



Webinar on Laws and Policies for Women Empowerment

For F.Y.B.Ed. 2021

SXIE- WDC initiative

The 5th of May, 2021 marked the day when the inaugural session of 'Potentia' - The Women Development Cell of St. Xavier's Institute of Education, was held, ushering in an eventful and enriching academic year ahead. The session was held via the Zoom platform, and '**Laws and Policies for Women Empowerment**' was the topic of discussion for the day. The program was presided by Dr. Vini Sebastian – WDC Convenor, and our faculties-in-charge - Dr. Shadab Paloji and Professor Nishi Kumar.

The session began with Professor Nishi Kumar throwing some light on what Potentia is all about, and some of its impactful ventures of the past. This was followed by a short presentation by Dr. Vini Sebastian, that helped deepen our understanding about Potentia, its objectives, and its collaborations.

Miss. Madhulica Sharma, a student of F.Y.B.Ed. then took the stage and introduced the speaker for the day: Advocate Audrey D'mello, Director at 'Majlis' - A legal centre for women and children. Her long list of credentials and heroic contributions in extricating, liberating and empowering women and children, were truly inspiring.

The main session commenced with the keynote speaker presenting a short clip that encapsulated the efforts of Majlis over the years. We were also introduced to how Majlis works towards developing new initiatives, and ensuring effective implementation of law. This was followed by a brief discussion on some other associations that work towards educating and empowering women. It was interesting to get an insider's view into how organizations like Majlis address women's issues at the grassroots level and empower women by giving their lives a new direction. The discussion was not only informative, but it also motivated us, students, to recognise that one cause that we believe in most, and volunteer with an organisation that works towards fulfilling it.

The session gradually moved towards focusing on the various laws and policies that protect women. We also had an insightful discussion on how organisations set up such policies. This provided the foundation for a meaningful exchange of views on the prevalence of violence in today's times, and how violence has taken new forms. The thought-provoking questions put forth by the speaker motivated us to introspect on the gory reality of today's world. We were then introduced to some of the important laws surrounding Domestic Violence, namely:

1. The Dowry Prohibition Act (1961)
2. Section 498 A (1983)
3. Section 304 B of IPC (1986)
4. Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (2005)

A stimulating discussion on these threw light on various horrific situations that women in our country still encounter. The speaker then communicated, in detail, the different intricacies of the laws. Emphasis was laid on the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence

Act, where the speaker articulated the crimes that are covered under this law, the reliefs that this law provides to women, and how this law empowers every individual to raise their voice against any crime inflicted upon or witnessed.

We then paused for a short break, followed by an intensive session that focused on sexual abuse. The speaker initiated a discussion and encouraged the attendees to share some experiences. It was indeed heart-wrenching to hear about the heinous crimes that women are subjected to even in today's time and age.

In addition, the experiences shared by a professional added new perspective to our previous knowledge, and made us more aware and informed. The speaker also drew our attention towards the statistics, which revealed that out of the total rape cases that Majlis addressed, about 92% of the time, such crime was committed by those known to the victim, and in 20% of the cases the crime was committed by a family member – a horrifying, bitter truth.

The speaker also spoke on children being victims of sexual abuse, and explained the POCSO (Protection of Children from Sexual Offences) Act; which serves as a very protected environment, while providing justice to all children (irrespective of their gender) under the age of 18. It was indeed a very informative session, as the speaker highlighted many positives of this Act, which most of the attendees were unaware of. It not only gave us a clear picture of what the act entails, but also served as a wake-up call for us, potential teachers, to be more vigilant, especially, while working with children.

The attendees were also introduced to the law that punishes the lodging of a false complaint and another one that guarantees confidentiality by media (in cases where children are victims of sexual assault). Some other legal terms like 'Zero FIR' and 'Mandatory Reporting' were also discussed. Gaining knowledge about these little things that matter so much truly made us feel empowered.

Lastly, the vote of thanks was delivered by Miss. Purna Jain, student of F.Y.B.Ed., where she wonderfully summarized the important learnings from the session. The final remarks were delivered by Dr. Vini Sebastian, who thanked everybody who contributed in making this session possible.

Steve Maraboli has rightly said, "The empowered woman is powerful beyond measure and beautiful beyond description". Educating women about the different laws and policies that are drawn in order to protect them, is one great way of empowering women, and this is what this session aptly did.

As we left the meeting, each of us were definitely touched in more ways than one. It was truly a rewarding experience, which instilled in us a sense of responsibility; that as the privileged creamy layer of society, if we could help in making a difference to even one life, there would be nothing like it!

ST. XAVIER'S INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION



**WOMEN DEVELOPMENT CELL
POTENTIA**

*Presents
A session on*

*Laws and Policies for Women
Empowerment*

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

ADVOCATE AUDREY DMELLO
DIRECTOR
MAJLIS

MAY 5, 9:30 AM ONWARDS