

# **FEM-WB New Members (Mentors) Training Report**

**Date: 04<sup>th</sup> July and 05<sup>th</sup> July 2017**

**Venue: Seva Kendra, Kolkata (WB)**

## **Day - 1 (4 July 2017)**

Partha from Jeevika gave an introduction of the importance of engaging men in women's rights and how it can be included within the work that each organisation was already doing. Women had been aware of these issues due to gender sensitisation programs with them but in the meanwhile men had fallen back and a need was felt for engaging "perpetrators" of patriarchy.

Facilitator asked everyone to make a circle and divided them according to -

- Number of years they had been working with their organisation
- Those who are married and unmarried
- Those who had either received or given gender training to others
- Who have heard about 'Ek Saath' campaign before coming to the training

This helped form an understanding of the awareness of the participants about issues related to gender training.

## **Why need to work with men and boys -**

Facilitator added that when training women the aim is empowerment whereas for men it is sensitisation; otherwise there isn't much difference between the two. The final aim is not only to create an understanding of gender based discrimination and women empowerment but also achieve social justice. During their work on women empowerment they observed that the women that they trained faced greater violence at home as men felt threatened by women who had started raising their voice. This led to a realisation of the need to engage men as they are also socialised according to gender norms. Violence and discrimination is not prevalent among all men and the aim was to find those men who are silent. These men are to be trained as 'samanata saathi'. He highlighted that Ek Saath is not a project but a campaign. The need is to make men realise how they too are victims of patriarchy.

## **About the Campaign -**

Kakuli Deb gave an introduction of the Ek Saath campaign in West Bengal. The work had begun in 2015 with Parichiti and Swayam and later by Jeevika. In 2016 they joined CHSJ to create a network at the national level. Addressing a question raised about the inclusion of other gender by a participant, she said that it was a recurring query. However, during their work they had realised that if they spoke of more than two genders to the men at the very beginning they would often get confused. So it was best to begin with simpler ideas which they were most used to. After some progress in this aspect other gender can be introduced in the conversations. The name of the network was also selected in a democratic manner and was chosen as the word 'Ek Saath' would be able to include all categories of marginalisation. The campaign was open not only to organisations, academicians and clubs but also to anyone who is interested in the issue. The next step is to create mentors and several organisations had identified 'Samanta Sathi' in the past six months. The organisations under the campaign had also received printed material such as caps and postcards which are to be given to the male community group members. This has to be

included within the existing work of the organisations to make it sustainable. The ‘Samanta Sathi’ will be men who will not only bring change to their own lives but also influence their peer groups and community members to change.

**Gender and Sex –**

Facilitator conducted a word game where two words ‘chele’ (boy/ male) and ‘meye’ (girl/ female) were given at random to each participant. The participants had to give the first word that came to their mind first when they heard either ‘boy’ or ‘girl’. The words that the participants gave were written in two columns.

Boy/ Male	Girl/ Female
One who works outside, Responsible, Penis, Hero, absolute power, ruler, masculine, beard and moustache, capable of working, powerful.	Beauty, self-sacrifice, vagina, bound, softness, housework, shame, educated, adjusting, womb, toleration, breast, revolt, caregiver, birth giver, mother, long hair.

Facilitator said that among the words that the participants gave most were applicable to both male and female. The ones which were exclusive were vagina, penis, womb, breast, giving birth and, beard. From this exercise there were two concepts that emerged: sex and gender. Sex (ling) is that which is given at birth and is exclusive to each sex ie. sexual organs and hormone produced features such as penis, vagina, beard, breasts, etc. However, gender is socially constructed. Sex is biological and gender is social and constructed. This constructed image which is created by society leads to gender stereotypes and binaries. There is a need to break from these stereotypes as under patriarchy what doesn’t fit into the stereotypes is not accepted. Sex at birth is of three types: male, female and intersex. But gender should be seen as a way of expressing the self which should be seen as a line with male and female as two poles and one can lie anywhere on it. Gender stereotypes are dependent on the context of the society and time we live in. Gender one connects to can also change according to time and space.

