their rights. These are conducted in partnership with community based NGOs, who are responsible for mobilising women in the community. We start the legal aid camp by giving a small talk to the women who have gathered about the rights and how they can access them. We then set up a desk where individual women can approach us to discuss issues they are facing. These camps have been very successful and some women take our contact numbers and get in touch with us later in our office.

This year we offered legal consultation to 574 women and we filed 118 new cases in court, these cases were in addition to balance cases from last years.

The Magistrates Courts: Since the magistrates' courts are our primary areas of work, we constantly monitor this space, both as litigating lawyers and as support persons to the protection officers to ensure that the magistrates pass expeditious orders of protection and injunction as per the provisions of the DV Act. They are the primary stake holders under the Act and it is their duty to provide protection to a woman facing violence and to grant necessary orders to secure a woman's right to live in an environment which is free from violence and the threat of violence. Hence it is important that this space is guarded to ensure that it functions effectively.

Through holding convergent meetings with the magistrates and protection officers, we have ensured that the protection officers have legitimacy and respect when they enter the court arena and the magistrate is aware of their role and functioning under the Act. The circular sent out by the High Court to all magistrates' courts has helped to ensure this. But whenever there is a violation we ensure that it is brought to the notice of the High Court.

Apart from this we have flagged the issues that come up from time to time which cause further problems to women victims --

1. Judges asking the woman to first get a DIR before passing orders, when there is no such legal requirement. To address this issue, we sent a letter reiterating that a DIR is no longer necessary in DV cases. In addition, through our PO Handholding training, we advised POs that in such situations, they can show the judge the letter as well as the Handbook.
2. The pro-family approach of some judges which prevents them from passing appropriate orders for protection. This was particularly important as this would often make the women lose faith in the court.
3. Referring to mediation before passing orders, when the requirement is to first pass interim orders and then refer the matter to mediation. In such cases, we have referred the judge to the Handbook, which clearly states that interim orders have to be given priority.
4. Delay in passing orders. To address this, we have applied for certified copies of the *roznama*, Based on these, we have sent a letter to the Registrar, High Court and awaiting the response.
5. Long dates in Family Courts and Magistrates Courts
6. To make the legal process more accessible for the woman, when we noticed an irregularity in this realm, we sent a letter to the concerned Metropolitan Magistrate regarding the legal requirement of providing free copies of both interim and final orders.

The Learning Centre

The Learning Centre is relatively new and the main aim of this centre is to evolve modules for disseminating information about rights to grassroot level NGOs, organize college programmes, bring out resource material to be used during these programmes, to spread legal awareness. This unit works closely with other three units discussed above and participates in the trainings and consultations held by them. It relies on these units heavily for the legal content of the programmes it organizes. This is primarily a non-lawyer unit. The purpose here is to understand the law and procedures, as well as practical experiences of courts from other units and translate the same into training modules which can be used to communicate to participants who do not come from a legal background. Once the legal content is worked out, the important aspect here is to devise ways in which the same can be communicated in an effective and concise manner.

The unit has been able to reach out to communities, colleges, organize conferences, network meetings, coordinate our internship programme and source and circulate important articles to facilitate discussions. Listed below are few of the programmes conducted by this unit.

Trainings, Collaborations and Networks

Collaborations with Civil Society Organizations: In order to provide holistic support to victims of sexual violence, the Legal Centre collaborates with several civil society organisations.

These organisations also seek regular legal assistance and advice on cases of domestic and sexual violence abuse. They include: Childline India Foundation, YWCA, Asha Sadan, Arpan, Aangan and Sneha.

We provide continuous legal assistance and advice to victims residing at Asha Sadan and submit quarterly reports on the progress of the same. The RAHAT and Childline teams also work very closely in case work especially while interacting with the Police and CWC.

We have collaborated with Aangan to provide their teams with training on various issues like working with the police, POCSO. And well as provide them them input and support for any issues they may have when dealing with cases of sexual violence in the community. In addition to this Aangan will also refer cases that require legal support to Majlis

Mahila Mukti Manch is a forum of women's groups under the community centers of the Archdioceses of Bombay. These community centers are connected to the Church. Over the years, Mahila Mukti Manch has been approached by a large number of women seeking support for various services such as counseling, protection, vocational training, medical assistance etc. As part of their training, Majlis was invited to address 29 community workers on the practical application of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act.

The Legal Centre has evolved Paralegal Understanding for Social Workers (PLUS). PLUS a 10-session course to help social workers negotiate for women in the backdrop of rights. Through the course, they gain practical knowledge and legal understanding to deal with case work as well as deliver legal rights' lectures in the community. We conducted PLUS with 15 members of the organization LEARN.

College Program, 'Expression': Every year we try to reach out to the student community by holding college programmes around a specific theme in which the students participate with debates, and other non verbal communications such as posters, plays, etc. This format has been extremely popular and helped us to discuss some contemporary issues in a non-confrontational manner. The participatory mode adopted and the element of completion inherent in this format, helps to bring student participation. The participants are judged by a selection panel comprising of the faculty member, a member from Majlis and an external NGO member. This also helps as a network building exercise.

For the current year we reached out to 13 colleges across Mumbai and interacted with nearly 1000 students. We selected the following two themes for the competition:

- Is Rape a crime befitting death penalty? If 80% rapes are by known persons and happen in homes, what is the solution?
- Zero Tolerance to Domestic Violence and Save the marriage are contradictory statements.

The themes are selected around contemporary issues to elicit the maximum response from students and have proved to be highly popular.

The IAS Academy at Mussorie, the Judicial Academy at Bhopal, the State Judicial Academy at Uttan, the Police Academy at Hyderabad: We have been invited to these academies to hold sessions on domestic and sexual violence, and other related issues. We have been receiving very high ratings for the trainings conducted by us as they are based on practice experience and are far more advanced course with legal inputs rather than the more common “gender sensitization” programme conducted by other NGOS.

A course on Law and Social Work for Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies: We have continued our collaboration with NMIMS Management Institute where we coordinate and conduct the Law and Social Work Module for the First year students of the Masters in Social Entrepreneurship course. This course has been highly popular and the management requested us to repeat it for this year.

Helping Organisations Implement the Prevention of Sexual Harassment at Workplace Act: The program against Sexual Harassment at Workplace aims to program all organization, institutions and corporates a comprehensive package to combat any issues of sexual harassment in their institutions. The program provides the institutions support in designing a policy in compliance with the law, train the committee to be set up, provide employee awareness training and address cases of harassment. This year we have 10 collaborations under this programme. We have also been invited to collaborate with the Maharashtra State Women’s Commission.

