



Gender Sensitization

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Women's Development Cell
University of Mumbai

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FOREWORD

We are happy to publish this Manual on Gender Sensitization and Enabling Relationships for the teachers in the departments/institutes/colleges of University of Mumbai.

The University Women's Development Cell (UWDC) has always felt the need to reach out to all affiliated colleges and institutions of the Mumbai University and ensure that the Supreme Court Guidelines on Sexual Harassment at Workplace are implemented not only in letter, but also in spirit and with an understanding of the larger goal of establishing an atmosphere based on equality, freedom and justice in the portals of the University.

The Manual is the outcome of several rounds of discussion and debate that took place among members of the UWDC in their attempt to reach out to the maximum number of colleges and students to promote gender equality on the college campuses. These debates and discussions were then presented to a wider group of interested teachers as part of a Training-of-Trainers (ToT) programme. Subsequently, on the basis of the experiences arising out of several workshops held in urban and rural colleges of the university, certain sessions and exercises were crystallized

as being essential for conducting sessions on the topic. These were then collated to make up this manual.

As Chairperson of the UWDC, I personally benefitted tremendously from all the passionate discussions that took place during the process with my colleagues and members of the UWDC.

I must record here my gratitude to honorable Dr. Vijay Khole, former Vice-Chancellor, University of Mumbai, for his unstinting support to the activities of UWDC. He, being president of the UWDC, had always encouraged the UWDC to conduct seminars/workshops and insisted that affiliated colleges understand the seriousness of purpose with which a WDC should work. The proposal to bring out this manual was mooted during his tenure and was strongly supported by him. The present Vice-Chancellor, honorable Dr. Rajan Welukar is equally supportive towards the UWDC and its activities.

I hope this manual helps to spread the message of mainstreaming gender sensitivity on university and college campuses. We need to create an ambience where women and girls feel safe in all places and at all times.

Dr. (Ms) Kranti Jejurkar
Chairperson
January 2011

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This Manual could not have been prepared without the rigorous efforts and generous contributions of many individuals and institutions. Important contributions were made by Prof. Anjali Kanitkar, member UDWC who prepared the preliminary draft of the first section of the Manual. Her insightful understanding in the subject helped us to formalize our views on important concerns that are discussed in the first section. Thanks are also due to Prof. Vijendra, N.M. College, who provided his valuable comments on the preliminary draft, assisted in writing and helped in finalizing the Manual content. We sincerely thank Prof. Suneeta Kulkarni, P.D.Karkhanis College, who helped in writing various parts of the workshop sessions. We thank Prof. Shama Dalwai, and Dr. Chainika Shah, members UWDC, who gave their valuable time by attending consultative meetings and provided detailed, thoughtful and extremely helpful comments during the writing of the Manual. The work of bringing together early drafts of the Manual was organized by Dr. Rekha Mahadeshwar, member secretary UWDC. She contributed by compiling and formatting the Manual material in a manner that will be accessible to the users getting their first introduction to such endeavors.

A wide range of consultation with experts and activists was undertaken for this Manual. We thank all who participated for their time and comments. The Manual also benefited greatly from the feedback received from the teacher participants in the Training-of-Trainers (TOT) programme.

Special thanks go to India Centre for Human Rights Law (unit of HRLN) for permitting us to reproduce a few abstracts from their training manual titled 'The Campaign against Sexual Harassment at the Workplace'.

A particular note of appreciation is due to Prof. Seema Bhosale, Rachana Sansad College of Applied Arts & Crafts, who designed the cover page of the Manual.

PREAMBLE

The University Women's Development Cell (UWDC) was set up in 2001 according to the Supreme Court guidelines arising out of the famous Vishaka Judgement of 1997. Set up for the primary purpose of protection of women from sexual harassment at the workplace, the UWDC is governed by the Vice-Chancellor's Directive issued on 18 January 2008, in exercise of the powers conferred on him under Section 14(8) of the Maharashtra Universities Act, 1994.

Since its inception, the UWDC has conducted several activities to promote a gender perspective among university staff and college teachers to encourage them to come together to a common platform and air their anxieties and thoughts regarding propagating gender equality on campuses. To this end, in the last eight years, the UWDC has conducted three national seminars and several zonal workshops to draw attention to issues related to women, provide guidelines for creation of appropriate working conditions and prevention of sexual harassment.

In view of the experiences gained over the last eight years, the UWDC has been grappling with the issue of reaching out to the maximum number of colleges, teachers and students so as to ensure that not only is a College Women's Development Cell (CWDC) formed in every college and that the students and teachers are aware about its activities, but that the CWDC functions with a perspective that arises out of an understanding of gender equality in all its ramifications. This concern has led the UWDC to conduct training programmes for conveners of CWDCs and also

identify interested teachers who will get involved as trainers for the various workshops conducted in colleges throughout the year. This same concern has also led the UWDC to prepare this manual as it now looks forward to organize gender awareness campaign on a much wider scale. This Manual is the outcome of the observations and experiences gathered from the preliminary workshops conducted at NSS Camps and in Colleges by UWDC members in the last couple of years.