Facilitator illustrated how sex is determined through a combination of X and Y chromosomes. If a baby is wrapped in a towel there is no way one can understand its sex without looking at the sexual parts. Throughout the world sex is the same but gender norms changes according to the context of time and culture. To illustrate how gender stereotypes are ingrained in our subconscious mind he asked the participants questions to which they had to answer whether it is gender or sex based. He gave the statement ‘Bache ko sirf maa hi doodh pila sakti hain’ (only mother can feed milk to the child). It is based on gender as it wasn’t mentioned that the child is breastfed.

He then told a story about a maindak (male frog) and maindaki (female frog) where they live in a house in which a snake enters and one goes under the chair another jumps onto it. The snake chases them further and both flee from there and break a door to escape them. Most of the participants guessed that the ‘maindak’ (male frog) jumped higher and broke the door. Facilitator said that a gender balanced answer would have been “neither of the two” whereas choosing the male over female revealed gender bias. He gave another situation where a reynard (male fox) and vixen (female fox) where happily walking down a road. They go into a restaurant and eat and make merry. By the time they leave it is almost 1 PM. The participants were asked what the relation between the reynard and vixen was and most of

the participants replied that they were boyfriend and girlfriend. This too revealed a certain bias towards the hegemonic ideas of gender relations.



This was followed by two games to refresh the participants and create alertness. Facilitator gave another situation where he drew a picture of three pieces of fish – head, middle and tail. This was to be divided by the participants among the husband, wife and child. Some participants gave the head to the husband, middle to the child and tail to the wife. One participant said that preference should be given according to the need, thus the child should be given priority. Facilitator extended the situation and added that if the father in law comes back home who will have to give up the fish. The unanimous answer was that the wife would have to give it up. However, if the father in law felt that his health got better after eating the fish then the husband would be praised and if the child got sick the wife would be blamed. Thus our society is structured in a manner that though the wife works hard and cooks she is the one who receives the least benefits and is blamed the most.

### **Equity and Equality -**

Facilitator explained the difference between the concepts of 'Samata' (equity) and 'Samanta' (equality). If two contexts are different then equality which doesn't take the context in account will not produce equal results. Equity is when the context is kept in mind and the work is done in a way that there is equality in the outcome. Action should be equity based and result should be equality. To bring forward marginalised sections equity has to be followed so that there is equality and social justice. As, the desire is equality in outcome the men engaged in women's rights are called 'Samanata Saathi' (samatarsaathi in Bengali). For men to become 'Samanata Saathi' they must enter the kitchen and share the same responsibilities that women have. This discussion was followed by a word game where the word gender was written and the various body parts related to each of the gender binaries (male and female) were written down. This was followed by two games to re-energise the participants. One was of producing a strange noise and throwing it at another participant who would catch (reproduce) it and produce a new strange noise. This next was a game called 'Bolbhaikitne – Aapkahojitne'.



### **Masculinity -**

The concepts of masculinity and femininity were given to the participants. The participants were asked to define masculinity through words which they associated with the concept. The participants gave the words:

**Masculinity-** Strength, grave, dominant, physical, violent, ruler, sexual control, braver, wealthy, self-centred, difficult, independent.

The Thesaurus too defines 'masculinity' in similar terms. These terms try to create an ideal of masculinity and define the perfect man. The society too tries to teach us through the same framework. Masculinity is a concept or process which feeds the idea of gender and has certain adjectives attached to it. Patriarchy attempts to teach that men are better and women are lesser than men. Patriarchy is maintained through masculinity and the ideas related to it. When there is creation of an ideal there is also creation of an 'other' against which the ideal is posited and defined. The creation of discriminatory norms leads to marginalisation and further bias against the other. The work of the participants is to challenge these ideals which are given by society. However, in reality masculinity is not limited to this ideal and there is another side to it. The given ideal is called 'hegemonic masculinity' and the other characteristics of masculinity do not find space here. The questions are who actually fits in to this given ideal and are those who don't fit in the ideal not men. Thus, there are several masculinities which are beyond the hegemonic masculinity. Patriarchy can be propagated by both men and women and it is a way of acquiring and exercising power. Facilitator asked why there is a need to discuss masculinity. One participant said that it is to understand masculinities beyond the ideal. Another participant said that "it puts pressure on men as well and it would help to understand gender."



