

A brief report

on

13th-14th July, 2018

Felicitation Ceremony of the Feminist Leadership Development
Course (FLDC, 2016-18)



Prepared by:

Astha Priyadarshini

DAY ONE: PANEL DISCUSSION AND EXPOSURE VISIT TO LOCAL NGOs

During 13th -14th July, 2018, Jagori organised a Felicitation Ceremony for its 35 participants of the Feminist Leadership Development Course (FLDC), a 2.5 years' course that began in December, 2016 and concluded in March, 2018. The course involved these participants working in 24 organizations spread across 9 states of India, namely, Bihar, Delhi, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh.

The first day, 13th July, 2018 saw a reunion of the participants after the last phase of the course that was held in March, 2018. The participants then gathered at the ShivShakti Hall, Zorba the Buddha for a panel discussion on **Feminist Leadership, campaigns and movement building in India.**

As the day's event began, Shruti (Jagori) welcomed everyone present in the hall and congratulated all the participants for a successful completion of the course. She invited all the panelists to join the panel which included Chitra Panchkaran, a participant in the course, Sejal Dand (MAKAAM), Rituparna Borah (Nazariya), Ranu Bhogal (Oxfam India) and Suneeta Dhar (Jagori), who took the role of moderator in today's event.

All, including the participants, gave a brief introduction and also stated the issue on which they want to work. Issues included violence and abuse masculinities, financial empowerment, education, etc.



Suneeta Dhar introduced the panelists and invited the first speaker, Chitra to share her experiences of **Feminist Leadership** through FLDC. Chitra began the discussion exemplifying her engagement with feminist perspective. She said while watching a cookery show shot at a village in Gujarat, she could see the unequal status of women being normalized in people's eyes.



“The woman despite being the cook was silent all the while and later sat on the floor as the host and her husband ate at the table,” she said. She mentioned how the “feminist lens” has become her “permanent lens”. The role as a facilitator has been same but the perspective now she said is different. She said that through her engagement in the FLDC, she realized how deep-rooted the issues are and how they intersect with each other. She asked other panelists to share how she and other participants can now move forward in this feminist journey through campaigns and make this course into a movement.

Furthering Chitra’s question, Suneeta added the need to understand the journey’s next direction. She invited Rituparna Borah to share the journey of her organization Nazariya in feminist groups. Rituparna began by saying “there’s no one gender perspective; sexuality cannot be separated from gender”. She shared how sexuality wasn’t talked about earlier in feminist struggles as it was considered to be a private affair. Building on this argument, she brought out the aspect of ‘control of sexuality being a political tool used by patriarchy in different ways’. She talked about transgenders’ identities and asked the audience to consider ‘Who is a woman- the one who was born with female genitals, the one who considers herself one or the transwomen who go beyond society’s conception of a woman. Emphasizing about the need for sexuality to be seen together with gender, she talked about the recent incident of suicide committed by a lesbian couple in Gujarat, she said, “the feminist movement treated it with silence; therefore we need to also focus on whose equality are we demanding and in what contexts- before the law, society or among each other”. She further emphasized that in movements and campaigns one needs to consider who they exclude in the process and why so. Adding more about movements,

she shared about the Supreme Court hearing on Section 377 of IPC being people's intervention to change laws. She further added about another legal battle that is ahead of this, i.e., about school structures, curriculum, work place inclusivity, etcetera.



Underlining questions raised by Rituparna, Suneeta asked the next panelist, Sejal Dand to share MAKAAAM's journey in organizing women farmers to claim their rights. Sejal began with a question, "who is a farmer- small land owns and ploughs the field or those with no farm land but work on farms owned by others"?. She shared that over 77% working women work on fields but still not recognized as farmers. She stressed about the need for women to be recognized as workers; she added, "Women need an identity more than the freedom they seek, as freedom and recognition from society would come along with it". She gave the example of tribal women who know about nutrients and gather those from the far off forests to feed everyone, presenting their crucial role in sustaining the environment. Talking about movements she asserted about the identity that women farmers, fisher women get when they form an association or an autonomous group. She also raised the issue regarding the need to call it 'women farmers' and not simply 'farmers' when Makaam started its work in 2014. She shared that "movements are not limited by time and place or staff; they have a perspective and keep growing with time. People come together in agreement and till it involves with our life & our rights, it gets irrigated".

She emphasized about the choice of method taken for any campaign, and its need to constantly reflect on the reasons of this ‘coming together’. Moving on to the systems of food security, she raised the pertinent issue of suicides among farmers and the growing lack of control in government’s expenditures, production resources and farm resources. She talked about the women’s labour in all of these which remains unpaid and unrecognized under the umbrella of care work but has not yet made to accounting. Other questions she raised were about social security that women need as workers. She concluded her talk highlighting the need for women to make her work visible and for State to gather gender disaggregated data that includes ground reality such that women’s contribution is accounted for in the Accounting.