The first section of the manual discusses important concerns of the UWDC. The concerns are those that institutions are often confronted with and that need to be understood in appropriate perspective to clarify the individual and institutional responsibilities towards promoting gender positive environment. The Manual elaborates the perspective that the UWDC holds on such concerns.

The second section consists of details on sessions that can be effectively conducted over a half-day workshop. These sessions are explained with the objectives for each module, the possible exercises and the outcome expected from each module. Exercises using an interactive format are suggested to enable the participants to introspect and explore their own stereotypes and biases about men and women and move towards a more gender sensitive understanding. All the sessions follow a timeframe such that the participants get an exposure to concepts of gender, sexuality, sexual harassment at workplace and the role of the UWDC/CWDC in dealing with sexual harassment.

While the Manual does not claim to provide the ultimate understanding on these issues, it does attempt to begin a rational discussion on them and we hope that the CWDCs use it as a First Step towards promoting an enabling atmosphere on their campus.

SECTION I

Dealing with Sexual Harassment in Colleges – A Perspective

Introduction:

In all societies, women face some kind of discrimination and harassment simply because they are women. This harassment cuts across caste, class, region, race and religion. Women and girls, practically of all age groups are subjected to physical, sexual and psychological abuse (harassment) across all societies and sections.

Sexual harassment is the most common form of violence women face in all societies. They face sexual harassment everywhere: homes, schools, colleges, offices, all other workplaces and, of course, in public places. The Supreme Court of India has issued guidelines, commonly known as *Vishaka Judgement (1997)* to ensure protection of women from sexual harassment at the work place. It is a landmark judgment that holds the employer, whether the government, or a public/ private enterprise, responsible for providing a "safe" working environment to women employees. These guidelines uphold the human rights of women by ensuring equal opportunities for them and protecting them from indignity at the work place. Work place safety is regarded as an important prerequisite for women empowerment and gender equality.

Universities and colleges, our institutions of higher education, with a large presence of young men and women are highly vulnerable to incidents of sexual harassment. These institutions need not only policies and mechanisms to protect women from sexual harassment but also programs and workshops to create greater gender sensitivity among

students and authorities.

Why are we concerned?

In the University of Mumbai, at the University Women's Development Cell (UWDC), for the last eight years, we have been handling cases of sexual harassment that have taken place in the University and its affiliated colleges. We have also been conducting gender sensitization workshops for teaching and non-teaching staff of the University and colleges. During the course of these activities, we realized that the members who have been entrusted with the responsibility of redressing the cases of sexual harassment, need to develop an appropriate perspective regarding various concerns related to sexual harassment of women and other women's issues in order to implement the guidelines of *Vishaka Judgement* in the true spirit. In this context, some relevant aspects are discussed below:

The understanding of what constitutes sexual harassment is fraught with several problems.

It is widely believed that certain types of women when they exhibit some types of behavior invite sexual harassment on themselves and, therefore, if such individuals and/or such behaviour are controlled, it may be possible to prevent sexual harassment. **However, we need to understand that the term sexual harassment reflects a problem that is endemic to a patriarchal society and emerges out of the power dynamics between men and women in such a society.**

Further, certain underlying attitudes towards girl students and women in general are also visible at all levels - not only from men, but also from women. There seems to be a general understanding of what constitutes socially acceptable behaviour and restraint in educational institutions. This is evident in discussions on issues like how (specially

girl) students should dress, relate to the opposite sex, the type of friendship they should or should not get into/display, and a whole lot of their other behaviour which should be discouraged, frowned upon or chastised.

In many colleges this 'undesirable' behaviour has been sought to be controlled by placing restrictions on girls and women on their dress, their mobility, their choice of friendships and so on. It is believed that more freedom and choice for students is like opening the doors to indiscipline and/or (far worse) to sexual promiscuity between boys and girls on the campus and, of course, to 'moral turpitude'. Any absence of codes of discipline regarding dress and/or behaviour is believed to result in situations which would be hard to manage. Therefore, it is better to control the situation in advance so that such incidents don't happen. The **underlying assumption** seems that sexual harassment of girls/women would not take place if the woman/girl showed more restraint in her behaviour, if she did not provoke unwanted attention from men/boys, if she behaved in a 'circumspect' manner..... Such '**control**' or '**disciplining**' is seen as essential for the prevention of sexual harassment of women/girls.

The UWDC's concern is that our institutions of higher education are placing such constraints on women and girl students studying/working in their premises. Instead of promoting an environment that respects individual freedom and choice, where one is free to aspire to the best of one's ability, where a person can explore any friendship one wants for one's growth, often, our institutions stifle growth and creativity of individuals, by framing rules about (especially for women/ girls) what is acceptable and not acceptable within these institutions.

