



## Women's Day 2016 'Ready to Report' Police and Women's Forum



Amnesty International India  
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**I. Objective:**

To organise a dialogue between Bangalore police and 40 women from diverse backgrounds, including members of garment workers unions and domestic violence activists to mark Women’s Day 2016, and to highlight several key issues contributing to underreporting of sexual violence against women.

**II. Profile of participants:**

The participants came from different organisations, and included representation from the Garment Labour Union, Cividep India, Association for Promotion of Social Action (APSA), Samvada and other individual activists.

**III. Summary of the event:**

The event was conducted on 8<sup>th</sup> March, 2016 at Mangala Kalyana Mandapa in Koramangala, from 10am-1pm. At the event, organized by the Karnataka State Police’s ‘Gender Sensitisation Police and People Friendly Project’ and Amnesty International India, working groups comprising women, students and the police responded to a skit performed by Samvada Kandeelu Girls Forum, on harassment at a garment factory, on a public bus and inside a home.



The groups discussed the reasons why official reporting on crimes of sexual violence in India is only 1 per cent, and possible interventions to enable women to report sexual violence. After the group discussion, there was a sharing back from each group, highlighting key points that were raised as a result of the discussions. They focused on some of the recommendations from women on how the attitudes and behaviours of the police could be conducive towards women reporting. This was followed by a response from the IG Training Alok Kumar, responding to the concerns raised by the participants.



#### IV. Group sharing Highlights:

1. Most women said that police do not handle complaints of sexual violence with respect or dignity towards the survivor which needs to change. The presence of a woman police officer to handle such cases should be mandatory.
2. Domestic workers and garment factory workers find it difficult to raise issues of sexual harassment at their work places. They need additional support to raise such issues.
3. Even when uneducated women go the police station, the police should treat them with dignity and be friendly. In the complaint, they should write exactly what she narrates and not add more “stories”.
4. More interaction of the police with the community and collaborations between the police and community based organizations/NGOs will change the quality of interaction between the police and survivors as it exists today.
5. Filing an FIR is usually the last resort for the police officials, especially in case of domestic violence. In most cases, the police would suggest that the issue is resolved within the family or with the help of an NGO.
6. Barriers that women face when reporting sexual violence: Lack of support from family, concerned about reputation in society and at work place, scared about going to the police station, scared about back lash from the community
7. More awareness is required among women about their rights.
8. When a woman shares these issues with the family or the husband, they should help her come to the nearest police station and file a complaint.
9. Mr. Venkatesh, SI from the Yeshwantpur PS said that 99% people do not come to report sexual harassment to the police on their own. It is only when they get the help of an NGO or others that they come to the police station. He said that if women do not come to report to the police, the police will never know what happened to them in that spot.
10. Police response regarding domestic violence: The first solution should be to resolve it within the family by talking to the family members or resorting to counselling. If that is not successful, the police should be approached.

#### Case study:

*A participant shared the story of her neighbour who suffered from domestic violence. Her husband would come home drunk and beat her up every day. When she went to file a complaint to the police station, the policemen refused to take her complaint saying they were busy and asked her to come the next day. The woman was tortured by her husband that night too. She started bleeding after which the neighbours came to her help. Even after that, the husband kept abusing her verbally. The woman out of sheer helplessness hung herself. There was no action by the police in this case\*.*

\* The participant who shared this incident has requested her details and the case to be kept confidential.

#### V. Recommendations from the women participants

- Platforms should be created where women can comfortably talk about issues of sexual violence and other related issues. As women are sometimes scared of going to the police stations, this platform will help women.
- Community policing should be strengthened to reach out to women from lower economic backgrounds.
- The police should prioritize the issue and take appropriate action so that repeat violations are prevented. Even if an FIR cannot be filed, register an official complaint; consider solving through counselling.

- The police should sensitize their officials on treating women with respect when they come to file complaints
- Every mother should give education on sexual violence to children.
- Banners should be put up in public places.

**The women affirmed that survivors coming to register cases need to be treated with dignity. Also a comfortable zone must be created for the women when they come to file a complaint.**

After, this the Inspector General (Training), Alok Kumar responded to the points raised in the discussion. He said, “It is vital for everyone's perception about women victims to change. Enough with shaming or embarrassing a woman for wanting to walk into a police station and file a complaint. The very fact that a victim has the pluck to come forward must be encouraged by both the police and society. Our nine-month training programs and refresher courses for women police constables and other police officers ensures our officials are fully equipped with the knowledge and soft-skills necessary to handle women and child-related crimes.”

This was followed by a reaction from Tara Rao, Programmes Director, Amnesty International India, who highlighted the importance of working in partnership to make Bengaluru a safe city for women. She reaffirmed Amnesty International India’s commitment towards ensuring women can report sexual violence, safely, with dignity and without facing prejudice.

#### **VI. Feedback:**

Alok Kumar (Inspector General)

“It was a very meaningful programme. It was organized well and people from different walks of life participated. From our department, police officials participated and officials of Amnesty organization and volunteers, workers, communities, APSA workers and even Domestic workers association officials also participated. So people from different walks of life came together here and participated in the discussion. So I think wide range of interaction happened and also group discussion led to close interaction among different groups of people. I strongly feel that the interaction happened today here should continue as a collaborative project.”



Kirana (Facilitator)

“I felt very happy to see people from different walks of life came here for the discussion which is very important. Police officials, public, women organization people, media, youth in a single forum!”

#### **VII. About Ready to Report:**

Amnesty International India’s ‘Ready to Report’ campaign aims at deepening this engagement between the community and the police towards enabling women to report sexual violence with safety and dignity. **This is the first of many dialogues for women to talk in safe spaces about their concerns about reporting sexual violence to the police, and for the police to respond. It helps build stronger relationships between the police and women, which we need to make our cities human rights friendly.**