



Sākshi

EQUALITY IS INCLUSIVENESS

ANNUAL REPORT FY. 2017-2018

www.sakshi.org.in

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| SAKSHI

Sakshi, a capacity building organization, pioneered work on Gender, Equality and Responsible Sexuality in India in 1992. Through Research, Advocacy, Publications & Campaigns – Sakshi has been the backbone for Judicial Education on Gender Equality in the Asia Pacific Region, and has informed several laws including POSH, POCSO, JJ Act & Sexual Assault Bill.

| VISION & MISSION

Sakshi strives to make equality a reality for vulnerable groups by empowering youth, women, children, and marginalized groups, focussing on diversity & inclusiveness, gender & sexual rights, mental health & hygiene, peaceful coexistence and leadership through offline experiential learning initiatives and online immersive learning portals.

| FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S DESK

In 2015 we completed our tryst with the POSH Act, when we completed the guidelines for the Ministry of Women and Child Government of India and it was finally uploaded on the website. We had poured decades of learning and understanding into that document. We had protested against the blind spots, had country wide consultations, across industries and workplaces to gather the experience and lived realities of those who were either living through the indignity of workplace sexual harassment or had devoted their lives to addressing it, preventing it, stopping it or redressing it. We had collated all that with our experience and expertise and tried to mitigate some of the blind spots inherent in the Act, by positioning the guidelines from a principle of Do No Harm. We won some, we lost some. The guidelines were completed, uploaded, and we were depleted.



2016 was a year when we surfaced to take cognizance of what else was happening in the world. We picked up the strings of our work. Again. Slowly. We went back to spaces that nurtured our spirit. The work we did with the educators, youth, and children, educating and informing and building capacity through experiential pedagogy, which included adventure sports, theatre, and films. We worked with girls from Kasturba Gandhi Maha Vidyalay, we worked with about 20 NGOs who supported children from difficult circumstances, and street connected children who had dislocated from their family units, we worked with about a 100 schools in Delhi NCR, we worked with teachers in Bijapur and Dantewada, we worked with youth across colleges in Delhi and NCR and Bihar. And everywhere we went we were once again faced with how little each of these populations knew about or lived their constitutional rights. The cycle of sexual violence was the norm and the acts of micro aggression that underpinned it were unrecognized. It was time to go back to the drawing board. To reconsider the position, we were standing at since what we are able to see depends entirely on where we stand. We could no longer continue to take the position of having completed our share of the work, of having worked for legal frameworks, of having worked for bringing in the relevance of social context in interpretation of the legal frameworks. We needed to go back to the drawing board.

And so started this year. 2017. We went back to the genesis of Sakshi. We had come into existence in response to a case of custodial sexual assault of a minor girl, when the sentence of two policemen had been reduced, because the minor was found to be of questionable character.

That was in 1992. This was 2017.

In the ensuing years, we had managed to file two PIL's, influence 4 laws, run a gender equality education programme with judiciary in five countries, worked on rules, regulations, and guidelines for POSH, created award winning, behaviour change communications.

It was time to go back to the drawing board and work out our next course of action to interrupt the cycle of violence. It was time to go back to where the cycle begins.

Child Sexual Abuse.

SMITA BHARTI
Executive Director



| CHARTING THE COURSE FOR 2017 - 2027

The year 2017 -18 has been spent on designing the future course of action for Sakshi.

Sakshi Board and Leadership took a conscious step back. Sakshi team was advised to not take on any projects and concentrate on designing the path for the next ten years.

‘To interrupt the cycle of sexual violence, we needed to begin with child sexual abuse.’

This was the first decision taken by the team.

We took the study conducted by the Ministry of Women and Child Development in 2007 as our base, which revealed that 53 percent of all children interviewed faced some sort of sexual abuse, with 21 percent having faced severe abuse. Boys and girls accounted for 53 percent and 47 percent of the children reporting abuse respectively.

According to it, since 90% of all child sexual abuse happens by people of trust, we had to realize that homes may not be safe for 50% of our children. We also knew from our work history that sexual violence at home does not occur in a vacuum — there is social, cultural and political context to such instances of violence.