Network Meetings

The Maa Beti Mela: On 15th Nov 2014, on the occasion of children’s day, around 140 of us, team members, clients and supporters gathered together to celebrate courage. The women who we work with come from different walks of life. What acts as a leveler is the violence and harassment that they have faced. These women are an inspiration to us - their courage to stand up against violence fight against all odds to rebuild their broken lives. They interact with us mainly through their problem and we become their problem solving persons. We have no interaction with them beyond this. So this was a moment to bond and an opportunity to bond and spend an evening of relaxation and fun, shedding our role as their lawyers and support persons.

International Women’s Day: We organized a client network meeting on the 11th of March 2015 to celebrate Women’s Day. We invited our clients, associate organizations, newly appointed PO’s, representative from women’s commission, etc. The main aim was to provide a forum for the clients to interact with each other and develop their own support base. The second was that expose to our other partner organisations and Protection Officers, so they could approach them directly when they need their help.

Other Activities

Campaigns

Intervener against Death penalty- We intervened in an appeal against the execution of two women convicts who are on death row, Renuka Shinde and her sister, Seema Gavit who were convicted for using children for begging and then murdering them. This is to publicly state our stand against death penalty. We have expressed our opinion even in cases of gang rapes such as Nirbhaya and Shakti Mills cases. In addition, this would be the first time India women will be hanged and it could set a precedent for the future. Our application has been allowed, and the execution is stayed. The case is pending final hearing.

Process Fee and Court Fee - the PWDVA is a beneficial piece of legislation. The idea is that even the poorest of the woman could access it. There was however a problem to it as certain courts charged court fee and process fee to women. Women were also asked to pay for the order copies which they were clearly exempted from as per S 24 of the Act. We wrote to the concerned authorities who replied that court fee is exempted for women. We now have not faced any issue of court fee being asked from the women. Women are now also given order copies free of cost coz of our intervention. We have not seen the process fee issue being raised in any court.

Appeals in Sessions Court - there is a limit of 60 days (at least on paper) for the lower courts to pass orders. There is no such limit in appellate courts. Sessions court takes a long time to dispose off appeal under the Act. In Bombay sessions court we realised the problem was there was only one court assigned to decide appeals under the PWDVA. We took up the issue and wrote a letter as a first step to ensure that the cases are distributed to other courts too. We are happy to note that our suggestion has been accepted and cases are now being distributed to other courts.

Amendment in CPC for post retirement benefits - women who file maintenance in courts have a number of processes to execute the orders, one of them being attachment of salary. However this becomes a problem when the husband retires. Though he is entitled to post retirement benefits but she is not entitled to attach the same. S 60 (1) (g) of CPC does not address this issue. The purpose of the said clause was to protect the retired people from such attachments so as to secure their retired lives. However the same is affecting women. Probably that was never in the mind of the law makers. However when we realized the problems which women were facing, we have written a letter to the concerned authorities to amend the said section of CPC.

Intervener in Child Access Guidelines and Joint Parenting Plan - The family court is trying to introduce a joint parenting plan which favours the erring husbands, who are using their children as instruments to harass their wives. While neglecting the aspect of payment to their wives and children, the husbands are insisting only on access. The judges appear to be sympathetic towards them. We have filed an intervener application in these proceedings to place before the court the concerns of women litigants.

Conference – *Negotiating Spaces*

The two day national consultation organized by Majlis on 8-9 November, 2014, was the fifth and final conference in this series. The theme this year was '***Uniform Civil Code: Inclusions and Exclusions***'. *Negotiating Spaces*. This proved to be an exciting event which helped to unearth many issues which had been rendered invisible in the Uniform Civil Code debate. Since enforcing a Uniform Civil Code has been an important political plank for the ruling NDA government, there is an expediency in foregrounding the complexities involved in enforcing such a code in haste, without due caution. Around hundred participants, comprising of lawyers, law students, activists, and academicians attended the two day deliberations.

Published Articles and Academic Papers

Various articles related to different aspects of sexual and domestic violence written by Flavia Agnes were published during the year in her column in the Asian Age and as articles in other dailies such as the Hindu, the Indian Express and magazines like EPW, Tehelka, etc. These are based on the works of Majlis Legal Centre.

Submitted by Flavia Agnes

CULTURE CENTRE

In this reporting period the cultural centre has wrapped up the 7 year long Cinema City project and launched the new project Digital City. Hence it can be said that the manifold engagement of the centre with the cultural action and production is now, to some extent, consolidating around the urban culture and urban development.

Project Cinema City

In this last leg of Project Cinema City we mainly worked on preparing a case for the protection of neighbourhood theatres in Mumbai. For this phase of the project we have collaborated closely with Urban Design Research Institute (UDRI). It is interesting that a project that begun with collaborations with academic and cultural institutions – Kamla Raheja Institute of Architecture; SNDT Women's University; National Gallery of Modern Art, Ministry of Culture – Govt. of India; Arsenal Institute of Film and Video Art – Berlin; Public Service Broadcast Trust etc. - ended its journey with new collaboration with an urban development and town planning organisation. This, in short, maps the journey of the project – from public culture interventions to urban planning inputs. The first half of the project was dedicated to hidden labour and hidden spaces in the making of cinema. Hence the institutions and individuals who are engaged with the production of urban culture were our partners. In the second half the project emphasis shifted to public space and public culture and thus our collaborators changed to town planners.

The Dossier

In this reporting period we have compiled and published a dossier titled Cinema Theatres in Bombay / Mumbai. It is edited by Paroma Sadhana and designed by Afrah Shafiq – the youngsters who have received their primary training in the long years of Cinema City project. It is a joint publication by Majlis and UDRI, and designed as a campaign tool towards protection of some of the neighbourhood theatres. Our earlier research on all the neighbourhood theatres that have been constructed in the 20th century was upgraded and organized spatially according to the six administrative zones of the city starting from Zone 1 (comprising of Wards A to E in the southern tip of the city) till Zone 6 (comprising of Wards N, T and S in the northern suburbs). This helped us in identifying and visualizing the related growth pattern of the city through the 20th century. We have now layered this database with topographical and demographic information from each zone and that provides valuable information regarding the impact, or area of influence, that cinema theatres have had on a neighbourhood and its people. For example the recorded population of Ward H in 1961 is 2,90,405 while the number of cinema theatres functioning in this Ward at the time are 3; similarly in 1981 the number of functioning theatres in the same Ward are 7 for a population of 7,06,838. Thus as the population of this neighbourhood doubled, so did the number of cinema theatres. But this trend of mutual growth between the public culture spaces and demography stopped in the early '80s as the cinema theatres no longer function as community spaces. This research has been made available through charts of the lifeline of all theatres and decade wise maps of the city with the site spotting of the theatres.