While promoting responsible behaviour on campus is important, it cannot be done by restricting individual choice

or framing rules for girls/women. Responsible behaviour comes from respect towards and tolerance of others and by ensuring that everyone has the same degree of freedom and choice and everyone is free to explore friendships/relationships by mutual consent.

Our college and university campuses are full of young boys and girls in the age group of 18-25 years. Many of these young boys and girls - just past their teens- are probably encountering this relatively 'free' environment for the first time: free from constant vigil and control by parents and free from the regimentation that our schools widely practice. Many of them are faced with the complexities of forging new friendships and relationships with the opposite sex for the first time. Curiosity about sexual attraction and awkwardness about such friendships open up a new world of frustration and fulfillment for the young. And then there is peer pressure to worry about.

By and large, our institutions of higher education respond to these confusions and emotions among its youthful students in one single manner: they try to ignore these concerns of their students by pretending that these are irrelevant to the processes of teaching and learning and, therefore, of no consequence and do not deserve any attention. That is, to deny that students have sexual identity of any kind. Further, disciplinary framework is imposed in the college premises to actively discourage any possibility of (sexual) relationships among girls and boys. This framework takes many forms: from downright segregation of students on the basis of gender to dress code to actual disciplinary action if a girl and a boy are found together in an 'objectionable' situation, as perceived by the college authorities. Not surprisingly, this disciplinary framework varies enormously from college to college and, of course, it invariably differentiates between girls and boys: it is highly gendered.

The UWDC, while accepting the fact that education is the foremost duty of colleges, also wants to appeal to colleges to realize that education should not be limited to textbooks. Educating students about respecting differences in gender, caste, religion and/or class, and teaching them about responsibility in adult relationships - especially in intimate relationships - is also the duty of institutions of higher education. To achieve these, it is essential to encourage dialogue, debate, discussion and interactions among students in an environment that is friendly, open and non-threatening to all.

Below, we discuss some common ways in which colleges enforce the disciplinary framework for students on their premises. These ways and instances are drawn from observations and experiences of the UWDC team members during their visits to various colleges affiliated to the University of Mumbai, in Mumbai as well as in the *mofusil* areas.

Dress Code :

Dress code is the most common, popular and acceptable measure often adopted to discipline students in colleges in Mumbai, primarily girl students though some norms are applicable to boys as well. Often sleeveless dresses, spaghetti straps, low-waist jeans, tight T-shirts for girls, etc. are considered as objectionable dresses. The list normally varies depending upon where the college is located. For example, in one of the rural colleges of the University, we came across a situation where girls were made to wear aprons over their salwar-khameez. Similarly, recently, a college in Mumbai refused to give admission to girls wearing jean pants.

The basic charge leveled at (girl) students who dress as they wish is that they often dress in 'revealing' clothes. And in the popular conception, if girls wear revealing clothes, they

are bad girls trying to tempt the boys into loose behavior and thereby inviting unwanted sexual overtures and even assault. By implication then, if boys are tempted to sexually assault such girls and cannot control themselves, the boys are not to be blamed. The girls 'asked' for it.

It is, therefore, claimed that the dress code is a protective measure for girls: to protect them from possible sexual assault by boys, sexually tempted by the 'revealing' clothes of girls. Since, in India, 'boys will be boys', that is, in India, we are unable and unwilling to discipline our boys and ensure that they behave responsibly in public places and even in private domain, we have to somehow force girls not to tempt boys to commit sexual crimes. One of the easiest ways to do so is to have a dress code for girls to 'control the girls for their own safety.'

UWDC View :

It is important to understand that dress code for girls does not work. Even a cursory glance at all the reported cases of sexual assault against women tells us that women wearing any kind of dress - be it sarees, salwar kameez, skirts, ghaghra choli, essentially anything - are sexually assaulted. The very fact that even minor girls and infants are subjected to sexual assault means that dress has nothing to do with it.

Besides, if colleges are for teenagers and young adults, then, these young people must have the freedom to take decisions on their own, including decisions about how to dress. We need to understand that dress is not only about clothes, it is also about desire, friendship, self-perception and confidence. Dress is about what you want to be and who you want your friends to be. Dress is about your over-all personality and the image you want to project/present of yourself. This may also vary according to your career choices.

It is also important to recognize that people, including college students, exercise discretion regarding how to dress all the time. For instance, when people attend marriage or other celebrations or funeral etc; or when students attend regular academic activities or special functions such as college day or traditional day etc. Let them learn what and how much discretion should be exercised and where. Let us guide them if need be. But to push for an imposed, conservative, cover-all dress code for (girl) students is not conducive for making them learn about discretion. Instead, it cripples girls, makes them feel they are less than boys, and have less freedom. It neatly feeds into the larger patriarchal social norms and does nothing to protect the girls, anyway.

