

‘Ummeed’

Celebrates the courage and determination of women who have stood up against violence and whatever the outcome, have come out stronger at the other end. Through this sharing, we hope to inspire others to take the first step



Protector Or Perpetrator?

fight of a 12 year-old child against her father

When Child Welfare Committee (CWC) introduced Megha to the Rahat cell at Majlis, she appeared like any other 12 year old girl. There was one thing though which set her apart from the other kids; her eyes, which narrated the horror her step-father unleashed on her. She was trembling out of fear and had lost all hope for her future. The man who married Megha's mother after her first husband passed away had vowed to protect Megha and her mother from the evils which are usually thought to be "outside". The marriage however brought Megha closer to danger inside her own home.

Megha lived with her mother and her step-father in a slum in Trombay. She had always been a bright child with an ardent desire to study. One dreadful evening the step-father raped Megha in the quite of their home. He then threatened her with dire consequences and assured her that he would not do it again.

The next day however, he sexually assaulted her again, as the mother had gone out to work. Rajni, their 70 year old neighbor, heard Megha screaming and peeped through the hole of her tin casted door. As she saw him forcing his daughter down on the floor she gathered everyone from the community by creating a ruckus which finally put pressure on the step-father and he let go of the girl.

A trembling Megha was then calmed down by the locals. As she narrated the incident, they decided something had to be done. Rajni took action and lodged an FIR with the local police station. As Megha was a minor, the case was referred to CWC who then asked Majlis to get involved. The strong and detailed statement given by Rajni armed us with a strong possibility of conviction. Megha was then sent to a shelter home as going back home would be traumatizing and unsafe for her.

Majlis understood something was wrong when Megha went missing from the shelter home and they realized that her mother had registered a wrong address. We put excessive pressure on the police to find Megha who was found and brought in front of the CWC. She was then sent to a private shelter home.

Megha is 14 years old now and goes to school every day. She loves her trips and picnics with her friends. She came from a Tamil medium school and is now studying in a Marathi medium one. Despite the difficulties in transition, her care takers have been surprised at Megha's speed and intellect.

Following Megha's case from the beginning we got the opportunity to see a violated child to grow more positive and hopeful every day. After regular visits by our representatives, she got comfortable with us and told us how her life has changed and how she enjoys the life she has now. During one of the court dates, a teary eyed Megha expressed her desire to go back home to her mother. We assured her this would happen soon.

This case was triumphed by CWC who took immediate cognizance and intervened when it was absolutely necessary; by our representatives at Majlis who supported the child until and even after she regained her strength; by Rajni who stood strong and gave an unshakable witness, but most of all by Megha who kept her desire to learn even after facing severe violence and turbulence at a young age.