We have also made detailed profiles of some key neighbourhood theatres in the city to foreground our argument that the space of a cinema theatre is more than just a projection room

for films – it is simultaneously the city's heritage and spatial landmark, the citizens' sense of belonging and a vibrant space of cultural conglomeration. For this we have compiled detailed studies on five functioning theatres – Edward theatre (Kalbadevi), Liberty Cinema (Marine Lines), The Deepak (Lower Parel), Braratmata (Parel), and Alishan Cinema (Mumbra).

Edward Theatre Constructed in the last decade of the 19th century Edward Theatre was turned into a Talkies in 1930s. The popular cinema in Kalbadevi reached its pinnacle with a 48 weeks run of *Jai Santoshi Ma* in 1975. It brought back the early relationship between divinity, magic and cinema in circulation, and women treated the cinema hall as a temple and the screen as the deity. Currently Edward Talkies has lost its glory due to poor technical facilities and being patronized only by the wage workers and other poor people in the bazaar area. Still the establishment, few meters away from the gentrified Metro Cinema, could survive only because of the resilience of the benevolent Parsi owners and their commitment to the staff who have been serving there for generations.

Liberty Cinema is an 1100 seater air-conditioned theatre that opened in 1949 in Marine Lines and is celebrated for its Art Deco façade. Its name reflected the newly acquired 'liberty' from the British raj and also the status of the first theatre, with high end amenities and located in the erstwhile European quarters, that exclusively screened Hindi cinema. It was tagged as "The Showplace of the Nation". Liberty Cinema is remembered as a 'first run theatre' (a signifier of premiering 'A' list films) whose quality of refreshment was at par with its screening facilities. Many films have celebrated their golden jubilees in this theatre including *Hum Apke Hain Kaun* that ran for 2341 shows in 1995. Rumour has it that MF Husain saw the film 50 times in this theatre and subsequently painted the 'Shakti' series which was inspired by Madhuri Dixit (lead actress of the film). Liberty stopped regular screenings of films in 2012 and since then has been running as an alternative cultural space that hosts events like film festivals, music concerts and stand up shows. The history of Liberty Cinema, including the architecture, amenities, show advertisement pattern and audience profile; indicate the growth and composition of the urban middle class in post-independence era.

The Deepak (Deepak Talkies) began its journey in 1926 when it was built as a one storey stone structure in the erstwhile mill district of Lower Parel. It converted from a silent cinema house to a talkie in the 1930s and over the decades it included another floor and balcony. But following the decline of the textile industry it stopped screening films in early 2000s due to the high maintenance costs and low audience turnout. In 2014 the theatre got restored and refurbished with latest projection technology. Following the rapid urbanization and commercialization of the surrounding area Deepak is attempting to create a contemporary cultural space that is conducive to the changed demography. In the regular shows they screen standard Hindi and Tamil films for the general public and in the evening shows screen world cinema for a cultivated audience. In collaboration with Enlighten Film Society they have formed the Matterden Centre for Films and Creations at The Deepak. With future plan for a Café, book store and workshop space the theatre aspires to become a Film Centre instead of a regular movie theatre. According to the present owner Punit Shah the theatre has dropped the suffix of 'cinema' or 'talkies' from its name and rechristened itself as The Deepak to indicate its change of profile.

Bharatmata Cinema covers 1800 square meter of land and is located on the premises of the closed India United Textile Mills since 1932. This theatre along with others, such as, Jai Hind, and Hindmata, were constructed under patronage from the textile mills owners in order to keep the migrant workers glued to the city and to their work places. National Textile Corporation (a central government undertaking) is currently the owner of the property. In 2002, NTC decided to take over the land and refused to renew the theatre's 72 year-old-lease which was to expire the same year. In 1989 too they had served an eviction notice to Bharatmata but the then Chief Minister Sharad Pawar intervened and managed to temporarily save the theatre from being demolished. The threat of demolition of the only cinema theatre in Mumbai which exclusively screens Marathi films at affordable rates to the population in Girangaon is seen as a big blow to the city's working class culture.

Kapil Bhopatkar who runs Bharatmata Cinema approached the city civil court against NTC's eviction notice in 2002 appealing to consider the history of the theatre and its significance as an essential amenity centre for the local population. He argued that NTC only wanted to exploit the commercial potential of the prime location of the theatre by building residential and commercial property. In 2010 the court dismissed the opposition to the eviction notice. So far the public outcry and strategic mobilization of the citizens, artists, film stars as well as the trade union activists, has kept Bharatmata Cinema alive but their existence remains precarious.

Alishan Cinema, constructed in 1994 in the distant suburb of Mumbra, is one of the rare single screen theatres that were constructed in the era of crisis in cinema exhibition business. The only other neighbourhood theatre that we have come across within the Greater Bombay limit which was constructed in post '80s is Sona Gold (Mini) cinema in Borivali.

Mumbra is a town in the district of Thane which is populated largely by the Muslim community that migrated from Bombay city after the riots of 1992-93. Yunus Supariwala, the owner of Alishan, also owned a few theatres in South Mumbai that catered to the dominant Muslim community from the nearby areas of Grant Road, Nagpada and Lamington Road. After the migration of his primary audience to Mumbra, Supariwala, in an effort to capitalize on his patrons' loyalty, decided to open Alishan Cinema. But the new theatre in the haphazardly developed neighbourhood could not recreate the tradition of public culture of cinema in the old city. Majority of the inhabitants of Mumbra continued to long for the vibrant social life in their old city and refused to patronize Alishan Cinema. Soon after its inception it fell into disrepair and it is now only visited by the footloose men from the lower strata of the locality. With this kind of audience profile it turned into a no-woman territory. Of course one of the reasons for its failure is also the bleak period of the 1990s when television and videos, as household commodities, threatened the very foundation of the business of cinema exhibition. But additional point is that Mumbra did not evolve as a neighbourhood but remained a settlement hurriedly created out of an administrative necessity to house the displaced Muslim families and wage workers. Hence no neighbourhood public culture ever evolved there. We suspect Alishan Cinema is only part of that casualty.

