**LEGAL LITERACY**

***Publications***

**Objectives & Key Strategies**

The elimination of gender based discriminations is one of the fundamentals of the constitutional edifice of India. In fact the Constitution empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women for neutralizing the cumulative discrimination which women face. The struggle for legal equality is one of the major concerns of SAFMA. We believe Legal literacy is about demystifying the law and making it accessible to the people who can use it to assert their rights. It is often felt that due to their relative isolation in rural areas and lack of available material in vernacular languages; there exists a lack of knowledge among vulnerable sections on issues of Child marriage, Dowry, Rape, Untouchability laws, Labour Laws, Succession, Domestic Violence etc.

-Our PUBLICATIONS by being in the language of the people, address this need.

-SAFMA has come out with two compendiums, one a DIRECTORY of Supreme Court & High Court judgements on issues relating to WOMEN & CHILDREN and the other on VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN. Cases selected promote opinion-change and positive collective action in order to prevent and combat violence against women.[[1]](#footnote-1)

-SAFMA sponsored publication ‘Married But Not Legally Wed’ dealing with domestic violence ie. Violence against women in matrimonial relationships, be it in a relationship that may be from a legally and socially sanctioned marriage, or a socially sanctioned union, or for that matter the new phenomenon known as live in relationships.

- Legal literacy manual “HAR KAAM MAIN HAI SAMMAN” has been published for making female sanitation worker aware of their rights. These women face discrimination related to their caste and occupation, and deprived of their rights and entitlements under the law. They are paid less than minimum wages and are often forced to borrow money in order to survive and consequently end up maintaining the relationship of bondage. The publication was distributed at ‘Workshop on Awareness of Rights and Upliftment of Women Safai Karmacharis’ organized by National Commission for Safai Karmacharis at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi on 27.06.2013.  President SAFMA also as Member NCW speaking in the special session on laws made women participants aware of their rights and entitlements under the laws as workers. She stressed that there are several specific legislations like Factories Act, Beedi and Cigar Workers (Conditions of Employment) Act, Mines Act, Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, Plantation Labour Act etc. details of which are given in the publication, but no separate legislation for Protection of rights of the Safai Karmacharis, and for regulating their employment. Also most of the persons working as Safai Karmachari belong to historically deprived communities, such as Valmiki; as a result of which they are subject to indignity and atrocity. SAFMA recommended that to provide dignity to them and their work, the nomenclature “Safai Karmachari Workers” be changed to “Sanitation Workers”.

- Booklet and Poster on “ZERO TOLERANCE” to Sexual Harassment at workplace was designed and conceptualized by SAFMA in association with the GENDER COMMUNITY of the UN Solutions Exchange for NCW. The same has been used and printed by numerous public sector organisations, including banks and widely disseminated.

***Information Distribution IN VERNACULAR LANGUAGES***

**Objectives & Key Strategies**

Filling the gap of Information Dissemination and advocacy of Rights in hindi and vernacular languages SAFMA’s provides information and spreads awareness of the law in the language of the people. Often women are not aware of their rights and do not have access to legal recourse, often because of their relative isolation in rural areas, being socially disadvantaged and due lack of available material in vernacular languages. Hence there exists a basic lack of knowledge about the laws and procedures, which SAFMA publications in the form of simple Self help Manuals aim to address. We at SAFMA such an approach would invest in the development of women, inspiring them to seek better futures, enhancing self-sufficiency and ensuring access to justice.

***Legal Literacy and Training***

**Objectives & Key Strategies**

SAFMA has organised and conducted numerous Workshops on Legal Literacy and Advocacy of Rights, specially in rural areas, with the objective to raise awareness among the local community in order to access and avail the existing legal remedies. Also training local human resource/law graduates/ teachers.

Project SAJEEVTA consisted of Pre-marital Counselling and Advocacy of Reproductive Rights Participatory Workshops aimed to create an environment for adoloscent girls to seek knowledge and information in order to make informed choices and sensitize adolescent boys on gender issues. Infact SAFMA was the sole partner of Delhi Social Welfare Advisory Board (DSWAB) in sensitizing adolescent boys on gender issues. The boys took an oath not to take dowry on 29 May 2003 at a function organised by DSWAB. Workshops with financial assistance from Central Social Welfare Boardhave been conducted in Rajasthan, and Delhi (East)areas where social discrimination and neglect have been aggravated by the negative impacts of new technologies for sex-selective elimination of female foetus, spread of infanticide, and an increase of violence against girls and women.

***Gender Sensitisation Activities***

SAFMA has organised and conducted numerous Gender Sensitization Workshops and seminars on gender and the law. In 2007-08 in coordination with **Delhi Police** and Sunanda Bhandare Foundation Gender Sensistization Workshops have been conducted for constables in 19 Police Stations of South Delhi District.

***Advocacy***

SAFMA strongly propogates removal of aberrations in the personal laws and lobbies to harmonize them with the the constitutional guarantees of equality. SAFMA efforts including participation in seminar on **“Property Rights:A Gender Perspective”** in June 2003, organised by Times Foundation in collaboration with CARE INDIA and Indian Institute of Public Administration, resulted in amendment in the law making it equitable.

***Services Delivery***

SAFMA provides free legal services and counselling to abused women/children, victims of dowry harassment and domestic violence. Since 2007 SAFMA had been involved in a unique experiment of providing legal aid and counselling to children in conflict with law at the Juvenile Justice Boards, Delhi Gate and Mukerjee Nagar, Delhi including counseling families of children diagnosed HIV POSITIVE.

Free legal aid work is being undertaken by SAFMA in association NGO Women of the Element Trust with at Saket Court, New Delhi.

***Research & Documentation Unit***

SAFMA’s documentation unit maintains legal journals, judgements and newspaper articles on recent developments in case law. Special mention must be made of the Independent Survey & Documentation conducted by SAFMA of the Hand Block Printers/Chhipas (an OBC community) of Bagru, District Jaipur, Rajasthan with a view to protect their Intellectual Property Rights. This is the first project of its kind to be conducted in India and was sponsored by the Office of the Development Commissioner, Min. of Textiles, GOI.

SAFMA has also undertaken a survey on behalf of National Commission for Women (NCW) on the “Human rights violations of victims of trafficking” [[2]](#footnote-2) (2005-06) focusing on the human rights concerns of workers engaged in the sex trade (commercial sex workers), and their right to be recognised as “workers”. SAFMA has conducted a survey on “Discrimination of Girl Child in Uttar Pradesh” [[3]](#footnote-3) on behalf of NCW in 2005-06.

**Source of funds:** Donations, Govt of India, Ministry of HRD, Dept. of Women & Child Dev, Ministry of Law & Justice and Ford Foundation[[4]](#footnote-4).

1. <http://wcd.nic.in/research/preface-genderanomaly.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <http://ncw.nic.in/pdfreports/human_right_violation_of_victims_of_trafficking.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <http://ncw.nic.in/pdfreports/discrimination_of_the_girl_child_in_uttar_pradesh.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <http://www.fordfoundation.org/pdfs/library/ar2002.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)