Suneeta thanked Sejal for sharing the ground realities and invited the next panelist, Ranu Bhogal to share the Oxfam India’s journey with the participants. Ranu gave a brief history of Oxfam India as aviolence intervention organization in six states of India. She shared the initial learnings about discrepancies in law, awareness among people and implementation issues that cripple the society. She underlined the major learning that they took about ‘thought processes’ of people; she shared about a research at rural level that shows 62% women’s agreement about violence inflicted on them as a justified measure to discipline women. She then shared about the dilemma they faced about the model for campaigning against the violence.



She pointed out about most campaigns being just another event with no long term impact and the need for a critical mass of people to be benefited with a change in their perspective. She also talked about our own integrity in maintaining it in our lives. She told how social media has changed how opinions are presented to the world and shared about their Ek Saath Campaign which had hash tags ‘bano nayi soch banao hinsa mukt rishte’. She further emphasized the need for campaigns and programs to go simultaneously and the need for collaboration to scale the opportunity.

She further told that Programs need to be designed for specific age groups so that they relate with it, and for issues to be addressed as they are encountered. She also mentioned about the role of mentors and influencers, media, religious leaders who affect how gender relations interact with each other. She also mentioned that award (MAMI) to Celebrities or Films for a gender just representation acts as campaign as these mediums have potentially set norms in our country; a Film Appreciation Course instituted in this regard is another program she mentioned. She also cautioned regarding fake information that is circulated in the name of news, and falsely campaign against someone’s rights. Suneeta summarized the panel stating the need for inclusion of sexuality and the pertinent themes that emerged out of the talk regarding the model of campaigns and the growing need for a feminist movement to address issues of recognition and visibility to women in the economy. She then opened the panel for questions.

Participants asked a few questions to the panelists; one person asked regarding how can they take forward their learning in FLDC to make it a movement. To this, Sejal responded that they are a pool of resource that can sustain for a long time and raise the consciousness of people for action, for campaigns. Another question was asked regarding the identity of a woman, to which Rituparna quoted feminist activist, Maya Sharma-“Achi aurat dukhi, buri aurat sukhi” (good woman is sad, bad woman is happy). One participant asked a specific question regarding her will to involve her organization’s work into the larger movement against manual scavenging.



She was responded to by Ranu with a reference to Bezwada Wilson, National Convener of the Safai Karmachari Andolan, who is engaged with the issue.

The participants then dispersed in groups to visit different organizations – Nazariya, Oxfam, Pravah, Sangat, Centre for health and Social Justice (CHSJ) and Jagori.

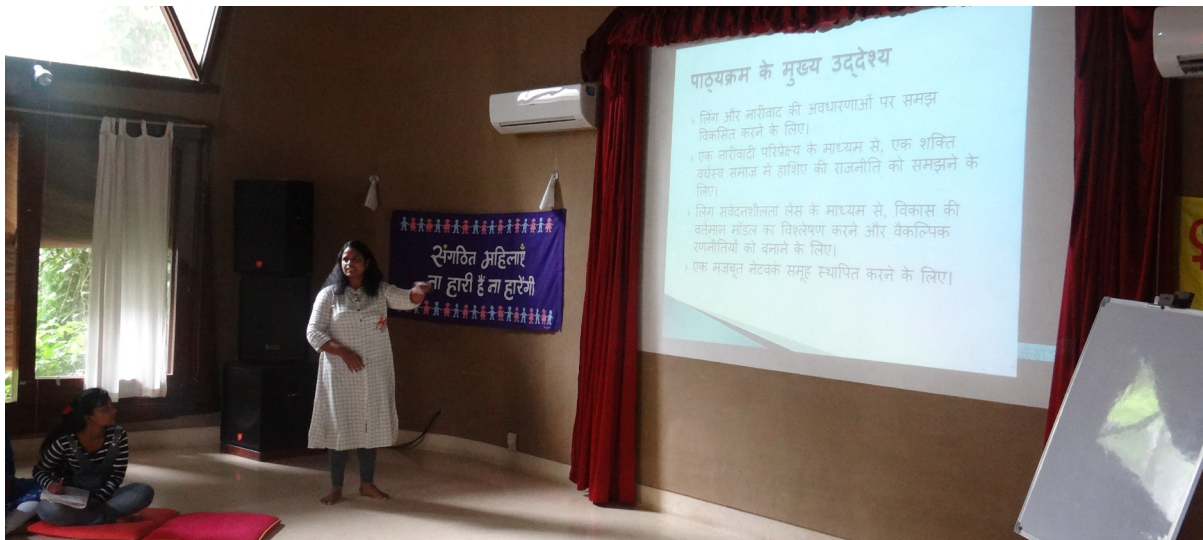
DAY TWO: PARTICIPANT'S PRESENTATION, MENTORS' DISCUSSION AND FELICITATION

On the Day two of the felicitation, the participants were both excited and low; on one side was the feeling of accomplishment and on the other were pangs of separation. But there were hopes of reunion and plans were being discussed to advance their relations with each other. The day's session began with a round of introduction and welcome of special guest, Gouri Choudhury, a founder member of Jagori and now director of Action India. Shruti (Jagori) presented about the course structure to other invitees for the day that had come to represent some of the organizations that the participants work with. The guests included Pooja from Srijan Foundation, Ranchi; Sunil Kumar Aledia from Centre for Holistic Development, Delhi; Mallika Srivastava from Centre for Microfinance, Rajasthan and Santosh Sharma from Samhita, Bhopal.