These five case studies have helped us in identifying the role that a space of the cinema theatre plays in the lives of the people that inhabit a neighbourhood. While the examples of Deepak and

Liberty could be considered as two different models of revitalizing single screen cinema theatres, and Bharatmata and Edward exemplify the resilience of a neighbourhood under threat of gentrification, Alishan's story is an example of how urban planning, or the lack thereof, sometimes fail to create a sustainable neighbourhood, in turn affecting the entertainment and recreational opportunities of its residents.

In addition to the detailed profiles of key cinema theaters, we have also collected a lot of archival material from newspapers and documents that prove the public utility and philanthropic roles of the neighbourhood theatres. For example, a film advertisement for the screening of *Raja Harishchandra* (regarded as the first feature film made in India) at Coronation Cinematograph dated May 17th, 1913 at Bombay Chronicle, states "With the object that Poor Class of people should have an opportunity to see this marvelous Film, we will give, an extra show on Sunday, the 18th May at 5 pm (ST) when Women and Children only will be admitted at half rates to this show". Similarly we have collected accounts of special 'Zenana' shows being organized for "Ladies in Purdah"; a children's film festival being organized at Rupam Cinema at Sion in 1974, cinema theatres in South Bombay advertising facilities such as crèches and feeding room for children and so on. These documents help us make a sociological argument towards the inclusive nature of the single screen theatres in a developing city.

We have also studied the previous Development Control Regulations of 1967 and 1991, in order to understand the crucial position that single screen cinema theatres hold vis-à-vis land use. In the previous Mumbai development plan cinema theatres were shown as a reserved category and were marked by the colour red in the zone wise maps. At this crucial juncture when the next Development Plan (Mumbai DP 2014-34) of the city is being formalised, it is essential to push the city authorities to protect and revive some of these neighbourhood spaces in order to preserve urban public culture, which, along with the single screen theatres, is fast disappearing.

There are three key essays in the dossier. The first is on the role of neighbourhood theatres in evolving an inclusive urban public culture across class, community, gender and language groups. The second is on the legal and construction history of the single screen theatres in the 20th century Bombay that also exposes the connivance of the state in privileging the multiplex franchises over the single screen theatres by imposing unfair tax structure. And the third is an argument for rehabilitation of single screen theatres under the provision of cultural heritage. The text essays are punctuated by image essays, decade wise maps of the city expansion and the cinema theatre constructions, chart of lifelines of all the city theatres and reproduction of archival texts.

Mapping Livelihood Practices

The neighbourhood theatres across the city have also created a wider space for social interactions and accommodated various livelihood practices in their vicinity. Over the decades the lanes around any such theatre have developed into an informal market space as well as an expanded community space. Outlets of various sizes and registers would sale all sorts of local commodities that may or may not be related to cinema, such as – second hand books, aphrodisiac herbs, pony rides, fortune teller, fashion accessories, salons, eateries and drinking holes, food carts, pirated VHS-CD-DVDs, printed posters, hobby clubs, grooming centres,

lottery kiosks, photo studios and so on. All sorts of people would visit these very local enterprises or just hang around the vicinity even when they were not going to see a film. Thus the cinema lanes have been an integral part of the neighbourhood economy and social life.

In the earlier phase we conducted research on such lanes and bylanes around 15 theatres across the city and have developed a catalogue of cinema-plus livelihood practices. Based on that we have created an art work resembling a map of one such cinema lane – indexing the shops, the frequently visited characters, a few historical details and a lot of anecdotes. The work is created as an easy and fun reading into the social history of cinema theatres. It is printed in a poster form and being distributed along with the dossier.

Dossier release

The dossier was released at The Deepak and in collaboration with Punit Shah, the president of Cinema Owners and Exhibitors Association of India. We took this opportunity to showcase The Deepak as a sustainable prototype for rehabilitation of neighbourhood cinemas. As part of the strategy to reach the administration we invited Dr. D M Sukhtankar, former Chief Secretary, Govt. of Maharashtra, to be the chief guest. We are also hoping that the dossier will be proved helpful in the struggle of the cinema owners to make the state reframe the entertainment tax structure that currently privileges the multiplex corporations.

The dossier has been disseminated to academic institutions, urban development groups and concerned state officials. Currently UDRI is lobbying for it to be considered as a resource document for identifying heritage structures in the city.

Other Cinema City Projects

The publication *Project Cinema City*, edited by Madhusree Dutta, Kaushik Bhaumik and Rohan Shivkumar, Tulika Books Delhi, 1993; has been adjudged the Best Published Book of the Year 2014 at Publishing Next. In this reporting period we have also managed to get a book seller and distributor in Berlin, b-Books, to distribute Project Cinema City in Western Europe.

The extensive archive of the entire project has also been finalized with detailed cataloguing and annotations. It has been a mammoth task to compile and catalogue the works commenced by around one hundred people over seven years. Finally the digital version of it is completed and it comprises of all the video footage of nine films; the working files of eleven public art works; the working files of the three publications; the research on the labour in cinema, trade unions and workers' associations; theatres and audience profiles; archival texts and images as well as found images, maps and graphics.

Though we are committed to make all the resources available in public domain it is not possible to put such a large volume of material online. We have made a selection out of the entire collection and uploaded them on www.projectcinemacity.com site. We are planning to create a pen-drive / concise version of the archive and that will be made available to academic institutions. The project website continues to be very popular and currently the average daily visit to the site is 165. In its less than three years of existence the total visits has been more than 135,000.

Ancillary

Cinema City project continues to influence the thinking on cultural studies and art productions through interactions and liaison with similar international initiatives. In this reporting period we have participated in a think tank programme for the Columbia University in conceptualizing their forthcoming project on Arts and Culture in Global Cities. The Goethe Institute has initiated an international project on Urban Cultures and their curators have taken Cinema City as one of the primary case studies. Presentations on issues related to architecture and public space within Project Cinema City framed the base of Leeds School of Architecture's initiative on The Cinematic Construct of New Commons. At an international conference titled Visionmix, hosted jointly by Jawaharlal Nehru University and Shiv Nadar University, the curatorial vision of Project Cinema City was presented. Cinema City project was also showcased as keynote address at the national conference on Citizenship and Public Services, organised by the head office of Ford Foundation. These disparate events only validate the inter-disciplinary and multi-scalar attributes of the project.

In this reporting period Majlis has also organised public talks by visiting international scholars on related themes. Significant among those events were presentations by Lalitha Gopalan, Associate Professor, Department of Radio-Television-Film, University of Texas at Austin, on Bombay Noir and Alisa Lebow, Filmmaker and Reader in Film Studies, University of Sussex, on Unframing Revolution – challenges in image making and archiving in post-revolution Egypt. These interactions have enriched our own activities as well as helped disseminating our works at a wider platform.

