



23 July 2011

Workshop on Women's Legal Rights

Report

On the 23 July Renu Chauhan, the manager of Sambhali Trust organised a workshop for the Sambhali participants on their legal rights. It was lead by a sub-inspector from the city of Jodhpur, Mr. Satya Prakash.

The workshop lasted more than 2,5hours as Mr. Satya Prakash turned out to be a very good speaker and he managed to win the girls' and women's trust immediately.

Mr. Satya Prakash started with trying to get the girls to speak in his presence by encouraging them to describe themselves who they were – women, girls, mothers, sisters, daughters. At first reluctant, none of the girls would speak in his presence. But due to Mr. Satya Prakash charisma some girls – Jyoti, Guddi, Bhavna – started to speak out.

Mr. Satya Prakash presented the girls with the idea of the injustice going on between women and men in Indian society. How from the beginning girls are devoid of choice in their life – they are pulled out of school – despite their constitutional right to education – they are often forced to marry, to have children, they are punished for having daughters and not sons. He drew a chart of the ages girls and boys do different things in life – and how usually girls have to suffer much earlier, deprived of their childhood, they are forced to grow up.

Mr. Satya Prakash told the girls about the Protection of Women Against Domestic Violence Act 2005. He told them how it is against the law for their family to force them to do anything. It is also illegal and they should report if they feel at any time insulted, humiliated, ridiculed or called names for any reason. That



domestic violence extends from physical to verbal and psychological.

Mr. Satya Prakash also mentioned how girls and women are often deprived of their rightful property. How men usually inherit everything despite the fact that women are legally entitled to their share.

The participants were also informed that the legal age for them to get married is 18 years old.

Mr. Satya Prakash asked the girls various questions about their opinion as well. He asked whether they thought that the present, largely oppressed, state of women is their fault or men's or both. Two women said it is the fault of women – that they have done it to themselves by agreeing and never protesting to such conditions and then perpetuating such behaviour among their offspring. Some women said it is the men's fault and majority said it was fault of both men and women.

In conclusion it was a very informative and important meeting. Many participants had no idea about the many protective aspects of the Indian Law. To hear this information from a man was also very encouraging and had a much bigger impact than if the workshop was conducted by a female volunteer. The fact that the policeman was so approachable, communicative and with a sense of humour also was a positive matter. The moment he joked that because his wife is a n inspector and therefore higher than him, and that it is him who has to make the in the morning, definitely made many participants aware of how relations between men and women can be different.