On the other hand, we need to ensure that girls are not sexually harassed or assaulted in our institutions. We need to have a dialogue with our students, both girls and boys, on suitable social behavior. We need to make our young boys and men understand that when girls dress attractively, they are not asking for sexual harassment and assault. And that her mode of dress is no marker of her willingness or unwillingness to enter into a sexual relationship.

Boys and girls sitting on the same bench/hanging out together :

Though dress code is the most popular, acknowledged and widely discussed measure to 'protect' girls and keep them 'safe from boys', there are many other kinds of interactions between boys and girls which are regulated, controlled and discouraged in the colleges. One popular method in many colleges, even now, is to discourage boys and girls from sitting on the same bench or 'hanging out together' as they call it, in a group or even as couples.

In fact, in most colleges where boys and girls study together and are in the same class, the internal seating

arrangement in a class tells a different story. Very often, boys and girls occupy different parts or corners of the same class. Only occasionally, a few girls and boys cross these unstated boundaries. Many teachers, though fortunately not all, prefer that boys and girls in the same class do not sit together, and in any case, not on the same bench: that is, a girl sandwiched between boys and vice versa.

Many believe that such close physical proximity between boys and girls is asking for trouble. They fear that, somehow, the boys are likely to be tempted; somehow, something unwarranted may happen. Therefore, it is much better to be cautious and not create an opportunity for 'trouble'. To keep boys and girls segregated in a class is the only way out. And of course, if it is a specific boy sitting with a specific girl, if it is a 'couple', then, the dynamics may change yet again with different responses. But even now, in many colleges, such a situation warrants uncalled for attention, gossip and /or intervention.

UWDC View :

Such interactions/friendship between boys and girls sitting together/hanging out together should not be discouraged at all. One should desist from acting as 'moral police' and instead create an enabling atmosphere. Only when we are not unduly worried about what might happen if boys and girls sit on the same bench, will we be able to encourage interactions and friendships between boys and girls. In fact, we should inform and educate students about how normal such interactions and attractions are, what constitutes friendship with responsibility and how not to give in to what one is not comfortable with.

Ideally, institutions of higher education should lay the foundations for students to become informed and aware citizens in a society like ours which is so diverse and

disparate in so many ways. Students should learn to interact with colleagues and authorities of different gender, class, caste and/or religion. Students need to learn in colleges that public spaces are not segregated before they participate in these spaces as citizens and take on larger societal roles. Since in our society, women's participation in public domain is very low, it becomes imperative for our colleges to train girls/women to inhabit these spaces and to also teach boys/men to accept women's presence as equals. Segregation of all kinds is an obstacle in this process.

Time curfews at home or in hostels :

This is one basic form of discrimination that girls and women in India face all the time. Girls and women of almost all ages, with rare exceptions, face this problem. In many families, and in all hostels for girls and working women, there are strict and official curfew timings that girls and women must abide by or risk displeasure of and punishment of all kinds by authorities that be. Young boys and, of course, men of all hues almost never face this problem.

The curfew timings specifically pertain to evening and night hours. Parents' refrain for girls is that they should not stay out at late hours. If one is a working woman living in a hostel or as a paying guest in a rented house, the first question she is invariably asked is about when she will return home from work/college, whatever. If these are not 'safe' and 'respectable' hours, there is trouble in the offing.

The presumption behind these curfew hours is essentially moral. Girls/ women who work late/ odd hours, whose hours are not fixed, who spend time with friends or may just be on their own late in the evening, are somehow always deemed to be women 'asking for trouble' and 'women with loose morals'. These are often cited as bad examples and as women who do not know what is good for them.

Of course, there is a larger context to these curfew timings. Late evenings and nights are times when a large number of men are free and out in public places; not only single men but even men who have families at home are often out there with their male friends and colleagues before they return home. Society perceives these 'free' men as dangerous men who may sexually harass women. While there are many ways to deal with this situation, the popular and widely accepted response in India is to lock up the women and girls behind curfew hours to keep them 'safe' and 'to guard their morals' from these men on the rampage, so to say.

This is not to suggest that there are no women out in the evenings and late nights in public places. However, the crucial point is that very few of these women are out on their own. Almost all of them out there are with some men they are related to, for some work and so on. They are not out there, free to do as they wish, hang out in groups or alone. If a woman does any of these things, she is asking for 'trouble': sexual harassment, to be precise. It is assumed that such women - out in public places at a time when they should be inside their homes - are 'bad women' and, therefore, fair game to all kinds of advances and atrocities.

UWDC View :

We believe that though it is important for women to be careful and take precautions, curfew timings for women and girls simply perpetuate the gender divide and are discriminatory. Public authorities and the police need to ensure that evenings and nights are not out of bounds for women and girls. We also need to educate men about exercising discipline and behaving civilly in public places at all times. We need to create an ambience where women and girls feel safe in all places and at all times. We realize that such safety requires enormous and decisive changes in our

social and political perceptions about freedom and choice and about the presence of women and norms of behavior for men in public places. We want to emphasize that freedom and safety are not mutually exclusive situations and both should be ensured for women and men at all times.