At the level of institutional collaborations there were two major events in this reporting period. With Arsenal Institute of Films and Video Art – Berlin and Max Mueller Bhavan Mumbai we held a two days film festival on Identity and Conflict. The film package was curated out of the film archive of Arsenal and travelled across the South Asian cities. Majlis was the Mumbai partner of the project and facilitated a sustained dialogue between the visiting curators and local curators, artists and filmmakers.

The other collaboration was with the cultural scene in the city of Kochi, first with the documentary film festival – SIGNS, organised by the Federation of Film Societies of Kerala and then with Kochi Art Biennale. Majlis, in collaboration with Arsenal Institute of Film and Video Art – Berlin, curated a 7 day film package, titled 2/3 Floating 1/3 Moving, for Kochi Biennale.

It is with great pride that we report that Renu Savant, who got her initial training in filmmaking at Majlis, has received National Award as Best Non-Fiction Director for the year 2014-15. This is the highest honour in the field in this country.

Other Projects

Kashmir Archive From the year 2003 to 2008 we ran an initiative to collect visual material from the public domain in Kashmir. This was initiated as part of Majlis' Godaam project. Godaam, literary means the store house, was a project to create an archive of digital images from contemporary public domain. The image collection primarily happened in Bombay and Srinagar.

The Kashmir section was initiated in order to counter the hegemonic images from the metropolises. The decade of the '90s has been crucial for the history of visual culture in Kashmir. On one hand the movement for Azadi and related political upheavals were sweeping across the state and on the other hand video / digital technology made the act of image production universal and accessible. Hence Kashmir, the land which is often represented as the exotic by the mainstream cinema and other media, begun to be framed widely in the context of public protest, state violence, religious fundamentalism, economic and educational deprivation and so on, through the hand held video cameras. It resulted in an avalanche of 'other' images from Kashmir – shot by visitors, locals, media people, campaigners, activists and students. We set out to collate some of these materials from the '90s from various sources. Thus a modest archive was built. But most of the material, by now, had turned technologically inaccessible.

In this reporting period the entire collection on Kashmir has been painstakingly restored, technically upgraded, re-catalogued and converted into various analogous and digital versions. A copy of the entire archive has been donated to INTACH – Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage, Srinagar Chapter. This has been part of our commitment to resource sharing and dissemination. The archive hard discs will be made available to public through their documentation centre in Srinagar. We are also exploring the possibilities to develop similar arrangement with other cultural outfits.

There was a time when cultural activists working in the area of Kashmir had some serious anxieties about making certain images from Kashmir accessible to public. They feared that without an adequate political contextualising the isolated and volatile images might become vulnerable to maneuvering by the people with vested interests. This anxiety is part of a wider political debate regarding the power of camera and the politics of visibility-invisibility – which is how public visibility in a non-egalitarian society might make a certain people more vulnerable to the state power and hegemonic public opinion. In 2008 we held an extensive workshop titled Logistic of Perception: Images from Conflict Zones based on the Kashmir archive to discuss these issues. The five day long residential workshop was attended by filmmakers, visual artists, media professionals, art historians and social scientists. It was an extremely charged interaction and the issues of representations and conflict images were debated heatedly. Though no clear conclusion could be arrived at we decided not to make the Kashmir material accessible in public domain for the time being. And thus when Godaam archive went online on pad.ma we refrained from uploading most of the Kashmir material.

But by 2014-15 the political situation has altered substantially to challenge the older debate on visibility-invisibility. Besides, digital activism has also matured. Hence we thought of revisiting the Kashmir archive and revitalizing the material. Making copies of the entire archive and sharing it with other institutions is one part of that. Additionally we are also thinking of developing a public art project on images from conflict zones based on this material and others.

City Archive The other and larger part of Godaam is a video image archive on Bombay / Mumbai. It is a wide and eclectic collection of video images around themes like - Dharavi livelihood practices, 1992-93 Bombay riots, bazaars-railway stations-other public places, fire brigade documentation footage, roadside shrines, sites of street cultures, election campaigns in

2004, bar dancers' campaign in 2005, food politics in the city, city cemeteries, public protests, entertainment district of Pila House, talk shows on reassessment of Sanyukta Maharashtra Movement, and interviews with representatives of various communities and eminent citizens etc. Most of these videos are available online on pad.ma site. The offline archive has been technically upgraded and properly catalogued in this reporting period. It was a colossal task to contain around 180 hours of material shot over 20 years and in disparate formats into 300 odd folders on the hard discs. Cataloguing too was a complex task as we wanted to keep the reading of the material open and thus did not want to make rigid categorization. We still have 40 hours of television reporting on the US invasion on Iraq in 2003 and 110 hours of documentation of World Social Forum 2004 which have not been digitized and catalogued.

For these archives too we are looking for partner institutions to share the resources.

Digital City

The current reporting period was the first year of the project Digital City. The project undertakes a public campaign towards Universal Access to Internet, with Greater Mumbai as a pilot project. The project is a continuation of Majlis' engagement with the issues of urban public culture and infrastructural development related to that.

INFOALL (Information for ALL) is a consortium of city organisations to press Mumbai municipality to create infrastructural facility in order to reach affordable internet to all. Majlis Cultural Centre is entrusted to design and implement programme for mobilizing public opinion. The other partners are UDRI (Urban Development Research Institute) – responsible for negotiating with the municipality and other state agencies; PUKAR (Partners in Urban Knowledge and Research) – responsible for community research and data development; and Dept. of Electrical Engineering, IIT-Mumbai – responsible for working out the technological feasibility. The composite project is supported by Ford Foundation. Majlis had not initiated the project but was invited by Ford Foundation and the consortium to work on the public campaign based on our experiences in the field of public culture and social campaigns.

DP (Development Plan) is a proposal by MCGM (Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai) towards the urban infrastructural development for the next twenty years (2014-34) and currently that proposal is being debated within the civil society. The urgency of the project is to create a space for Public Internet Policy within this proposal. Since digital technology is a fast developing phenomenon the infrastructural provision for internet needs to be envisaged as upgradable and technology-adoptable. Without such flexibility the state-provided facility is likely to become obsolete in near future and then, the whole system will again get privatized and open to random market speculation. This campaign facilitates the vision of public internet infrastructure that would be sustainable, inclusive and conducive to future requirements.

