



## **EMPOWERING WOMEN IN WPC**

YMCA INTERNATIONAL, MUMBAI

27th-28th September 2023



### **Present:**

1. Aarathi Pai
2. Bhakti Vardham
3. Chinmayi Naik
4. Divya Varma
5. Gayathri
6. Gayatri Singh
7. Jaya Velankar
8. Meena Menon
9. Meena Seshu
10. Priyakshi Gogoi
11. Rukmini VP
12. Shruti
13. Shweta Damle
14. Mini Mathews
15. Rukiya Bhen Jat
16. Yasmin Mulla
17. Laxmi
18. Sulekha Rane
19. Arehana Sharma
20. Muskan Kumari
21. Preeti
22. Vinita Balakundri
23. Ishita Mukhopadhyay
24. Dr Shaila Ansari
25. Harshada Kane

### **Day 1: 27th September 2023, Wednesday**

#### **1. Introduction of participants - Challenges of women leaders and activists in labour organisations**

- a. Participants shared their experiences and story in the introduction
- b. Introductions brought out main issues and challenges faced by women leaders and activists, Such as:
  - i. Patriarchy within trade unions
  - ii. Violence against Women
  - iii. Sexual harassment
  - iv. Reproductive health and birth control
  - v. Backlash from members within organisation
  - vi. What is consent?
  - vii. Financial stability and education
  - viii. Ratification ILO 190 C convention
  - ix. Issues faced by single earner households for women

#### **2. Context setting: Women in WPC - Meena Menon & Meena Seshu**

- a. Meena Menon shared her experiences from Feminist movement and the women workers movement. She mentioned that both the movements had found congruence on fighting patriarchy and challenging patriarchy.
- b. When women leaders used to raise voices in the workers struggles, she was always subject to character assassination. It was very difficult for a Woman to involve and raise voice in workers struggles.
- c. She gave an example on how the movement of Bar Girls created conflict in the workers movement on the question of whether to consider them as workers? When Datta Iswalkar took a stand to support the Bar girls movement, there was pushback from workers from the unions.
- d. When we are fighting against the patriarchy, we will also face such pushback from our organisation itself.

### **3. Relationship between women's movement and labour movement - Facilitated by Jaya Velenkar**

- a. Jaya shared her experience of working with women's movement and labour movement such as, Maitrini and establishing Stri-Watch - Feminist Publication.
- b. She raised that still in Politburo, we are not able to raise issues faced of women within organisations and workplace
- c. Strong emergence of right wing agendas have made the situation more complicated to take the feminist movement and progressive movement forward. Women and Transperson voices are now shut down.
- d. We should focus on Autonomy from State, Funding and Men
- e. 4 main focus areas were presented by Jaya
  - i. Awareness, conscience raising and resolution training on 'Violence against Women within WPC organisations -
    1. sexual, mental, structural and physical - need to push and strengthen our own organisation/unions -
    2. Trade unions also are cautious and they don't want to touch this issue
    3. Starting dialogues using the the law on Sexual Harassment in Workplace
    4. Meena Seshu mentioned that we need to make it compulsory also in Trade Unions and not just in workplace
  - ii. Women leadership - Knowledge and information in mainstream workers movement
    1. Women are usually at the backfoot as they are raised in the Particiarchy
    2. There is need to challenge this normative environment including young boys and girls within work and home
  - iii. Politicisation of issues of feminist and women workers movements
  - iv. Reproductive rights - Coming out of heteronormative discourse and be sensitive about LBTQ

- f. The discussion also mentioned that we should focus on bringing 50% women leadership in the WPC National Conference in Bengaluru. And 33% women in Executive Committee
  - g. We also need to be sensitive about the issues that are coming from other women in WPC and also from LBTQ+. We should ask ourselves, are they not coming forward or are we not providing them the space?
- 4. Issues and Challenges of women workers - Ishita Mukhopadhaya**
- a. There is a strong women's movement and participation on women in the workforce is also strong but they are not visible
  - b. Where are they? They are scheme or volunteer workers (ASHA, Anganwadi, Yoshoda etc.). They have been successful in raising and achieving their demands
  - c. Workers are in the disguise of care, unpaid and underpaid work even by ILO
  - d. These struggles are sectoral which are not studied or documented properly.
  - e. We need to recognise them
  - f. When unemployment is on the rise, women are the ones who are ill paid in the less skilled jobs
  - g. One example of Bihar, where ASHA workers were given incentives instead of wage, they were successful to demand and get Honorariums
  - h. Similarly in Andaman, anganwadi workers were able to achieve raise in wages
  - i. How did they win?
    - i. If these care, unpaid and underpaid workers stop working, then the production process will collapse
    - ii. Their demands have also transformed and became systemic. 8 hrs of work is not a demand anymore as workers won't be able to survive in this exploitative process
    - iii. They are fighting for bare minimum
  - j. The workers are subject to surveillance by the state. They are doing character assassination of workers if they raise their voices for more than bare minimum
  - k. Now, Patriarchy and exploitation is the apparatus of the State
  - l. Another challenge is recognition. Social reproduction is not Care work
  - m. We need to recall 8th of March for a Joint movement of workers and feminist movement
  - n. We need to get involved in the process of CEDAW shadow report and Special Rapporteur process
5. At the end of day 1, **we formed a group to work** on the suggestions, issues and create a framework and program for 'Women in WPC'. Ishita jee will be advisory to this group. This group will also work on the role and limitations of Women in WPC group.
- a. Divya Varma - Coordinator
  - b. Arthi Pai
  - c. Shruti
  - d. Bhakti
  - e. Rukiya Bhen
  - f. Yasmin

- g. Gayathree
- h. Chinmayi

**Day 2: 28th September 2023, Thursday**

**1. Analysis of the discussion of Day 1 and way forward**

- a. Day 2 started with recollection of Day 1 and introduction of what is WPC
- b. The main discussion was on how the NGO's and unions have a waterdown approach towards POSH guidelines within their own organisations.
- c. Least understanding of the law
- d. The focus from the discussion was following points:
  - i. Deeper analysis of policies related to issues faced by women
  - ii. Politicising the issues through political process of feminist movement
  - iii. Focusing on POSH training with the support of JAGORI
  - iv. Building communication strategy for sharing knowledge, materials, stories and experiences with simplief content
    - 1. Newsletters
    - 2. Blogs on women's issues
    - 3. Communication through whatsapp, facebook and youtube
    - 4. Form a Women in WPC FB page
    - 5.
- e. Few suggestions on Communication:

Content	Format	Platform
Material on Mathura Rape case and law - History and Change	Videos	Whatsapp, FB, Youtube
Sexual Harassment workshops - Self Defence	Workshops with SHGs, primary schools	Training manuals or guides
New Labour codes and its impact on Women	Videos	Whatsapp, FB, Youtube
Why 'Women in WPC'	Video or pamphlet	Whatsapp, FB, Youtube (WPC social media platforms)
Stories of women leaders and activists in WPC	Videos/blogs	Whatsapp, FB, Youtube (WPC social media platforms)
Backlash faced within unions	Blog	
Dissemination of Kamala di's write up - Are rehne do na!!	Posters	(WPC social media platforms)
What is Consent	Video or pamphlet	Whatsapp, FB, Youtube (WPC social media platforms)
Gender Definition	Blog	

ILO 190 C ratification	Campaign	
Women in nontraditional jobs	Video or pamphlet	Whatsapp, FB, Youtube (WPC social media platforms)
Financial stability and education	Workshops	