



Muskaan
Aalochana PUNE
Centre for Documentation
and Research on Women



REPORT
Muskaan - A Ten Year Journey

Child Sexual Abuse - prevention through awareness

History

Muskaan was set up in 2000 in Pune as A Campaign Against Child Sexual Abuse comprising of individual volunteers and a group of NGOs including Aalochana, Babu Trust, Tathapi, MASUM and The Special Cell for Women and Children attached to the Office of the Superintendent of Police, Crime Branch. In October, 2000, the Media Cell of SNDT College, Pune and Aalochana Center for Documentation and Research on Women, based in Pune, jointly sponsored the screening of Grace Poore's documentary, 'The Children We Sacrifice'. People from diverse backgrounds attended it such as members of child rights and women's rights groups, social workers, counselors, doctors, media personnel, lawyers, teachers, students and parents. This was followed by a second screening and discussion at Aalochana where the need was reiterated for a new group to deal with child sexual abuse (CSA). This was the genesis of Muskaan as a campaign, housed and supported by Aalochana.

Rationale for Muskaan

- Widespread prevalence of CSA
- Denial and silence
- Taboos and stigma
- Long term impact on the child
- Inadequate legal system

Child sexual abuse is largely prevalent but rarely reported and addressed because of the taboo, stigma, denial and silence surrounding it. There are numerous difficulties, complexities and nuances in addressing the issue, which are interlinked with matters such as vulnerability of child, parenting styles, socio-cultural taboos and guilt about body and sexuality, emerging sexuality in adolescence etc. For this reason prevention through awareness is of utmost importance. Awareness has been our core activity so far. Our approach is child-centered and based on child rights. We believe that the issue of child sexual abuse needs to be placed in the context of respect for the child and rights of the child.

Muskaan has taken up the issue of sexual abuse of children by known, trusted adults as opposed to child trafficking or child marriage which also involve sexual abuse of minors. Our main activity has focused on creating awareness about:

- The spectrum of behaviour that constitutes abuse;
- Myths like all abusers are perverts, children are safe inside their homes, abuse happens only in certain classes and cultures, children will forget about the abuse, boys don't get abused etc;
- Socio-cultural and gender norms that facilitate and condone abuse of children especially girls by men
- Looking for physical or behavioral symptoms in the child that may point to abuse
- Devising prevention strategies with the help of adults and children themselves
- Importance of supporting the child to help him/her recover from the trauma
- The need to punish the abuser and challenge the culture of impunity

For a number of reasons the Campaign decided to disband itself in April 2006. Fortunately that was not the end of Muskaan. Some of Muskaan's volunteers who had been involved with the campaign from its early years and the Special Cell for Women and Children felt that they should carry forward the work of the campaign. Thus began the next phase of Muskaan as a program of Aalochana.

Our Mission

- ***To ensure that all children are able to realize their right to a safe and secure environment free from abuse in which their dignity is protected and their capacities developed to their fullest potential***
- ***To encourage adults to provide an enabling environment for children in which their rights can be safeguarded***

Our Objectives

- To create awareness about CSA in families, communities and institutions including schools and colleges and stress the need for prevention
- To create a support structure for children as well as adult survivors of CSA
- To offer counseling services for both children and adults
- To create an information and resource base which will include written as well as audio-visual resources
- To network with other groups and individuals working on CSA locally, nationally and internationally
- To lobby along with other groups for changes in the law relating to CSA



Muskaan Awareness Sessions

Muskaan has organized awareness and training sessions for a diverse population of school children, college students, parents, teachers, NGO workers, observation and shelter home staff and members of local communities. These sessions are tailored to the needs of the participants.

Our sessions with adults have the following general objectives:

- Provide participants with a general orientation on the issue of CSA, the various forms of child abuse and sexual abuse, the socio-cultural and gender background of CSA, common myths and misconceptions etc
- Impart knowledge and skills of detection, intervention and counselling in CSA cases
- Develop a child-centred and rights-based approach in dealing with CSA cases
- Discuss and evolve prevention strategies involving children, parents, teachers, counsellors and social workers
- Engage participants in an experiential learning process by incorporating participative and interactive methods such as discussions, games, role play and screening of documentaries.

Our interactive sessions with children are flexible to accommodate age and gender differences.