The primary task was to place the issue of access to internet at par with essential urban infrastructural services such as water, sanitation, safety, education and transportation. Both the individual state officials and most of the fellow civil society organisations are under the belief that access to internet is not an essential service but only a privilege for the middle and upper end of the society. This belief stems from the mind-set that the poor strata of the society only needs to be

provided for their physical needs, and infrastructure for knowledge and communications are not relevant to them. This, in turn, exposes the deep bias regarding the poor as an inferior class of citizens that only requires services for survival and not towards upgrading and empowerment. But the interesting aspect is that the need for internet for individual betterment has been hammered through advertisements by the private telecom service providers in the last few years. The multinational telecom companies have pumped in huge amounts of money through television and radio advertisements to create a market for internet as a commodity. Thus turning the basic public amenity into a competitive market commodity while the development activists treat it as a non-issue. The state, on the other hand, indirectly facilitates the corporate service providers by talking about Digital India and yet not making a public sector based infrastructural facility. And if the infrastructure is not laid and controlled by the state the corporations will make the service available only to the areas where the market is strong. For example, the internet services in Nariman Point, Fort and Marine Lines is of high quality. But no service provider is ready to take the burden of building infrastructure for net-connection in the neighbouring Masjid Bunder. And hence when individuals in that neighbourhood want to avail the service they would have to pay a higher rental than the parties in the affluent area. It follows the same logic as how the slum dwellers are made to pay more for drinking water and electricity because of the absence of state-run infrastructure. This is called Digital Divide.

Therefore it can be said that a kind of visibility regarding the issue already existed before we entered the campaign. But that awareness is skewed as it emphasizes only on the aspiration of an individual and tilted towards a class privilege. Our first task was to exploit the commercial advertisements in order to benefit from their outreach but at the same time disassociate the issue from consumers' products and relocate it as citizens' right.

A standard international practice to assess the urban development level is by measuring the attributes of a Smart City. *'Smart city can be defined as a developed urban administrative area that creates sustainable economic development and high quality of life by excelling in multiple key areas; economy, mobility, environment, people, living, and government. Excelling in these key areas can be done through strong human capital, social capital, and/or ICT infrastructure'*. But within the project period the newly elected Govt. at the centre issued a declaration for building new cities as special economic zones and those proposed cities are termed 'Smart Cities'. The Govt. scheme is to reduce the importance of the older and larger cities by abandoning development inputs as those cities possess tremendous political potential in terms of civil society awareness. Instead they want to build artificial and corporate-friendly cities with high end infrastructure facilities in order to attract new capital and also to channelize capital and labour resources out of the older cities. So we faced our second problem of being co-opted by the design of the state towards over-corporatizing the country.

In short, the tasks in hand were to establish the validity of the campaign as an essential public service and development issue, disassociate it from the commercial network of the private service providers, prove the technological and logistical feasibility of it as a state apparatus, and then, differentiate it from the state's own divisive design of Digital India. Hence, we have decided to focus on: a) infrastructure across the entire city – the emphasis being on the infrastructure and not on the commodity on one hand, and on the other hand on the concept of across the entire city –

thus making it a right and not a privilege that is available to some and not to the others; b) all public utility services (licenses, forms, tickets, documents, complaints, bills, provisions, schemes, warnings etc.) to be made web-based – thus reframing the goal as public service and not as individuals' betterment; c) public internet centres in the model of public telephone booths – thus creating provisions of shared facilities.

Campaign Materials Produced

Video Spots: In this reporting period we have produced five video spots on various aspects of sustainable infrastructure for public internet and web-based public utility services. The main task was to create a comprehensible picture for what a public policy for Internet for All would entitle and how the state may implement it within their means. The five videos are made in different formats and languages and meant for different target groups. A tongue-in-cheek animation film made in the colloquial language of a jumble of Marathi, Hindi, English and Gujarati, and developed along with a group of NID-trained designers, depicts the precariousness and unsustainability of the current arrangement of hanging overhead internet cables across the buildings provided by multiple private service providers. This video is meant for popular usage in the public domain.

Two video spots are made on faux-documentary format on the concepts of e-Warns and e-Health. They are made in Hindi and English respectively. These videos explain the logistics and possibilities of web-enabled governance or e-governance for efficient, fast and accessible for all public services. These are meant for serious viewing and to be used during the negotiation with the state agencies. The fourth video is made in popular talk show format and portrays a utopian picture of a settlement that has realized the Internet for All provision. This video uses the pedestrian Bombaiya dialect of Marathi-Hindi mix. This video is to be used in community events where the audience is overwhelmingly young and vernacular. The fifth video is produced with 2D motion graphics and is silent. It shows the existing digital divide in the city through animated maps of the city. This one is designed for instant introduction to the project.

Following Majlis' practice of facilitating young artists the five videos are directed by debutant filmmakers who have been trained through earlier projects at the centre. All the videos are uploaded on Youtube, Facebook and on the *sabke liye broadband* website as well as being screened during road shows and community events.

Radio Campaign: In the urban milieu radio has surfaced as a key player for information and entertainment in the last decade. Since a large part of the population in Mumbai spend substantial amount of time commuting radio has become an important service for them. Radios are played in all private as well as public vehicles such as auto rickshaws and taxis. Many people, both young and elderly, access radio programme through their cell phones. Women listened to radios while doing the house work. Unlike television radio does not require the full attention and hence it is often played while people are engaged in their chores. Hence radio was chosen as an important platform for this campaign.

After the market research we decided to go for AIR (All India Radio), the state run radio station and a private station – Radio Mirchi. Though AIR has the widest outreach in terms of geographical

coverage its audience profile is overwhelmingly made up of elderly men who mainly want to access news on govt. schemes and provisions in vernacular languages. AIR also produces docu-dramas and fiction programme on various social issues. Radio Mirchi is the most popular private station in Mumbai. Its audience profile ranges from young Hindi film fans to housewives to professional men. Radio Mirchi programming is mainly film based musical programme, popular RJ events and city related talk shows. So we decided to partner with Radio Mirchi in the first phase and then with AIR in the next phase. Due to the issues of professional protocol the campaign could not run concurrently on two channels.

We booked broadcast slots for 60 days in March-May 2015 at Radio Mirchi. For the campaign we produced three jingles and five dialogue spots on various aspects of the issue. They were broadcasted once in every hour from 9am to 9pm on week days. Since radio spots need to be short, easily accessible and widely evocative we strategised the concept of 'the entire city under one provision' to be the key to the campaign in this phase. Accordingly jingles and dialogue spots were composed with keywords such as *Sarvajanin Broadband / Akkha Mumbai Mein* as well as names of the poorer settlements that are generally considered lowly and unworthy by the market such as Kurla, Nagpada, Jogeswari, Malvani, Gaothan, Koliwada etc. In the later phase Radio Mirchi will conduct talk shows and public interviews on the issue.