In an increasingly globalized world, the nature of jobs is becoming increasingly diverse and is constantly changing. This means that women need to acquire different kinds of skills to negotiate their space in this changing context. Long working hours and leisure time thereafter are almost inevitable. The UWDC believes that colleges have a responsibility to create as many opportunities for young women as possible and not to restrict them by imposing curfew times in the name of false ideas of safety. It also believes that, simultaneously, colleges have a role to play to help young men to learn to respond with sensitivity to the changing roles of the women in a truly modern world.

What can we do?

It is in this context that the UWDC proposes to convey this message of gender equality through workshops, seminars and talks in university and colleges and through training of teachers who interact with students on a day-to-day basis. We offer this manual to teachers in the hope that they will be able to understand our concerns, engage with us in dialogue over the issues raised, and facilitate us in creating an enabling and open environment in our colleges for young women and men who come to study there.

The NSS camps conducted by most colleges in the University of Mumbai provide a good opportunity for teachers to discuss these issues with students. At such camps, boys and girls come together, stay together for a few days, undertake social service activities and generally share a spirit of camaraderie. Of course, these camps can also be stressful, at times, for teachers in charge who may have to

monitor the behaviour of students so that nothing 'untoward' happens.

It is desirable that these NSS camps set aside one day when a session on 'Gender Sensitization and Enabling Relationships' can be held for students. Hopefully, this platform will not only bring in a different perspective for discussion but will also help students in articulating their feelings and anxieties and debating on these issues and will make them understand the dynamics of gender and sexual relationships better.

This manual also contains a module that can be utilized to organize a 'Gender Sensitization' workshop on college campuses. However, this manual only offers guidelines. We request teachers to include other examples if they so wish. For the UWDC, the perspective and the thinking behind the issues (as explained earlier) is of prime concern. We hope that the information and arguments incorporated in this manual will help teachers in dealing with these issues in the NSS camps, and in their colleges.

We also request teachers to use other innovative methods to convey the message of gender sensitivity and enabling relationship to students. Interactive methods such as group discussions, role play, simulation games and others can be very effectively used to encourage everybody to participate and discuss their ideas about these issues. Screening of relevant films and dramas may also be useful. Additions to exercises, already listed in this manual, are always welcome.

SECTION II

Sessions to Promote Gender Sensitization and Enabling Relationships

The manual has been formulated to provide the College Women's Development Cell (CWDC) with points of discussion for Gender Sensitization Workshops with the following objectives:

1. To recognize the gendered nature of interactions among students and the institutional responses to the same.
2. To emphasize the need for creating an enabling environment for healthy and positive interactions among students on campus.
3. To clarify the individual and institutional responsibilities for creating a non-discriminatory atmosphere on campus vis-à-vis girls/women and reduce sexual harassment.
4. To understand the procedure of redressing complaint.

The UWDC has prepared the following modules to enable the facilitators to achieve the above-mentioned objectives as well as to have uniformity in the contents of the workshop.

There are four sessions spread out over three hours leaving a lot of space for discussions, interactions, films, etc. Each session includes some exercises and the salient points that need to be discussed in that session. The fourth session, being purely informative in nature, has no exercises but may be followed by discussions. Users of the Manual are

free to include more modules in each session or more sessions if they find it useful and relevant.

Sessions Outline

Session 1 : Gender and Sex	45 minutes
Session 2 : Sexuality - Personal Boundaries and Power	60 minutes
Session 3 : Sexual Harassment at Workplaces (Particularly on campus)	45 minutes
Session 4 : Role of College Women's Development Cell	30 minutes

SESSION 1 **GENDER AND SEX**

Time: 45 minutes

Understanding the concepts of gender and sex is essential to comprehend the terms such as patriarchy, sexuality, power, sexual harassment etc. that are discussed later in this manual. The objectives of this session are to:

- Explain concepts of 'Gender' and 'Sex'.
- Understand that gender is a social construct which can be changed.

Exercise I : Time: 15 minutes

Begin the exercise by :

- Asking the participants what they understand by the words 'gender' and 'sex'.
- Follow this discussion with an exercise asking the participants to complete the following statements:

For male participants -

Because I am a man, I can.....

Because I am a man, I can not.....

For female participants -

Because I am a woman, I can.....

Because I am a woman, I can not.....

Responses of the participants may be used to explain the concepts of sex and gender. The session will end by reiterating the following definitions:

Definitions:

SEX

- ☐ Sex is the physical and biological difference between men and women. It is universal and static.
- ☐ Sex is the biological characteristic of being male or female which is genetically determined.