Facilitator explained that though patriarchy is often viewed by women's movements as putting men in a more powerful position. Though this view is true it also tends to marginalise men who don't fit into the ideals of hegemonic masculinity. The qualities that were given under masculinity are all related to control and power. Patriarchy thus needs the cadre of masculinity to survive and gain power. But a large number of men and women fall outside it. Much work has been done to sensitise women but not much to sensitise those who hold the power. There are also men who don't support it overtly but remain silent in the face of patriarchy. Patriarchy also dehumanises men and there is a need to show an alternative to them. Rahul commented that the media too propagates this idea of masculinity. The idea of hero prevalent in the media is problematic as the hero is portrayed as larger than life and capable of doing everything. This role of media is because it is a part of society and is guided by the same structural divisions and gender norms. Facilitator spoke about three forms of masculinities that exist in our society -aggressive, dominant and cultural. These are based on gender as it is a social construct and even women can be proponents of patriarchy and can also display masculinity. He sang a song "Larko aur mardo ko samjhae tab bhagegi hinsa .....unki bhi kamar lachke tab bhagegi hinsa". This defines the work that trainers have to do.

Three groups were made consisting of two men and two women each. The men's group were asked to arm wrestle and the women's group asked to hold each other hands tightly. The third group was given a banana each and they were asked to eat it without folding their arms. A fourth group was called when the third couldn't eat the banana and they were successful in the task as they fed it to each other instead of trying to have it themselves. This game was used to illustrate the concept of power. He asked the first two groups why they didn't leave the others hand. This need to maintain control is play of power. The fourth group had illustrated how power could be used to help each other and lead to equality. Facilitator added that when people are aware of the discrimination they would be able to construct solutions themselves.

Facilitator spoke about four categories of power:

- Power over – which is exploitative and seeks to dominate others.
- Power to – helping others and leading to empowerment i.e. giving power to others.
- Power with – it can be both positive and negative depending on the use. In its positive sense it is moving towards equity in solidarity.

- Power within – is providing information to someone so as to empower them and helping them find the power within themselves.

The participants were asked what could be the various sources of power. They said – knowledge, money, fearlessness, caste, position, and, gender (male). Facilitator said that the ‘SS’ have to be those who are in the category of ‘power to’ and ‘power within’ whereas those who fall in ‘power over’ can’t be viewed as ‘SS’. The withdrawal of power from men is important to change the power structure and status quo in society. However, convincing men to give up their power and privilege is challenging. Thus, they must be made to realise how patriarchy ultimately leads to a loss for them.

### **Regional Masculinity and its impact on men and women-**

All the participants were divided into three groups and each was given a subject – Group 1 was asked to write on the ideals of masculinity found in their culture/ region (regional masculinity), group 2 on how masculinity affects men, and, group 3 on how masculinity affect women. Each group wrote their points in chart papers which they presented to the other participants.