A video, compiled and edited by Rajat Verma, about FLDC was presented before the audience. The participants then presented their journey before the audience and the representatives from organizations shared their insights on the same. There were five groups-

1. Delhi and Gurgaon
2. Maharashtra and Rajasthan
3. Bihar, Jharkhand
4. MP participants
5. UP and Uttrakhand





The sharing by the participants focused on mainly their involvement in the course; their understanding of the issues and their new awareness that they had got in the due process. All of them shared about their plan in taking forward this leadership journey; they shared the need to further engage with Jagori for support and guidance. Some promised to inculcate the perspective in each area of their life. Some of them shared personal stories of change. A female born married participant shared her testimony of influence of FLDC. She shared how she had come in the first phase with a parda or ghoonghat (a veil) and now could confidently stand wearing any dress. She also shared how she has engaged her family members in addressing the inequality; her strategic negotiation and constant sharing the knowledge with her husband after each phase (workshop) of the course were among the things that supported her. Others shared how they transformed their workplaces; they took sessions with other members of their organization helping the perspective reach out to many more individuals. Also each of the participants shared the number of trainings they conducted as assignment and the issue they addressed with specific groups; the 35 participants in total have reached a critical mass of 750 people through their assignments in the 2.5 years of the course. One of the participants shared that she learnt to say NO, Yes and also learnt how to break out from the boundaries.

Mallika Srivastava from Centre for Micro Finance, Rajasthan shared how Hemlata has come out as a much stronger leader in her work area. Pooja from Srijan Foundation reflected with pride on the journey of the two participants, Juhi and Naresh, from her organization. She also mentioned that a chance to meet the FLDC organizers and the mentors at an earlier stage would have helped in better networks. Saraswati Devi (Jyoti Mahila Samakhya) shared her joy at coming for the occasion of felicitation of her fellow. Santosh Sharma (Samhita, Bhopal) appreciated Jagori for attempting such a course, and shared that the mentorship model could have been more efficient if there was one organisational member who is constantly in touch with both the progress of the course and the participant. Sunil Kumar Aledia (CHD) shared briefly about the work that they do and the importance of considering gender aspect into it.

Jagori's founder member and currently Director of Action India, Gouri shared her remarks at the end of all the presentations by the participants. She appreciated the FLDC organizers and participants for keeping 'personal is political' as the foundation of the course. However, she mentioned that the leadership could have enhanced if each participant was involved with a particular issue. She also remarked that we now need to think what to do about boys and men so that the whole book can be brought together. She highlighted the need for a campaign to be built up for the same. Gouri also shared that time has come when women need to be leaders and motivated the participants on deciding on the next steps of this journey.



After this the mentors were invited to share their insights on mentoring the participants. They also shared ways to improve the mentoring process. Runu shared her ideology of distinguishing between a 'facilitator' and 'trainer' and the pertinent feminist issue of ruler as a dominating personality which is similar to the term 'trainer'. She shared about leadership as, "jiska mudda, uski ladai, aur jiski ladai uski aguwai" (The struggle belongs to the one with issue, and the one who has to struggle has to lead). She emphasized the need for mentees also to constantly 'demand' guidance from their mentors. She advised Jagori to make mechanisms to increase the involvement of mentors in due process, "There should be more interactions between mentor and mentee". Sarita Baloni shared the issue of connection that they faced during the course.

Amrita Thakur shared her tips on writing as she has read all the writing assignments that were given to the participants. She emphasized the need to write truly from heart so that the audience can connect. She also told them to use better strategies to put their arguments and write not just facts but their feelings and expressions, giving a feel of ‘self’. She advised to write in a way that satisfies oneself.

Neetu underlined the need for proper communication channel and the basic requirement for assigning a mentor to be the common interest area of mentor and mentee. She brought to notice the fact that assignments could have been done in more flexible ways, like one could have been given to write on topics of interest and be allowed to submit not just a written copy but audio or video recordings as well. She also said that the legacy of mentorship must be taken forward by forming forums for like-minded people.



With this, the last part of the session arrived. Special invitees Gouri Choudhary and Pamela Philipose (Ombudsman, The Wire) and Savra, the oldest member of Jagori’s team felicitated the participants with bandhez dupatta and a Certificate. Mentors also felicitated the participants; along with organization representatives, members from Jagori team were also felicitated. The Ceremony was concluded with vote of thanks by Madhu Bala, Senior Manager – Programmes, Jagori.



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B-114, Shivalik, Malviya Nagar, New Delhi 110017, Phone: +91-11-2669 1219/20, Telefax: +91-11-2669 1221
Jagori Helpline +91-11-2669 2700, 8800996640, jagori@jagori.org, www.jagori.org, www.safedelhi.in