Public Vehicle Campaign: Another highly potential platform for public campaign is public vehicle network – auto rickshaw, bus and local train. For a city like Mumbai which is popularly known for its intense commuting patterns public vehicles can be best used for wide outreach. In this reporting period we decided to concentrate on the auto rickshaws that ply only in the suburban district. In the next reporting period we shall cover the BEST buses and hopefully have an entry in the local trains too.

Auto rickshaws reach the densest and the most far away settlements in the city where no other public utility service may have reached yet. Traditionally the auto rickshaws carry stickers and posters of commercial advertisements and events on the back cover. The advantage of the auto rickshaw is that even when stationary or in the stand or parked for good they are always in public places. These vehicles are seldom parked in any indoor spaces. As a result they continue to service the campaign even when not plying. The class and gender coverage of the auto rickshaws are varied – middle class students, office goers, working class men-women, wage workers, housewives, sex workers, pensioners and so on. Their language proficiency too is as varied. Hence the campaign slogans needed to be precise and workable for multi-lingual crowd. We developed three key concepts – *sabke liye* – for all, *mulgi shikhli* – education for girl children and *akkha Mumbai* – the entire city. Accordingly posters were designed in Hinglish and Marathi.

These poster-stickers were pasted on 2000 auto rickshaws plying on six different routes – on north-south axis of Andheri to Bandra, Borivali to Andheri in the western suburb and Thane to Sion in the eastern suburb; with on east-west axis Borivali to Thane, Santacruz to Chembur and Ghatkopar to Bandra. The stickers lasted at an average for 3 to 4 months. We launched this campaign in the month of November with the strategy that this would introduce the issue and then be followed by the radio campaign. It is difficult to calculate exact outreach of such a campaign as the vehicles run through the traffic, get stranded at the signal, wait at the stand in crowded places

resulting in uncertain number of people who see and read the posters. Yet by a conservative estimate an auto rickshaw is seen by three hundred people through a 12 hour shift in a day. We may also take 90 days as a time limit before the poster gets worn out or torn. Hence 90 days x 300 people x 2000 vehicles amounts to 540,00,000 viewing. Even by an extremely conservative estimation if one percent people out of this have read and registered the matter in the poster it amounts to 540,000 people over three months.

Web Campaign: There has been a dichotomy regarding the relevance of web campaign in this project. The people who visit the campaign through web platforms are likely to already be in possession of a secured web connection and thus may not be overtly interested in the logistic of access to internet. Yet, it is also essential for the campaign to showcase its gamut of possibilities within the net world. Hence we had to think of ways to communicate the more complex aspects of the project – such as e-governance, upgradable technology, sustainable development etc. than concentrating on basic information while on the web platforms. We also had to think of design inputs in order to make the portal exciting and stand out in the crowded web space. There are a few different kinds of websites in circulation – the first is informative sites that are full of texts entered in typical fonts and colours and are generally run by NGOs or other social action groups; the other is funky sites run by wizards full of interesting interfaces and tricks but in terms of subject matter they remain very thin, and the third is artistic sites with creative images and videos that may appear elitist to most of our target group.

We worked for six long months with the agency that was hired to design the web campaign to evolve the right look for www.sabkeliyebroadband.com. Today's web users are image savvy people and hence it was very important to have some visual elements for all the pages in the site. For example, for the page International Case Study we have developed an interactive map of the world for the viewer to identify each piece of information in the exact geographical location in the world map. The site has a banner that runs through all pages with a series of popular images of the quintessential Mumbai citizens – Koli woman (fisher woman), Dabbawala (lunch box supplier), Parsi man, East Indian girl, Bohri woman, Tapani boy (street smart lad), middle class working woman, Tamil man (Tamil community is one of the significant minorities in Mumbai) and so on. These characters have been traditionally portrayed as the cosmopolitan essence of the city by popular culture over the decades. Thus they function as visual templates for the city-zens of Mumbai. But in the current scenario of identity politics many of these communities are being relegated as outsiders or lesser citizens. So we decided to incorporate these characters as the protagonists of the campaign. Each of these characters, in their community and profession specific attires, carries a computer monitor with different web pages over their shoulders. This has become the leitmotif of the campaign – sabke liye broadband (Broadband for all). The oddity of the images of human beings with computer monitor-as-head makes the first point of interest to the site. Then upon second viewing it reveals the identity of the characters that are varied and even incompatible to each other to an extent. Here the strategy is to exploit the element of unfamiliarity in order to gain attention and then insert elements of identification in order to sustain visits to the site.

In the page titled as Campaign Material the viewer can access all the materials – video, audio, posters, stickers, texts, letters to the authority, graphics and photographs – and can download

them for free. In fact we encourage other organisations and individuals to use any of the material that is produced by Majlis Cultural Centre. All of Majlis' works are copy left and have been made available in the public domain in some form or other.

www.sabkeliyebroadband.com is a bi-lingual site, in Marathi and English. It was a difficult task to make the technical texts available in Marathi as many of the terms and concepts that are being referred to are not yet in circulation in regional languages. Yet we took up the challenge and finally could make the entire site available in Marathi. In six months – October to March – the site has been visited by 11,120 visitors. There is also a Blog page where subject experts are invited to contribute. The website also houses an online petition addressed to the Municipal Corporation of Mumbai through change.org. We have also published SabkeLiyeBroadband Facebook and Twitter pages in order to expand the outreach and direct more traffic to the website.

Creative Device: This programme was planned as an extension of Majlis' forte in public art initiatives. Under this programme visual art and performance pieces are to be developed and presented at various public spaces around the city. Other than facilitating the Universal Access to Broadband the programme is also meant to further expand our works on urban public culture and public space.

In this reporting period we developed a mobile unit as an art work and campaign vehicle. We hired a van and equipped it with an LED screen, audio amplifier and speakers, and portable lights. We decked up the van in the fashion of entertainment vehicles in the popular fairs by pasting radium stickers (a printing device that make the image glow even in the dark, as in trucks and taxis) with graphics and campaign tag lines, and 3D cutouts.

On the large LED screen, that covered an entire side of the van, the silent Motion Graphic video on essential service infrastructure ran on loop while the van plied in the city as well as parked in public places. The constantly running video on the surface of a van helped in getting people's attention to begin with. This video work is specially designed for street level viewing and was conducive to projection even in the daylight.

