



“It is important to understand the pluralistic scope of India’s Constitution while debating the enforcement of a UCC under Article 44. Rather than a unitarian scheme, the Constitution provides for diversity and cultural plurality” ~ Flavia Agnes

### **Social and Legal Support to Victims of Violence**

The aim of our survivor support programme is to ensure dignity of the victim-survivor at all times. To date, we have secured favourable orders in 80% of our cases. This month 113 victims of domestic violence approached us. We filed 13 new cases under PWDVA and we managed to get binding orders from court for maintenance and custody in 5 cases. In addition 27 victims of rape were referred to us by the Mumbai Police. Through our social support programme we helped over 50 women access shelter, jobs etc to rebuild their lives.

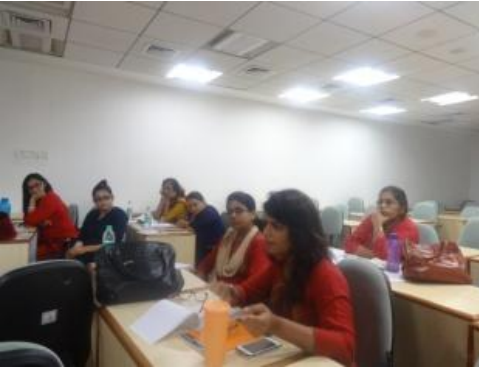
### **Majlis Milestones**

On 21<sup>st</sup> December, more than 100 women attended a **Public Hearing - ‘Jan Sunvayi’** organised by Maharashtra State Commission for Women and Majlis Legal Centre, making it a huge success. Women victims of sexual and domestic violence got a unique opportunity to present problems they faced while accessing justice directly to Medical, Police, Protection Officers and Legal Aid lawyers. **Mr. A. N. Tripathi, Member Secretary MSCW** was the chief guest of the event. The other dignitaries that were present included Ms. Sheela Sail, DCP, Crimes Against Women, Mumbai Police, Mr. S. B. Kurhale, Secretary District Legal Aid Services Authority, Dr. Avinash Supe, KEM Hospital, Dr. Rekha Daver, Gynaecology Department, JJ Hospital, Dr. Salish Mohave, Rajawadi Hospital and Ms. Anjana, Protection Officer.



## Awareness & Training

To ensure effective implementation of the law and to share our expertise, we conduct training for state and non-state stakeholders on laws for the protection of women and strategies to help women in this regard.



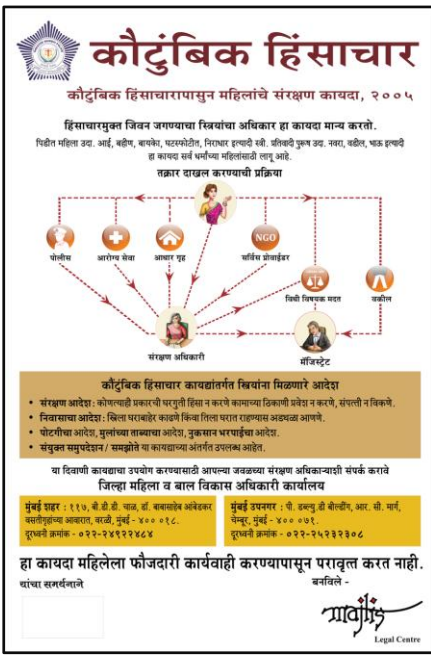
**Women Lawyer Training.** Majlis is conducting a series of trainings for women lawyers to guide them in representing women in court. On **17<sup>th</sup> December** we trained **8 women lawyers** as part of a series. The session covered drafting applications and compiling briefs under PWDVA. The activity-oriented session gave the lawyers important pointers on recording facts of the case. To guide them and to give them a practical litigation experience, they were also assigned cases to work on. Exceeding the expected target of group assignments, the lawyers have taken on individual cases and are at various stages of drafting and filing applications in court.