<b>Group 1 – Regional Masculinity</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government job</li> <li>• Well educated</li> <li>• Tall and lean bodied</li> <li>• Responsible</li> <li>• One who consumes addictive substances</li> <li>• Dadagiri</li> <li>• Organising social events</li> <li>• Political power/ political party membership</li> <li>• Intelligent</li> <li>• Economic wellness</li> <li>• Sports</li> <li>• Display of power</li> <li>• Risk taker/ risky driving</li> </ul>

<b>Group 2 – Effect of Masculinity on Men</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not allowed to express emotions</li> <li>• Substance abuse</li> <li>• Risky behaviour</li> <li>• Violent behaviour</li> <li>• Forced to become decision makers</li> <li>• Negative impact on social relations</li> <li>• Loss of self-respect due to inability to meet the ideals</li> <li>• Suicide</li> <li>• Depression</li> </ul>

<b>Group 3 – Effect of Masculinity on Women</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early marriage</li> <li>• Lack of ability to acquire higher education</li> </ul>

- Early Pregnancy
- Female infanticide and foeticide
- Sexual harassment at work place
- Inability to work due to harassment
- Dowry death
- Domestic violence
- Sexual violence and harassment
- Mental, physical, emotional and economical exploitation.



The third group illustrated their points through three small skits. The first was of a young girl who is keen to study further but is forced to get married early by her parents. This leads to early pregnancy and she is forced to abort her child as the foetus was a female. It highlighted practices such as child marriage and gender based sex selection. The second skit showed sexual harassment at work place where a woman employee is forced to give in to the advances of the boss to save her job. The third was on the subject of 'men don't cry'. The final one was on harassment and violence due to dowry demand.

### Day - 2 (5 July 2017)

The second day session began with a recapitulation of the discussions of the first day. The participants were asked about issues and concepts that they felt needed further exploration. Facilitator said that the idea of women internalising patriarchy and masculinity was new to her and would want to know more about it. Ankita asked about the concept of power withdrawal and ways in which the ground of patriarchy can be broken. She gave the example of how that very morning while she was coming to the training she faced verbal sexual harassment and how one could change the situation. Anuja said that she drives a scooty and once when she overtook a bike the male pillion

rider said to the bike rider “Dekh ladki ne tujhe piche chor diya” (Look a girl overtook you). She wanted to know whether by crossing the bike she was promoting patriarchy or masculinity.

As the idea of patriarchy seemed unclear to the participants Facilitator explained the concept as “a system, concept or philosophy which says that the position of men is higher than women.” Patriarchy is completely fed by power and whoever has power dominates the system. Usually the power is in the hands of male. But the whole society works to maintain the system. The system and related concepts are ingrained through socialisation and it is called masculinity, there are several masculinities and that which is most dominant is called hegemonic masculinity. Facilitator added that we have a conscious and unconscious part in our mind. Several ideas are fed to men and women through patriarchy and silence on the part of women propagates patriarchy further. These myths have to be broken among ‘SS’. But one must begin from home. The message is not to answer violence with violence. The aim of the campaign is to change the environment of the society which is becoming increasingly violent. The work is to explore whether those who are part of the problem be made part of the solution. The problem is on both side and society has connected sexuality and honour in such a manner that even women have internalised it. He added that in the gender politics for power men have a dominant role and this is displayed by certain characteristics such as – moral authority in the hands of men, privileges such as property rights, control over women’s reproductive capacity, decision making power, head of family, etc. There is a vertical stratification of society where all social institutions are controlled by men.

Facilitator said that ‘pitrasata’ (patriarchy) is the root and it is important to be aware of one’s history to understand how patriarchy emerged and created practices such as women wearing sindoor and bangles. Patriarchy controls through language which women also find acceptable and uses words such as– ‘naitikta’ (morality), ‘vishwas’ (belief), ‘manyata’ (honour/ acceptance) and ‘paap-punya’ (sin and good deed). Men must be told that though they have privilege they also face a greater risk under patriarchy. The message to the ‘SS’ should not be that they are helping women. It should rather be that the men are helping themselves. The need is to change the norms not reject the institutions. He told the story of Babli who was angry and refused to go to school. When her brother came home from playing outside he asked for a glass of water and she curtly refused him. Facilitator asked a male participant why Babli behaved that way but he failed to answer. One of the female participants replied that it was because Babli had her period. Facilitator pointed that when the question was asked to men on the streets of Delhi even the most educated men failed to answer it correctly.