In this programme there was a special emphasis on school education. Slogans related to that were pasted both in Marathi and English (School for all / Internet in all schools; Mulgi Shikli Pragati Jhali / Broadband Ala Vistaar Jhala). Cutouts of the key images of the campaign – the quintessential Mumbai citizens with computer monitor-as head – were hung from the roof of the van. On one side of the van was an art work made of rotating venetian blind. The surface image changed from one of the earliest moving images in the world (still from an animation titled Trip to the Moon by George Melies made in 1902) to Van Gogh's landscape (1890) to a futuristic digital image of the cityscape. Through these imaginary landscapes that belonged to different time zones and cultures we tried to incite people's imaginations and expose them to the expansive possibilities of the web world. This was an attempt to campaign through abstraction and by inciting imagination. The art works were developed in collaboration with visual artists.

In this phase the van plied across the city for 10 days from 10 am to 10 pm in the month of March. Obtaining permissions and licenses for this programme turned out to be a nightmare. It involved three different agencies in each administrative zone – police, traffic police and municipality ward

office. These agencies are mainly geared towards controlling commercial activities and detecting legal offenses, and hence making them understand and approve of a programme of public interest was a herculean task and involved a lot of persuasion and time investment. In 10 days the video van plied 1500 km along the artery roads, by lanes through the settlements and around the railway stations across the city.

For this programme this was a trial phase for the feasibility of the idea. In the next phase the van will travel to the popular public sites such as bazaars and sea beaches, and to the community spaces, and will hold cultural events and interactive sessions in the evenings. This will also be used to garner offline support for the petition to the municipality.

Assessment

Though this project did not begin as an integral part of Majlis Culture Centre and came more as an assignment, working on this project has brought in some valuable experience in the sphere of public campaign and public services. As the project was comfortably funded we could get into areas that were earlier unreachable for us and gather knowledge and experience on the functioning in those sectors. This knowledge will definitely inform and enrich our further thinking on public culture. Besides, through this well funded campaign we could also push some of our older agenda, such as, education for girl children, access to public place, public art, cultural pedagogy, community video, communal harmony, multi-culturalism etc.

We have also learnt a lot about the emerging field of international net activism and digital networking. Besides, the project has provided a rich exposure to the current state model of urban development and its hidden agenda. Majlis' earlier experiences of producing issue based videos, mounting public art works, creating interactive art works and games, mobilizing artists around social issues, and initiating public campaign etc. have facilitated the Digital City project. And hopefully this project will now feed into Majlis' expertise as cultural producer, commentator and campaigner. Besides, the grant has helped in running the office and upgrading its technical facilities that are very essential for its other engagements too.

Reflection

It has been a long journey for the culture centre that begun with a national level women's arts festival – Expression – in 1990. It was the first significant public articulation of women's arts and feminist cultural practices in the country. In the following twenty five years it has produced 35 films - 10 long documentaries and 25 short films (some more are to come out in the year 2015-16) made by 17 filmmakers; produced occasional plays and computer games; built three offline image archives and initiated an online video archive portal – [pad.ma](#); brought out five publications; conferred 25 culture fellowships (the recipients include the then upcoming artists such as Aiysha Abraham, Surabhi Sharma, Tushar Joag and writer like Jayant Pawar as well as talents from the non-metropolitan areas – actress Sabitri Heisnam from Imphal, authors Renee Lullam from Aizawl and Vaidehi from Manipal, filmmaker Abir Bazaz from Srinagar, etc.); conducted six PG level courses and several neighbourhood based video making courses; curated inter-disciplinary art projects and festivals, including international shows in the cities of – Berlin, Vienna, Sao Paulo, Porto Alegre, New York and Nairobi; received several national and international awards for the

films and the books; strategized large scale mobilisation of artists under socio-political issues (Gujarat carnage, US invasion on Iraq, state sponsored cultural terrorism, World Social Forum and so on); and collaborated with large number of academic institutions, national and international art and film centres, and eminent artists and thinkers.

The trajectory - from feminist art practice, to cultural literacy and art pedagogy, to artists' network, mobilisations and disciplinary interfaces, to contemporary archiving practices and resource sharing, to newer imaginations in the field of public culture and collaborative productions - has been dense and edgy. Through this long winding journey the guiding line was to counter hegemonic practices at every turn and develop alternative prototypes. Much of these works could be carried out, and altered and modified at every juncture because the structure of the centre was kept slim and agile as well as the tendency of settling down into a routine was resisted consistently. Instead of a monolithic organizational structure the centre has worked through a wide and dense network of collaborations and issue based alliances with individuals and institutions at local, national and international level.

Since the centre mostly ran on support from development sector and international donor agencies there was always a subtle, and at times not so subtle, pressure to standardize its activities and adhere to the practicing norm of 'third worldly' social activism. It demanded a great deal of imaginative strategising and subversive planning to maintain the cultural autonomy and commence the works that we did within the prevalent social and financial frame work. But since most of the works produced by the centre enjoyed substantial public affections and reasonable visibility the funding, so far, has actually never dried up.

But, by now, many of its agenda are well established or incorporated into the curriculum of larger institutions and schemes. For example, Majlis Culture Centre begun to imagine inter-disciplinary projects and courses as early as in 1995. But by now this has become a common practice, both within the academia and art productions. The centre was formed when this city lacked a space for production and dissemination of critical arts, and a site of interface between social action, art production and cultural discourses. Over the years many other outfits have evolved - such as FD Zone and Vikalp that disseminate documentary works; several art residencies and fellowships that facilitate young artists; and cultural study centres those house discursive initiatives and interfaces between theory and practices - who are working along the similar path. Also a whole new generation of artists who were groomed and nurtured in Majlis is now fully grown practitioners and they are taking the agenda further through their independent works. Now continuing along the same line may not prove to be as productive as it used to be.

Additionally, in the current global and national political climate funding policies of the donor agencies and licensing provisions of the state are likely to exercise far greater degree of surveillance and censorship, even induce self censorship, and implement more severe ploys of co-optation than what we have witnessed so far. In view of this new development subversive activities and resistance to hegemony need to be radically re-imagined. In the contemporary world subversion as a strategy is wearing off, slowly but steadily. As the attributes of democracy in the 21st century are being manipulated to make an alibi for majoritarianism, cultural activism and its

potentials ought to be re-strategised.

In this context Majlis Culture Centre needs to revitalize itself through newer structure and action plan – not because it has failed but precisely because it has succeeded in its time and thus, to an extent, has exhausted its own objectives and possibilities. The coming years should be invested in re-articulating criticality, pedagogy and cultural activism.

Submitted by Madhusree Dutta