In general they include the following subtopics:

- Needs and rights of children
- Children's right of protection from abuse
- Forms of abuse in general and of sexual abuse in particular
- Power dynamics between abuser and abused
- Children's right to say no to anybody and anything that makes them uncomfortable

We make use of art and story-based techniques and role plays to help children articulate their feelings.

With adolescents, we have discussion on:

- Forms of sexual abuse
- Abuse of power and betrayal of trust inherent in CSA
- Influence of gender and culture on values and behaviour
- Concepts of masculinity and femininity
- Developing a healthy attitude towards sexuality
- Responsible behaviour: respect, equality, mutuality in relationships
- Abuse on the internet and through MMS (multi-media messaging)



Resources Created _____

Muskaan has created posters in Marathi and English to be used in awareness sessions. These are available to interested individuals and organizations. The posters deal with general awareness, precautions for parents and safety rights of children.

Muskaan has also contributed articles in the print media.

We Network With _____

1. Counselors, psychologists, psychiatrists and doctors
2. Schools and colleges
3. Lawyers
4. Other networks such as an umbrella network of Pune-based child-rights activists (ARC); Connecting, a network for suicide prevention among adolescents
5. Legal networks to advocate for a specific law on CSA

Our achievements: _____

In general there has been greater reporting of CSA cases in the media over the last few years. Similarly there has been a steady increase in number of cases referred to Muskaan by NGOs or individuals. There is greater awareness of the issue of CSA, leading to more people coming out in the open to get help for the concerned children.

In spite of the inherent difficulties of working on the sensitive and complex issue of CSA, we feel that we have made headway in some areas.

- We have successfully used face to face interactions, experiential exercises like role plays and discussions to impress on the participants the urgency of addressing the issue of CSA. A professional counselor who is an adult survivor told us about the life changing impact that one of our resource persons made on him.
- We have enabled parents and teachers to talk to children about their body and sexual matters so that children may feel free to talk about abuse.
- Our CSA awareness module has become a part of the curriculum for the Teachers' Training course in Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Pune and for a short course on child abuse conducted by Maharshi Karve Stree Shikshan Sanstha, (MKSSS), Hingne.
- We have helped victimized children to be admitted to shelter homes when necessary.
- In cases where parents did not want to go to the police to register a case, we have been supported by our member, the Special Cell for Women and Children to bring pressure on the abuser to stop the abuse.
- We have contributed to building public sensitization and awareness through news media and public events.
- We have taken part in the collaborative process to advocate for a new child sensitive law on CSA.



Challenges

- There is a great need for sensitizing parents to sexuality and sexual abuse. Parents want a quick-fix solution to protecting children. They think they can handle the problem themselves within their homes and are reluctant to take outside help. Issues like virginity and marriage prospect for girls, reputation of family or institution are important reasons for suppression of cases. Parents take the child to a counselor only if there are symptoms that are of concern to them such as aggressive behavior, lack of concentration, poor academic performance etc. Taking the child to a counselor or filing charges against the abuser is done only in very few cases and as a last resort.
- In case the offender is a close family member, for example the father, the family is reluctant to take any action. The mother is either in denial or powerless to take a stand against the husband, being economically or emotionally dependent on him. The social stigma arising out of the abuse is another reason for denial and silence.
- We need to reach out to more boys and men. It is likely that abuse of boys is even more underreported than that of girls. Boys may feel greater humiliation and also experience confusion about their gender identity if the abuser is a male. Boys receive less education about body and sexuality compared to girls. They have less access to people with whom they can discuss sexual topics. Gender socialization makes them reluctant to talk about emotions or attitudes. Men also need to take greater responsibility for protecting children.
- Increasing public confidence in police and judicial process would encourage more parents and other adults to take recourse to legal action.
- Absconding abusers is a major problem that would require a multi-sectoral approach, involving media, police, activists, neighbours, and communities. In addition to dire consequences such as lack of justice to the child and absence of deterrence to others, the abuser remains a potential threat to other children.
- Convincing persons in authority to be child centered and pursue cases effectively is another challenging task. Some of them are more concerned about the reputation of their families or institutions rather than the well being of the children in their care.
- We need to mobilize a larger support base within civil society and bring about pressure on authorities to take effective action against abusers.
- Removing silence and stigma about CSA and sexual matters in general remains a major challenge. This would entail attitudinal changes which are difficult and slow to bring about.