GENDER

- ☐ Gender refers to the expectations that people have from someone because they are male or female. It is the socially constructed relationship between men and women.
- ☐ Gender refers to the differences between women and men within the same household and between cultures that are socially and culturally constructed and change over time.

Exercise II :

Time: 30 minutes

Utilize the responses given by the participants in the previous exercise to familiarize them with the concepts of gender roles, stereotypes and patriarchy. Encourage open discussion on commonly held stereotypes. The session will end by reiterating the following definitions:

Gender Role : Socially and culturally expected behavior from men and women.

Stereotypes : Societal norms of the society that determine social activity of an individual. A person's behaviour is regarded as normal/acceptable as long as he/she adheres to those set norms.

Patriarchy : It is a social structure in which cultural, economic, political ideas as well as customs and traditions are based on domination/aggression by men and subordination/submission by women.

SESSION 2

SEXUALITY- PERSONAL BOUNDARIES & POWER

Time: 60 minutes

We as teachers do not know how to teach our students about how to deal with the sexual feelings without making them and us feel awkward. We need to normalize sexuality. The students have sexual feelings, desire and they are aware of it. They want to experience it in many ways. It is here that we as teachers and CWDC need to intervene and interact with them, guide them, caution them and also let them know that sexuality is not something to be afraid of or to feel awkward about.

This session is conducted with the following objectives:

- To explain the concept of 'Sexuality',
- To understand positive and negative sexual behavior,
- To clarify the concept of Personal Boundaries and
- To discuss ideas about Sexuality and Power.

Meaning of Sexuality

Exercise I:

Time: 20 minutes

Go through a free-flowing exercise with the group, asking everyone to call out what they understand by the word sexuality. Write the responses on the board. If the group is unable to come out with words or thoughts, facilitate a discussion on what the following concepts mean: Sexual orientation, gender roles, intimacy, erotic activities, physical sensations, emotions, memories, body and self, thoughts,

and fantasies.

The exercise should help us conclude that all people are sexual whether they engage in sexual acts and behaviour or not. Sexuality is like any other human activity and is an unavoidable part of our (life/behaviour) body. Though it is expressed through body, it is not only a physical action or behaviour. It includes thoughts, emotions, feelings, values, faiths etc.

Exercise II :

Time: 40 minutes

Narrate the following two situations to the participants :

Situation 1. A boy & girl in a college, often in the process of getting involved, go to the beach, sit in a secluded corner and are happy holding hands, sitting closely, touching each other and so on. As long as, both consent to these intimacies, it gives sexual pleasure to both.

Situation 2. Sometimes, the boy then proceeds to touch the girl more than she is comfortable with or tries to forcibly kiss her etc. It is no longer pleasure but harassment for her even if she may not always explicitly say this. Her awkwardness should be acknowledged by the boy.

Familiarize the participants using the above situations to discuss the following:

- ☐ Sexuality as a Pleasure
- ☐ Sexuality is Dynamic
- ☐ Sexual Relationship

☐ Crossing Sexual Boundaries

☐ Sexuality and Power

Each of the above point is briefly outlined below to give an idea about the direction of the discussion.

Sexuality as a Pleasure

- Sexual pleasure is expressed in a variety of ways that include emotional and physical responses.
- Sexuality is personal and different in every person. No two persons have the same experience of pleasure. It also varies enormously for men and women: it may be a physical orgasm for some, emotional bonding for others, and often a combination of both for many.

Sexuality is Dynamic

- One's sexuality is not static. It is dynamic and multifaceted. Over time, its focus can shift; intensity and importance can change with different experiences, beliefs, circumstances, environment, conditions, etc.

Sexual Relationship

- ☐ Sexual relationship always involves another person.
- ☐ Every person has dignity and self-worth. Sexual behavior must be responsible and self-disciplined.
- ☐ Sexual relationships should be based on mutual thrust, honesty, commitment and respect.
- ☐ People express their sexuality through both positive and negative attitudes and behaviors.
- ☐ Sexuality expressed positively through consensual, mutually respectful and protected (non-abusive) relationships, enhances well being, health and quality

of life.

- ☐ Sexuality expressed negatively, through violence, harassment, exploitation, abuse, diminishes a person's dignity and self-worth causing long term harm.

Crossing Sexual Boundaries

As human being, we all have personal boundaries, both physical and psychological. Personal boundaries separate each one of us from others, and what is mine - my space and my body – is different from somebody else's. For example: different people respond differently to the following acts:

- i. When a person of the opposite sex touches you.
- ii. When a friend of the opposite sex hugs you.
- iii. When a man stares at a woman.
- iv. When a new male colleague offers to shake a woman colleague's hand.

The following points may be discussed to explain the concept and related issues leading to sexual harassment.

