

The Influencer bulletin

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When we welcomed you to the Influencers journey to empower the disempowered, we had promised that your support and voice will enable millions of nameless, faceless women to access social justice and equal opportunity. This issue focuses on the criticality of media in invoking progressive thoughts and positive action in promoting gender justice and brings you updates from our grassroots coalition partners Breakthrough and Majlis. We also bring you stories of justice delivered and redefined trends from Jan Sahas and Kutch Mahila Vikas Sanghatan.

Systemic change for sustainable impact



#RedrawMisogyny - Paying attention to the way news is reported is crucial.

Breakthrough, our NGO partner that works towards facilitating positive gender norms among youth, family and community in two districts of Haryana, draws attention to how reportage of violations is a double edged sword which can vindicate or victimise unless done responsibly.

When reporting about sexual assault, many news outlets tend to engage in victim-blaming and render the survivor/victim as a person without agency in their headlines.

Take this headline in particular - instead of saying "assailant sexually assaults 3-year-old-girl", it states "girl raped" and consequently places the fault on her. Also, the headline is excessively graphic and focuses on what has been violated as opposed to holding the **assailant responsible**.

In the news

Two social media campaigns on women you should know about

Majlis launched two campaigns on its social media - **Happily unmarried**, an online project that urges Indian women to celebrate singlehood and **Project Voice** that explores why survivors take time to speak out.

Happily unmarried is addressed at removing the stigma attached to being an unmarried woman in society.

The larger narrative behind the campaign was to encourage young unmarried girls to make an informed decision, said lawyer Bindiya Rao, a team member. "You often give in to social pressure, like 'you're 30 so you should be married' or 'you're 32 so you should start having children'," said Rao. "There is a particular timetable that is scheduled for women and they are not given a free choice. This project is about letting these girls know that they always do have a choice."

"One of the major reasons why women continue to endure abusive marriages is they fear the stigma associated with being single. So, we wanted to do something to show that being single can be a healthy choice and that marriage should not be put on a pedestal," said Zara, a Majlis volunteer.

Project Voice was begun with the hope that it would, first, encourage other survivors to come forward with their stories of assault or harassment. "We wanted to start this initiative without making anyone feel uncomfortable or coerced into sharing the reason they took time to tell their story, so we spread the word among our social circles about it," added Zara.

Check out **majlis_law** on Instagram.com to see the posts.

#HappilyUnmarried
#UseYourVoice

Access to legal justice

Jan Sahas has been instrumental in raising the spotlight on plight of women and girls involved in caste based prostitution, using various advocacy channels including mainstream media. Jan Sahas' engagement with the media has led to detailed reportage on how minor girls from the Bacchara caste in Madhya Pradesh are forced into caste-sanctioned prostitution; work that had spurred the Madhya Pradesh State police department instructing its 320 police stations across 19 districts to work with the NGO on such cases. The NGO's efforts achieved yet another triumph when earlier this month, the Mandsaur session court of commercial sexual exploitation of 19 girls, convicted four traffickers for 10 year imprisonment under the various sections.

#accesstolegaljustice

Redefining gender roles



This scene is from a cricket match that was organised by Kutch Mahila Vikas Sangathan (KMVS), our NGO partner in Gujarat that addresses the gender inequities, by building local leadership of urban and rural women. It was the first time the boys and girls played cricket together in a ground where girls have never even visited. The match that was designed as a mode of involving boys in the discourse on gender equity had the desired result. "We have learnt that we are equals and a mixed team also works well," said one of the boys.