

MULTIPLE ACTION RESEARCH GROUP

Remembering DR. Vasudha Dhagambar

On her 82nd Birth Anniversary

Event Organised by: Multiple Action Research Group

Collaboration with: Delhi state Domestic Workers welfare organisation

DATE: 28TH February, 2022

VENUE: 2nd floor, 205, 206, Peacock Court, Shahpur- Jat, New Delhi

TIME: 2 P.M. TO 5:PM



MARG organised an event on 28th February on remembrance of the founder of the organisation. More than 40 female domestic workers were invited to attend this session. The main motive of this session was to know about their grievances they faced during pre and post covid situation in the country. Social and economic impacts of COVID 19 fall harder on the marginalized sections of the populations with loss of livelihoods, food shortage and disruptions in access to health services and education.

Key points discussed during the session:

- Session started with MD. Noor Alam, executive director of MARG introducing himself to them and educating them about equality.
- Major challenges faced by workers were discussed.
- One on one conversation with female workers were made. Their grievances were heard.
- During this session what all they require from government, their needs were also heard.

ABSTRACT-

The COVID 19 epidemic has left a huge impression on the health, safety and well-being of workers in informal settlements, especially domestic workers, most of whom are women. With little organization and lack of institutional support, domestic workers are at high risk of exploitation and human rights violations, and the epidemic has exacerbated the situation. During the session with around 40 female workers, the data which was collected through in-depth interview with them were mostly about how helpless they feel. Major issues which they suffered were loss of the job, decreased payment and increased work load.



SITUATION PRE AND POST COVID:

During the discussion the conclusion which were made are:

A lot of them loss their jobs and till now are unemployed. Due to loss of job, they are unable to meet their daily requirement which includes rent, ration, electricity bill. During lockdown, as no one was able to get out of their houses, they were being asked to work 24*7 with the same pay which were given before. Another thing which came into highlight due to this was more harassment and domestic violence cases were increased. Before COVID hit, they were still allowed to take loan from ration shops but after that the scenario also changed. No lends were made through the ration shops. Also, during this phase they were sent back on unpaid leaves amidst the lockdown or only half payment was made that to only for few months. Another issue faced by people were because of the online education. Expenses of people increased twice as children who went to school now had to switch to online medium and for that where each house used to satisfy themselves with one single cell phone, now they have to buy 2-3 smart phones. So online education came as curse to them. Despite online education, full fees were also made to the schools and universities. Treatment was not properly given due to lack in our own

medical structural system as everything collapsed. During this time a lot people also lost their partners which were again the helping hands of the houses.



Discussions with them:

During one-on-one discussion, a lot of them open up about their real-life problems. Few examples are listed below:

During the session SUSHILA BEHRA, one of the domestic workers working in Shahpur jat area opened up about her struggles, she told how she was unable to pay rent because of no job. She had no money for her rations. She further discussed that now at the age of 50, she is learning a activity of sewing so that she could make her monthly ends.

Another worker BILISTA told that she was called on alternate days, work load was increased but the payment was decreased which affected them severely during the hard times.

Another woman, also discussed her personal loss where her husband lost his life during the hard times and she has 4 children to take care of.

CHALLENGES AND RESULTS:

At the end of the session, they were asked about their needs and challenges they faced and what do they expect from government:

In this the major takeaway was they wanted reduction in their rent. They also wanted free or at least reduction in electricity and water bills. One major drawback which were here discussed was about electricity meters. For



no electricity bills, the meter should be in their name but major landlords don't allow it, so they have to make the payments.

FINDINGS AND INSIGHT GIVEN TO THEM:

The session involved one major topic that was "EQUALITY". Legal literacy and legal empowerment lie at the base of any effort towards legal empowerment and also to achieve empowerment, female should also be treated as equal as men in the society. No matter what jobs they do and are made to do they should be treated equally. This could only be achieved when women themselves convince that they are equal. As working hand in the house or society or as a working lady, she has her own identity and which she should be proud of. No matter what jobs they do, they have an identity of themselves and they are independent.

Another important matter which they were made aware about the E-SHRAM cards which were launched last year, 2021 by the ministry of labour and employment under government of India under "Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bema Yojana". They were made about the benefits of the shramik cards and if they have not registered it yet, MARG will help them to register themselves in.