- ☐ Everyone's personal boundaries are unique. We adjust them when we need to, depending on where we are, who we are with and our personal attitude, perception or social background of the other person.
- ☐ Each of us exercises control over our sexual boundaries. This means that we have the right not to expose ourselves to boundary crossing: sexual behavior that we do not welcome.
- ☐ Maintaining our sexual boundaries also means that we take responsibility for our sexual behavior towards others.

- ☐ Women, in particular, need to learn how to effectively communicate when a man crosses their boundaries and makes them feel uncomfortable.
- ☐ Men need to learn to understand when their sexual advances are unwelcome.
- ☐ People are often offended when their sexual boundaries are forcibly crossed.
- ☐ Every case of sexual harassment, at some level, involves a serious disagreement about personal sexual boundaries between the accused and the victim.

Sexuality and Power

Sexual harassment can occur in any aspect of work life. It is an exercise of power, most commonly exerted by men over women, and often occurs where there is an inequality of formal status between those involved. The following points may be discussed to explain the interrelationship between sexuality and power.

- ☐ Sexuality and power are interrelated.
- ☐ Simply put, power involves the capacity of a person to make others do things against their wishes.
- ☐ Power comes from a variety of sources such as gender, class, caste, religion, status etc.
- ☐ Society strongly controls sexuality, especially women's sexuality, though social norms, values, customs, practices and laws.
- ☐ Often, discussion regarding sexuality only considers men's experiences and needs and ignores or devalues experiences of women.
- ☐ Gender discrimination in a patriarchal society is used to

control and exert power over women's sexuality.

- ☐ Sexual harassment is an exercise in power.

The session may be concluded by reemphasizing that:

- ☐ Men and women are equal and have equal right to live with dignity.
- ☐ Boys need to develop adequate gender sensitivity to understand the issues and help their female colleagues or friends on the campus to extend their horizons of activities.
- ☐ Girls need to develop adequate gender sensitivity and develop capacity to break the shackles of stereotypical gendered roles.

SESSION 3

Sexual Harassment at Workplace (Particularly on Campus)

Time: 45 minutes

Behavior that is thought to be mild or trivial by some may constitute sexual harassment, where the recipient perceives it as offensive, humiliating or distressing. This session is conducted with the following objectives:

- To define Sexual Harassment
- To understand the impact of Sexual Harassment on the victim.

Exercise I :

Participants may be asked to present small 5-10 minute role plays on what according to them constitutes sexual harassment. They should be encouraged to enact scenes from their experience/knowledge of what happens on the college campus, class room or among students and/or staff. Forms of behavior with a sexual element to them given in Box.1 below are useful to cite such examples.

The discussion following the role-play may lead to crystallizing the following definition of Sexual Harassment given by the Supreme Court:

Definition:

Any unwelcome sexually determined behavior such as :

- ☐ Physical contact and advances,
- ☐ A demand or request for sexual favours,
- ☐ Sexually coloured remarks,
- ☐ Any other unwelcome physical, verbal or nonverbal conduct of a sexual nature.

The trainer needs to elaborate on the following statements and clarify important aspects of the definition:

- Sexual harassment is an offensive form of social behavior.
- Unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature includes oral or written statements of a sexual nature to a person, or in a person's presence (whether or not the statement concerns that person).
- **Sexual harassment is defined by law from the perspective of the recipient and it occurs if the recipient feels offended, humiliated, or intimidated by the conduct and it is reasonable, in all the circumstances, that the recipient would feel offended, humiliated or intimidated.**

BOX 1

Forms of Behavior with a Sexual Element

- ☐ Leering, patting, pinching, touching, embracing, hugging, kissing.
- ☐ Repeated requests for dates or social activities, especially after prior refusal.
- ☐ Requests for sexual favours.
- ☐ Sexual comments or innuendo about a person's physical appearance.
- ☐ Sexual comments or innuendo about a person's sexual preferences.
- ☐ Sexually offensive written or electronic messages and offensive telephone calls, or smutty jokes or comments.
- ☐ Groups of people leering, wolf whistling or making sexual comments at a person or group of people.
- ☐ Offensive or humiliating displays of sexually graphic material including posters, pictures, cartoons and graffiti.
- ☐ Invasion of personal space.
- ☐ Persistent questions, of an implicitly or explicitly sexual nature, about a person's private life.

SESSION 4

Role of College Women's Development Cell

Time: 30 minutes

The objectives of the session are to understand:

- Steps in handling a complaint of sexual harassment
- The role of College Women's Development Cell.

A brief background to the case of Vishaka and Others vs. the State of Rajasthan is given in **Box.2** to enable the teachers to understand how the honorable Supreme Court guidelines on Sexual Harassment have been evolved in India.