The starting point for us was then to conceptualize child sexual abuse as a product of a patriarchal society that is then compounded by the powerlessness of children. This view allowed us to see child sexual abuse from the position of the child within the social context of their family members, who is unaware of rights or the law, leaving them susceptible to harm. It also allowed us to use an intersectional feminist approach to CSA that foregrounds age, recognizing children as structurally unequal and subjected to control and dominance by adults.

| CHARTING THE COURSE FOR 2017 - 2027

If, ***Every child has a right to childhood***. The concept of 'childhood' is defined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989 as healthy children in school and at play, free from fear, safe from violence, protected from abuse and exploitation. "Vulnerable" children are defined as those whose safety, well-being and development are threatened with major dangers including 'lack of care and affection, adequate shelter, education, nutrition, and psychological support'" (World Bank, 2004, p.1).

If, ***'Child Protection' in India implies protecting every right of children*** against social, psychological and emotional insecurity by preventing all forms of violence, exploitation, neglect and abuse against them including commercial sexual exploitation, trafficking, child labour and harmful home-based violence.

If, ***The Citizen's Charter of National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR)*** declares its service commitment to excellence in promoting and protecting the rights of children in India. Protecting children from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation is everybody's responsibility.

Then the onus and responsibility to prevent child sexual abuse rested on the adult community. Not on the child. The focus had to be prevention and not protection, and the site to be empowered was identified as the family unit. But the biggest question was do we perforate the family unit in a systemic manner.

Denial, silence, shame and stigma are the four gatekeepers that keep child sexual abuse within the families and trusted circle contained and unaddressed. Couple this with lack of information, and limited access to justice, and the ensuing landscape was indeed depressing.

We realized that to develop effective strategies and policies to fight back against child sexual abuse, it was important to define and understand the problem. The difficulty in measuring sexual violence within the site of the family made it near impossible to gather data and execute appropriate strategies, policies, and laws that can help prevent and/or counter it. We knew that children are at risk because of gaps in infrastructure, processes and systems, as well as inadequacy of guardians. We knew about SDG 2030 goals. We knew that the indicator for SDG 16.2.3 was the missing children, those children who were outside the family unit. We saw that the conversation was not spotlighting these children who were unsafe while living within the family unit. We knew that 50% of the cases are unaddressed. That unaddressed trauma can lead to loss of productivity in adult life. That it was time we recognized the impact of the harm and worked towards resolving it. And we needed to bring it all together in the design of the programme we wanted to roll out.

But first, we wanted to acquire the courage to say it aloud. 'It is possible to stop child sexual abuse. It is possible to prevent child sexual abuse within the families and the communities.' Once we articulated the big hairy goal for ourselves, we got down to strategy.

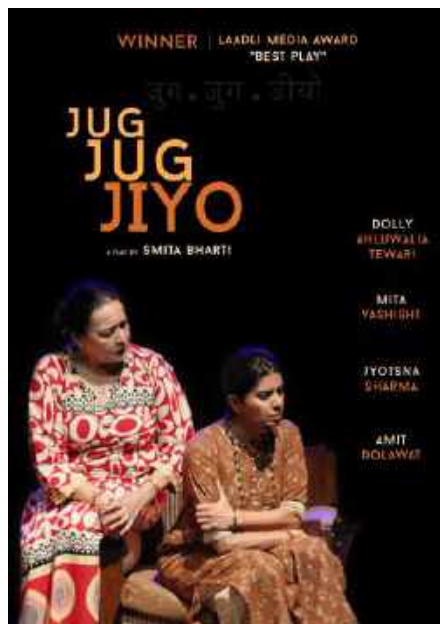
| SYSTEMIC INTERVENTION : PROTECTION OR PREVENTION

It is non-negotiable for the state and other duty bearers, including families and communities, to put robust systems and processes in place to assess, prevent and eliminate the risks. We wanted to roll out the programme with the government as a major stake holder for scale and reach. But we also wanted to reach out to the families in a systemic manner.