*“I feel extremely lucky to be a part of Majlis' Lawyers training programme. Though I hold a Master's degree in Law I did not have the required practical knowledge of appearances in court. Through Majlis I have got an opportunity to enhance my advocacy skills. This is a superb initiative by Majlis to train lawyers to be Advocates. My heartfelt gratitude to Majlis”. – Adv Mahima Prem*

On **18th December**, we trained over **30 Protection Officers (POs)** from Mumbai suburbs on how to serve legal notices and conducting economic status and house visits. The POs got clarity on valid means of serving notices and strategies to make visit reports. Many shared their experiences in getting favourable maintenance and custody orders, based on the earlier training sessions. Apart from these sessions, we conduct visits under our **weekly handholding for POs** at their offices in Andheri, Borivli-Dahisar, Worli-Kandivli, Bhandup, Mulund, Ghatkopar, Chembur and Khar-Santacruz. We covered **10 POs** across these offices and discussed daily case work, weekly assignments related to their work and the problems they face. We provide guidance and training on the issues discussed.



On **19th December**, Majlis was invited by CRH to conduct an awareness session on Child Sexual Abuse for **50 adolescent girls**. The session addressed three points - girls have the authority over their body, not even parents can touch them without permission; girls have the right to say no if the touch makes them uncomfortable. They should share what or who is bothering them with elders they trust. Most of the girls said they did not tell their parents about abuse for fear of being asked to stay at home.



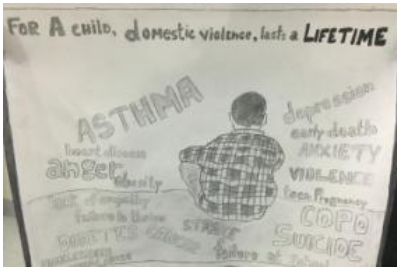
One of our important stakeholders is the police. Along with our **helpline support to Mumbai police**, we constantly engage with police through training. We recently designed a **poster on the DV Act, the rights of women and the reliefs available** and in collaboration with the Crimes Against Women Cell of the Mumbai Police, we will be displaying posters sharing important information about domestic violence and Protection Officers in simple language. The posters will be displayed at **93 police stations in Mumbai**.

This month, we conducted **legal awareness and legal aid camps** in Trombay with over **45 women**. The camps give women information about marriage rights, divorce rights, rights and reliefs under PWDVA and rights of women and children victims of sexual violence. We got **12 consultations** for domestic violence cases from these camps.

Apart from conducting training with state and non-state stakeholders, Majlis staff also undergoes regular **training for capacity development**. On **5<sup>th</sup> December** we attended an effective communication workshop by GYAN for improving inter-organisational communication. The training gave some very good points on how to communicate effectively within the organisation and with partners. On **9<sup>th</sup> December** we were part of a workshop to ‘Increase your internet presence and fundraising capacity’, for organisational development. On **10<sup>th</sup> December**, we participated in a workshop by the Canadian Consulate on external stakeholder engagement to develop our fund raising initiatives.

One new initiative we have started within Majlis is **Vision2020**, in which Majlis staff shares their ideas about what Majlis would look like in 2020. This month we discussed a vision of Majlis reaching out to many more women, with more staff for socio-legal support and with many more training programmes in the years to come.

## College Programmes



To engage with youth and to tap their potential as agents of social change, we organize two college programmes every year— **“Expression”** and **“Know Your Rights”**. *Expression* provides college students a platform to express their views on a given theme.



Our **theme this year was “Violence Behind Closed Doors”, organized in 13 colleges** including HR, Bombay Teachers Training College, Nirmala Niketan College of Social Work, Rizvi Law etc. This month, Momin College, Royal College and Kalsekar College participated in Expression.



Students addressed issues like child sexual abuse and its impact on the development of the child. One of the students spoke about how mental violence faced by women often drives them to suicide. Students in all three participant colleges were of the view that they make the legal system more accessible to women. One suggestion given was that if women were apprehensive to approach the police, they could register complaints in groups.