BOX 2

Vishaka and Others Vs. the State of Rajasthan

- ☐ In 1992, Bhanwari Devi, a village-level development worker, or sathin, participated in a campaign against child marriage. Her efforts against the customary local practices provoked anger from five uppercaste men, who were also traditional powerful men in the village. They repeatedly sexually harassed Bhanwari Devi in order to intimidate her and discourage her from her mission. Bhanwari Devi filed several complaints with the local authorities. However, her attempts to procure justice were thwarted by local law enforcement officials who were sympathetic to the five men. Despite the adversities she faced, Bhanwari Devi continued her campaign. On one

occasion she attempted to intervene in an upper-caste child marriage. She was then gang-raped by the same five men as a punishment for this "insubordination".

- Bhanwari took her case to the Sessions Court of Rajasthan in 1996. Then again, after a controversial trial, the five men were acquitted of all but a few minor charges. Bhanwari has since appealed to the Supreme Court, but this appeal remains unheard till today.
- However, in response to the outrageous attack on Bhanwari and the lack of subsequent action, a pool of individuals and organizations, led by the women's NGO Vishaka, filed a writ in the Supreme Court. Their grievance was that while women were allowed to enter the workforce, they were uniquely vulnerable to sexual harassment and were left unprotected by a law or a specific regulation. Vishaka and other sympathetic NGOs and activists approached the Supreme Court arguing for the enforcement and protection of the fundamental rights of working women as guaranteed by the Constitution and international treaties such as CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women).
- The Supreme Court ruled in favour of Vishaka-led consortium on August 13, 1997. Importantly, the Court ruled that the issue of sexual harassment at the workplace is a human rights issue and not merely a criminal issue. That the Supreme Court chose to invoke human rights law (Human Rights Act, 1993) as a basis for the Vishaka judgement holds significance for the issue of sexual harassment at work place.

Procedure to Redress the Complaints of Sexual Harassment

The establishment of the **Women's Development Cell** of the University of Mumbai (UWDC) by the Vice-Chancellor, in the year 2001, along with the College Women's Development Cell (CWDC), is in pursuance of the guidelines laid down by the Honorable Supreme Court of India in the case of *Vishaka and others Vs. State of Rajasthan and others* and also subsequently reinforced by the Ministry of Human Resource Development.

The prime role of the UWDC is to deal with the cases of sexual harassment received from female students, teaching and non-teaching women staff of the University and affiliated colleges/institutions as well as to implement the Women's Policy in general to promote their well-being.

The formulation of Women's Development Cell at the University and affiliated colleges is governed by the Vice-Chancellor's Directions issued under Section 14(8) of the Maharashtra Universities Act 1994. These Directives have now been included in the university compendium. These Vice-Chancellor's Directions (For Prevention of Sexual Harassment) issued in 2008 should be used along with the following guidelines on the procedure to redress the complaints of Sexual Harassment

College Women's Development Cell (CWDC) should conduct an enquiry, after receiving the complaint, as follows:

- The complaint of sexual harassment should be sent to the CWDC. The CWDC act as the Complaints Committee (without including the student members).
- The CWDC, on receiving the complaint, should accordingly order an inquiry and inform all the parties about the day and time of the inquiry.

- The procedure of the inquiry should be explained to both the complainant and the delinquent.
- The CWDC should ensure that the enquiry is conducted as per the law of natural justice, i.e.
- All parties to the complaint will have full opportunity to put forth their case with the help of witnesses and evidence.
- All parties to the complaint will have the right to be heard.
- All relevant submissions and evidence will be considered.
- The CWDC members will be fair and just.
- The inquiry procedure will be time bound.
- The CWDC will maintain accurate records of the inquiry procedure, with a copy of it given to both parties.
- The CWDC members will make recommendations in their inquiry report; a member could make a dissenting observation in the report also.
- It is the duty of the college management to implement the recommendations of the CWDC within a specific time period. If the recommendations are not being implemented the authority needs to give reasons for not doing so.
- The CWDC is required to ensure that a copy of the inquiry report along with the recommendations is given to both the parties.

Activities of Women's Development Cell:

The College Women's Development Cell is also entrusted with an important responsibility to undertake

activities to promote Gender Positive Environment in Higher Education Institutions.

This manual provides basic outline for organizing a **Gender Sensitization Workshop** for students and teaching/non-teaching staff of the college. However, more innovative exercises should be developed to bring the content of the manual to the participants' comfort level. Interactive or participatory methods such as group discussion, case studies, role play etc. may be used to maximize learning/introspection.

It is also suggested to organize **Gender Awareness Programmes** including poster/slogan/ essay competitions, screening of films, street plays etc. to acquaint the students with related issues.

The CWDC may organize such programmes with other associations of the college such as Students Council, Cultural Association, NSS etc. as well as NGOs working in the area of women's issues.

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- Men and women are equal and have equal right to live with dignity.
 - Boys need to develop adequate gender sensitivity to understand the issues and help their female colleagues or friends on the campus to extend their horizons of activities.
 - Girls need to develop adequate gender sensitivity and develop capacity to break the shackles of stereotypical gendered roles.