Our experience of working in the field of creating awareness about CSA for the last ten years has brought greater clarity about what we can do as also the limitations that are inherent in the nature of the issue. Protecting children from abuse requires both short term and long term measures. Short term measures encompass awareness sessions, counseling the child, taking action against abuser etc.

Changes in attitudes leading to and arising out of changes in power structures can bring about a change in the long term. They are by their nature difficult to bring about and slow in happening.

The ground reality can begin to change when:

- Parents talk to children about body and sexuality in an open and trusting manner,
- Boys are brought up to respect girls and women,
- Women and children are not looked upon as objects to be used,
- Macho attitudes are not accepted and glamorized in the media or in peer interactions,
- The rights of children are acknowledged and safeguarded,
- Abuse and misuse of power is not tolerated in any context.

Our Team

- Bharati Kotwal, Coordinator
- Dr Radhika Rawat,
- Kavita Pendse
- Sharmila Raje,
- Shubhada Randive,
- Madhavi Kuthe.

Financial Support

- The J.R.D. and Thelma J. Tata Trust
- Yardi Software Pvt. Ltd.
- Enginetech Systems
- Tarabai Welinkar Trust, Mumbai
- Individual donors



Appendix 1

Muskaan Awareness Sessions from 2000 to 2010

Total number of children addressed - 2016

Total number of adults addressed - 3531

Name of Organizations / Institutions	No. of Sessions
English Medium Schools	31
P.M.C Schools	3
Marathi Medium Schools in rural areas	5
Colleges	20
NGOs	51
Sessions in Communities	16
Recreational Centers for Children	2
International Student Programs	6
Social Work Colleges	3
Institutions for Special Needs Children	4
Shelter home	12

Types of Participants Addressed	No. of Sessions
Balwadi Teachers	19
School Teachers and Professors	13
College and University Students	20
Social Work Students	4
School Students	23
Shelter Home Students	7
Shelter Home Staff	14
Women from Communities	15
Parents of Children with Special Needs	2
Children with Special Children Needs	2
Participants of Counseling Courses	8
International Students	8

Appendix 2

Workshops with Experts organised by Muskaan

1. June, 2010: Address by **Adv Maharukh Adenwalla**, eminent Human and Child Rights lawyer from Mumbai, to discuss the draft of Prevention of Offences against Children (POAC) Bill and its potential for improving safeguarding of child rights, experiences in handling child abuse cases and deficiencies in the laws that are currently prevalent
2. June, 2010: Discussion by **Dr Raman Khosla**, Psychiatrist and Counselor, **Anuradha Sahasrabuddhe**, Director, Childline and **Ranjana Gaikwad**, Senior Supervisor, Special Cell for Women and Children, on features of POAC bill such as age of consent, multi-disciplinary committees to deal with CSA cases; use of existing laws, procedures and mechanisms more effectively to improve gathering of evidence and to push up conviction rate; coordination between the police, the medical and forensic departments
3. Sep, 2009: Talk by **Dr Raman Khosla**, Psychiatrist and Counselor on using a holistic approach and body-mind-spirit paradigm to help children and adult survivors cope with sexual abuse
4. July, 2009: Workshop by **Archana Nene**, Psychotherapist, on games and exercises which can be used in sessions with children
5. May, 2008: Interaction with **Bindu Madhav Khire**, Gay Rights Activist and Founder of Samapathik for Muskaan's inputs for his book on sexuality
6. Jan 12th, 2008: A two-day workshop by **Dr Shekhar Seshadri**, Child Psychiatrist from National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS), Bangalore, on understanding social norms and taboos which become barriers to disclosure of CSA; protocol for intervention; psychological and behavioral impact of abuse on child; counseling with a process focus, not a solution focus; using "On Track" workbooks with school children
7. Aug, 2007: **Dr Mohan Deshpande**, a Trainer and Health Activist talked to Muskaan members about empowerment of girls in rural and urban communities through improvement in sexual and reproductive health
8. Dec, 2006: One day Art Therapy Workshop by **Susan Bullough Khare**, Art Therapist and Cross-cultural trainer
9. February, 2006: Three day workshop by **Dr Shekhar Seshadri**, Child Psychiatrist, NIMHANS, Bangalore, on building counseling skills; developing protocol for medical, psychological, familial and social interventions; helping the child to recover from the trauma and reclaim his sense of self; using the Window Approach to imparting personal safety education to children
10. Oct, 2004: Talk by **Dr Leena Batra**, Counselor, University of Ohio, on current counseling ideologies and practices in USA with special emphasis on play therapy for young, abused children