Aside from our regular work, Majlis reaches out to different groups of people to further the cause of women's access to legal rights. Our Director Adv. Flavia Agnes has always shared her sharp and resourceful expertise as much as she can.

On 13<sup>th</sup> December, about **15 legal scholars and academicians from the Indian Institute of Technology-Bombay met lawyers from Majlis** to learn more about our work. The interactive session was a part of a three-day conference on Legal Pluralism being conducted at IIT-B. Participants were given a context to changes in Indian law with Majlis RAHAT's rape-case analysis report and discussed its role in breaking the stereotype that most rapes are by strangers, when more than 90% rapes are by people known to the victim. They were then taken through the role of the PWDVA as a civil provision in providing tangible reliefs to women. Adv. Flavia Agnes spoke about the much-debated Uniform Civil Code (UCC) and discussed the evolution of marriage laws, divorce laws, and laws on succession of property among women. Speaking about the vulnerabilities women faced when seeking rights, she elaborated on how affordability denied the poor access to justice. Flavia stressed on the need of the hour - **uniformity of rights and not uniformity of law.**



Majlis also joined IIT-B in the **Legal Pluralism Conference 2015** at its Powai campus on **16<sup>th</sup> December** with a stall that gave information about Majlis programmes. We distributed several Majlis publications (See full list here: <http://majlislaw.com/en/top/resource-centre/publications/>) and shared perspectives on laws protecting women with legal scholars from all over the world.

On **12<sup>th</sup> December**, Adv. Flavia gave her insightful inputs on the **Pros and Cons of Uniform Civil Code in India on 12<sup>th</sup> December**. She gave a context to the ongoing debate on UCC and spoke about women's rights and their access to justice in India.

## Advocacy & Campaigns

On **16 December**, **27 Participants from 16 Organizations** across Mumbai attended the PWDVA Action Group meeting to discuss issues faced by victims of Domestic Violence



at Family Courts. Delays in court orders, obtaining order copies, execution of maintenance orders and women being charged for order copies and court fee stamps were the issues that were discussed. Majlis, along with the attending organizations agreed to address letters to the **Chief Justice of Bombay High Court**, the **Guardian Judge of the Family Court** and the **Principal Judge of the Family Court**.

On **4<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> December**, we met Mr. Rahul More, the **Divisional Deputy Commissioner, Konkan** to discuss and finalize a new reporting format for Protection Officers at their quarterly monitoring meetings. We also discussed training sessions to be held for the POs, along with the monitoring meetings.

## Partnerships

On **9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> December**, one of our chief partners, DASRA, conducted an annual audit on Majlis' social and legal support to victims of violence. Here's what they had to say:

*"The commitment, passion and camaraderie that one experiences in Majlis is incredibly inspiring and infectious. The confidence that the victims of violence illustrated in Majlis's team is truly a testament to their work. Dasra also spoke with other NGOs partnering with Majlis and could see the value they place in Majlis's support as experts in the legal field"*

On **15<sup>th</sup> December**, **Majlis and Childline signed a MoU** on socio-legal support to victims of child sexual abuse. Majlis will be the socio-legal partner in this collaboration and will also conduct capacity building for Childline staff to effectively handle child sexual abuse cases. This month, Majlis has also been signed for empanelment on the Sexual Harassment at the Workplace (SHW) Internal Complaints Committee for one year at the **Insurance Institute of India** and **Campion School**

### *Umeed Case Study - "I kept thinking he will change"*

A well-settled groom, kids and a happy home – this is on the checklist of most women and Sunita\* was no different. From what seemed like a happy marriage, Sunita had to endure all sorts of abuse and mental harassment for more than a decade, "Vishal changed my mobile SIM card to screen calls on my phone. I was forced to stop giving tuitions." She still hoped that things would get better, "I told myself that these things happen and everyone should adjust in a marriage, I convinced myself that he will change".

*To read her full story, visit [www.majlislaw.com](http://www.majlislaw.com)*

### *Majlis in the news*

- ❖ "The Sacrament of Prenups"; by Audrey D'mello, *Asian Age* Dec 06, 2015