

BUZZ

Goa is Happening

Don't Miss It!

When they aspire and inspire



Viva! women of Goa



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The **#Metoo campaign** took social media by a storm, however, more often than not issues like sexual harassment come to the fore when celebrities come forward. **Sexual harassment and violence is widespread and happens with children, housewives, students travelling to college; everywhere and anywhere.** **NT BUZZ** tries to highlight the need for women to open up about sexual harassment and face life head-on confidently without looking behind



Beyond #Me too

DANUSKA DA GAMA | NT BUZZ

Clara Dias was in her early twenties when got into a rebound relationship with her friend, who befriended her. In the beginning it was about roses and taking good care of her, until he won her trust. Then the demands for sex kept coming in, and Savita didn't want it. She was encroached upon, through sexual abuse and blackmails. She still recalls every detail of the incidents that she says will never fade away.

the celebrities who spoke up after years of being victims- when they didn't have the fame, money and power. Founder of safecity.in and crusader against sexual harassment Elsa D'Silva tells us that the call to action was to use the hashtag to highlight the extent of sexual harassment.

"The outpouring of stories from all over definitely indicates how large and pervasive the problem of sexual harassment is. Not only is it pervasive, it has become 'normal' and so one has learned to 'deal with it'", she says before explaining that how despite it being perceived as trivial, it actually has short and long term effects - on mobility, opportunities and mental health. "Without realising it, many women and girls, adjust their behaviour so that they never have to experience the problem again or meet the perpetrator," Elsa says.

Sexual Harassment of Women at the workplace is a serious criminal offense and the new Act of 2013 recognises sexual harassment as such. Elucidating further, professor and HOD, Women's Studies says that in addition such crimes are a violation of the Indian Penal Code - Section 509 and 354 A and 15 which talk of right to equality, Article 21 which guarantees the right to live with dignity and Article 19 (1)(g) which is the right to practice any profession. Shaila has served on several Internal Complaints Committees which are mandatory committees to be set up in any organisation where women are employed, government run or privately owned.

"So, it no more matters what an individual person thinks...it is not what is intended by the actions of the offender that is important, but the impact on the victim, that decides the gravity of the offence," she says, before adding that the moment men sense that the woman is uncomfortable with his actions, words, jokes, touch, he just has to stop.

#Patrichy #Misogyny #Power game
Harassment continues not because men aren't aware that sexual harassment is incorrect, but is more because they do not believe they



will be caught or punished. They prey on the both the physical body and the mind to silence you, and bury the truth. Miriam Koshy Sukhija is of the opinion that misogyny is so deep seated in most people's psyche that they don't even realise they are crossing lines.

Women are afraid to report harassment due to a power imbalance between an individual victim and the perpetrator. Explaining further clinical psychologist and writer Amrita Narayanan says that sexual harassment is about the exercise of power. It occurs whenever women find themselves in the vicinity of men who are in powerful positions. Gender based sexual harassment is also about fragile masculine identity that gets bolstered up by its capacity to cause distress. "Harassment is a power-based communication from one person to another that says "you will remember me, I am important", and of course, most distressingly "I have a right to do this to you", she explains.



#Facts for you

- The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition & Redressal) Act, 2013, attempts to safeguard women against any incident of sexual harassment that they may face while at work.
- The Information Technology Act, 2000 seeks to protect women from sexual harassment online, with specific penal provisions to deter offenders from the commission of such crimes.
- In addition, IPC also contains effective provisions to punish offenders who indulge in sexual harassment of victims.
- If offence is committed at the workplace, immediately lodge a written complaint with the concerned superior, giving all the details about the alleged unacceptable behaviour, with proof if any. If no action is taken within a suitable time, approach the concerned police authorities and file a complaint.
- In Goa, the most appropriate authority is the Women's Police Station in Panaji. Lodge a detailed written complaint and insist on the filing of an FIR, which ensures that the police will carry out an investigation and the offender will face consequences for his criminal actions.

behind can be tormenting, and while many, including women (who've probably been lucky not to go through it) feel that recalling such incidents is a way of getting sympathy or self pity, the damage of such abuse is beyond contemplation- one that only women who've gone through can relate to. Shaila says: "It is not an exaggeration to say that sexual harassment is even the cause for suicides among women!"

General manager of a media firm, Sonia Kuncalienkar isn't embarrassed to say that she's faced sexual harassment and has also been witness to other women face it in public places. "It just jolts you and you are disturbed, making you doubt your own self, change your own behaviour," she states.

Sexual harassment is one of the gravest forms of human rights abuse, as it can mentally tear down a person and defeat one's spirit. Lawyer Fiona Cardozo explaining the gravity of damage it can cause says: "In many cases, it even results in the victim losing all trust in the opposite sex, thus damaging any potential personal relationships that the victim may have."

Amrita recalling her most salient personal experience with harassment says that it was a two year

long stalking and verbal-telephonic harassment that she had in her teens. She says that harassment that goes unquestioned breaks your trust and confidence in humanity as a whole. "It fractures your relationship to power such that you often no longer believe also in power that can be used for good. It could have so many effects including identifying with the aggressor or living a life of victimhood," she says.

More than the harassment, what shook her most about it was how paralysed everyone was, including her parents particularly. "They said that given how broken the police system was (1980s), lodging a police complaint made no sense and would only open another chain of bribes and violence." The message she took from it was that the broken criminal justice system was quietly complicit to sexual harassment.

#Fear not #Shout out #Don't keep quite

While many would like to believe that incidences of sexual harassment are increasing, the other side to the story is that women are talking! Much more, than ever before, women are being empowered to speak up and fight back.

Unfortunately most of this harassment comes from people we know whether in and around our homes and in offices. And while women need to raise an alarm, scream and nail the perpetrator, women take the route of being silent, leaving that incident behind letting it pass by as just another bad day in her life. "From girlhood, women are given the message that their work is to bolster fragile male identity. So we are taught that harassment is something that men need to do to feel good and that as women if we can let them do it, then it will ultimately help the family or couple. But sadly a male identity that is based on bullying and harassment is never fully fed or satisfied, feeding it perpetuates it," explains Amrita.

One cannot live a quality life if one is always watching over one's shoulder and living in fear" **Elsa**

We should support each other, reach out to each other. Be understanding. Women need other women to be part of the larger community" **Sonia**

Protest, discuss and if it still doesn't stop, name and shame" **Miriam**

Stop depending on men and fight your battle with confidence" **Celeste**

Women have to speak out and say "I do not like this", "stop it". Silence accomplishes nothing in this case" **Shaila**

Tackle any form of sexual harassment head on. Show no fear, confront the offender directly" **Fiona**