11. Sep, 2004: Address by **Renu Gavaskar**, Social Activist, on ways to communicate and empathize with children through story telling
12. July, 2004: Talk by **Prof Nirmala Pandit**, on Human Rights and Trafficking
13. Sep, 2003: Talk by **Dr Anant** and **Dr Mrs Shanta Sathe**, Sexuality Educators, on age appropriate sexuality education for young children and adolescents
14. May, 2003: One day workshop on Building Support Structures for Muskaan by **Madhuri Abhyankar**, Director of SOFOSH, **Suchitra Date**, Counselor, **Bhushan Shukla**, Child Psychiatrist and **Asim Sarode** a Human Rights lawyer--The issues covered were incidence and responses to sexual abuse of girls in rural areas; behavioral symptoms of CSA in children and laws used in CSA cases.
15. Nov, 2002: Public lecture by **Niloufer Ebrahim**, Counselor, on challenges in counseling sexually abused children; and by **Vidya Apte** of Forum Against Child Sexual Exploitation (FACSE), Mumbai, on successful interventions
16. January, 2001: Meeting with principals and counselors of schools to share perspectives on CSA and discuss incidence of CSA cases

Appendix 3

Forums and Public Events

1. July, 2010: Attended a national conference in Chennai, organized by **Tulir**, a Chennai-based NGO working on the issue of CSA -- Recommendations from regional consultations on a new child centered bill were consolidated and submitted to the central law ministry.
2. May, 2010: Attended a regional consultation in Mumbai organized by **Tulir** to discuss the draft of a new law on CSA
3. Dec, 2009: Participation in a public forum on 'Protecting Children from Abuse', organized by **Lion's Club of Pune**
4. July, 2007: Took part in a seminar on Sexuality Education, organized by **Open Space**, a forum for public debate
5. Dec, 2004: Collaboration with Action for the Rights of the Child (**ARC**), a network of Pune based child-rights NGOs, to bring to Pune the solo play 'Bitter Chocolate' based on Pinky Virani's book, directed by Arvind Gaur and acted by Lushin Dubey
6. May, 2004: Participation in discussion organized by Institute for Human Rights and Law (**IHRL**) to submit recommendations aimed at introducing a child centric law and child friendly criminal procedures.



Capacity Building Workshops Attended by Muskaan Members: _____

1. Dec, 2010: Workshop by **Silje Lynn**, Mental Health Counselor from USA, on sexual offenders, organized by FACSE, Mumbai
2. Sep, 2010: Workshop by **K. B. Jinan**, Artist and Educator, on "Learning from Children": how to improve well-being of children and promote their self esteem by encouraging creativity and independence
3. Nov, 2009: Three day workshop in National Institute of Mental Health and Neurological Sciences, (**NIMHANS**) Bangalore, on mental illness, retardation, autism and dyslexia in children. One of the sessions, conducted by Dr Shekhar Seshadri was about CSA and psychiatric problems arising from it
4. Aug, 2007: Workshop by **Dr Rani Raote**, Psychotherapist and Counselor on Post Traumatic Stress Disorder; various theories and practices of trauma therapy; burnout among therapists
5. April, 2006: Five day workshop on Suicide Prevention, conducted by **Dr Aruna Jha**, Counselor and Suicide Prevention expert, Chicago, USA
6. Oct, 2005: Seminar on Achieving Evidence in CSA Trials at **National Law School**, Bangalore
7. May, 2005: Ten day course on Gender, Sexualities and Human Rights organized by **Open Space**
8. June 6th, 2004: Three day workshop conducted by Mahila Sarvangeen Utkarsh Mandal (**MASUM**) on rights-based approach in development policies and at grass roots level



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Adv Maharukh Adenwala -
CSA Bill



Bhaje shelter home -
art based approach



Boys hostel - Nandgoon



FPAI -
Community workers' training



JBGYS -
Chaskaman Village