The two Ministries we approached were The Ministry of Women and Child, Government of India and Ministry of Youth and Sports Affairs, Government of India. The strategic approach being explored with both were different. With the MoWCD, the strategy was to reach out to the Integrated Child Protection Systems in each state and District and enable and empower the mechanism in place. With the MoYAS, the strategy was to educate the youth volunteers who had signed up for the NSS, to become message carriers, who would further educate their families to prevent child sexual abuse. The first one was about strengthening the protection mechanism set in place. The second was to initiate a proactive mindset for prevention, starting by addressing the root causes for child sexual abuse.

| ACTIONS TAKEN

- Architecture for both strategies was created, and detailed.
 - Presentations were made and proposals submitted to both the Ministries.
 - Course content for both approaches were crafted and drafted.
 - Test workshops were implemented for both the Ministries.
 - Network of implementing partners were identified, aligned and capacity built to the programme approach.
- **Jug Jug Jiyo**, an award-winning play on root causes of gender based was staged for communities and main stream audiences.
 - **Amavas se Amaltas**, a theatre production framing the intersection of children in difficult circumstances with law and society was staged for mainstream audiences.



| CONCLUSION

With increased detailing of the course of action, it became clearer, that Sakshi was leaning towards working with the Youth on the preventive approach for addressing child sexual abuse. The Youth-led programme was given a name, The Rakshin Project. Rakshin was a new word coined to stand for a person who committed to preventing harm ie child sexual abuse. The interaction with MoYAS has increased, for getting a partnership for The Rakshin Project. Sakshi has charted its path for the next ten years. The coming 10 years are going to be about realizing this mission. 2017-2018 has been a year of envisioning and Blue-Sky Thinking, supported by donations by well-wishers of Sakshi.

| ANNEXURE: THE RAKSHIN PROJECT ARCHITECTURE

Recognizing that violence begins at home, the Rakshin Project is dedicated to addressing Child Sexual Abuse within the context of the home. The young adults participating in The Rakshin Project will be equipped to lead conversations around prevention of sexual violence, create safe spaces for disclosure, and secure the child in instances of abuse within their families and communities.

These young adults will have the capacity to perforate the family unit, and facilitate conditions for community accountability in responding to the harm of sexual violence. Since 90% of perpetrators of child sexual abuse are known to the child, Each Teach Two, an intervention is conceptualized for the program, for the young adult participating in The Rakshin Project, to educate an older and younger person within the family on the topic of child sexual abuse. This will create a network within the family, wherein the younger family member will be informed on the issues of consent, personal boundaries and bodily autonomy, and equipped with the knowledge that there is an adult in the family who is informed about reporting and resolution mechanisms, if and when there is an instance of sexual abuse.

The Rakshin Project will have three pillars: Education and Skill Building, Resolution Mechanisms for Cultivating Resilience and Sustained Engagement. The action practitioner approach will be designed to impact knowledge, attitude and practice of the participating youth.

The **education intervention** will dismantle structural inequalities that perpetuate a culture of rape and entitlement, and will enable the participants to unlearn internalised narratives surrounding sexual abuse to prevent them from enacting or being complicit in sexual violence against others, thus interrupting and preventing a cycle of violence.

Skill building around behavioural tools to build safe spaces, deescalate conflict, and build a culture of accountability, will provide students with analytical skills to contextualise the experience of sexual violence, empathize with the abused, open up conversation on child sexual abuse, and then critically analyze factors contributing to gendered violence within the context of patriarchal family unit, typically seen as a “private issue”.

The **resolution mechanisms** of counselling, legal advice and creative expressions will shift the understanding about sexual abuse impact on mental health, and assist survivors towards healing, resolution of unaddressed trauma and resilience building.

Sustained engagement will tackle denial and stigma associated with child sexual abuse by creating opportunities to centre victim/survivor’s needs and integrity, humanise and validate their experiences by a) believing them, b) reassuring them that it was not their fault, c) ensuring that they have access to resources and a safe space. Silence and shame is tackled by destigmatising the narratives surrounding sexual abuse and emphasising that the abuser is always at fault regardless of context, and that the victim/survivor is entitled to care, empathy and resolution.

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