### **Social construction of inequality and masculinity -**

This was followed by a game called power walk where the participants were made to stand in a straight line. Each was given a chit with a character whose role they had to play. They were given certain situations and had to either step forwards or go backwards according to whether the character they were playing would be able to fair well or not. The power walk helped the participants understand cross-sectional nature of marginalisation. Though the ‘SS’ won’t be women but they must include men from diverse sections of society. The importance of understanding the context in policy making for those who are marginalised was reiterated by facilitator. He said that any

training has three parts– knowledge, awareness and skill. Change can come only through understanding and awareness which leads to a change in the lens with which one views the world. Only providing information can't lead to change. Skills need to be provided to the mentors so that they know how to interact and inspire the 'SS'. Only when the mentor becomes a role model can they hold their own in a debate with the 'SS'.

The discussion was followed by screening of two clips from 'Satyameva Jayate' where Kamala Bhasin speaks about the concept of masculinity and the need to work with men.

### **Discussion on the structure of the network and roles and responsibility of the Mentors**

The participants were asked what would be their role and responsibility as mentors. They said that a mentor is one who guides, advises, shows the path, helps develop skills, creates awareness, and, is informed and unbiased.

The structure of the Ek Saath campaign was explained to the participants where the secretariat at the national level was CHSJ. Each state would run its own campaign and in each state there would be a state hub and a coordination committee. The grass root work with 'SS' would not be done by CHSJ. The organisations at state level would collect data on the 'SS' and maintain contact with them. The 'SS' would have to be between 18 to 45 years of age ideally and all would have to be men. They must be trustworthy men. Becoming a 'SS' is not limited to only those associated with the development sector; members of civil society too can become a part of it. It should be kept in mind that at least 100 'SS' should be from the same district or region. The organisations must be in constant touch with them as they may have several doubts and questions and as mentors they should be present to guide them. After collection of data on 'SS' would come awareness creation, capacity building and change story. Under data there should be – name, age, occupation and contact number.

### **Expected Roles and responsibility of the mentors which has been discussed outlined as below:**

- Creating database of potential 'samanatakesathis'
- Giving potential 'samanatakesathis' information about the campaign through direct or indirect contact.
- Providing support to the 'samanatakesathis' in case of any backlash faced during his work in the community.
- Let everyone in the organisation and areas of work know about the EkSaath Campaign.
- Understand the program material and help the 'samanatakesathis' understand it.
- Update the work done on social media and Facebook so that it reaches the secretariat.
- Communication and coordination with Respective state hub about organizational activities as well as network related activities.

A 'To Do' list was created at the end of the program and is as below:

- All organisations are to send the database of 'samanatakesathis' by 7<sup>th</sup> August to the state hub (Parichiti). This would have to be sent to CHSJ by 15<sup>th</sup> August.
- Addition of three new organisations to the google group and creation of a whatsapp group.

- Organisations are to send an email with the amount of printed material needed by them.
- Organisations are to send the form for mapping of organisations to state hub (Parichiti) by 15<sup>th</sup> July.
- If any organisation does capacity building with their mentors and needs Kakuli Deb from the state hub to be present then she can go to the workshop.



**Resource Person:**

1. Mr Jagdish Lal, CHSJ, New Delhi
2. Mr Partha Dey, Jeevika- Kolkata
3. Mr Kausik Hore, Prantokotha- Kolkata
4. Kakuli Day, Parichiti- Kolkata

**Annexure I: List of Participant**

Sl. No	Organization	Name of the Participant	Phone Number	E-Mail
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3	Parichiti	Surajit Mahapatra	801615419	<a href="mailto:surajit92wb@gmail.com">surajit92wb@gmail.com</a>
4	Parichiti	Sourav Majumder	9051927500	<a href="mailto:souravadi@outlook.com">souravadi@outlook.com</a>
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24	Parichiti	Kakuli Deb		