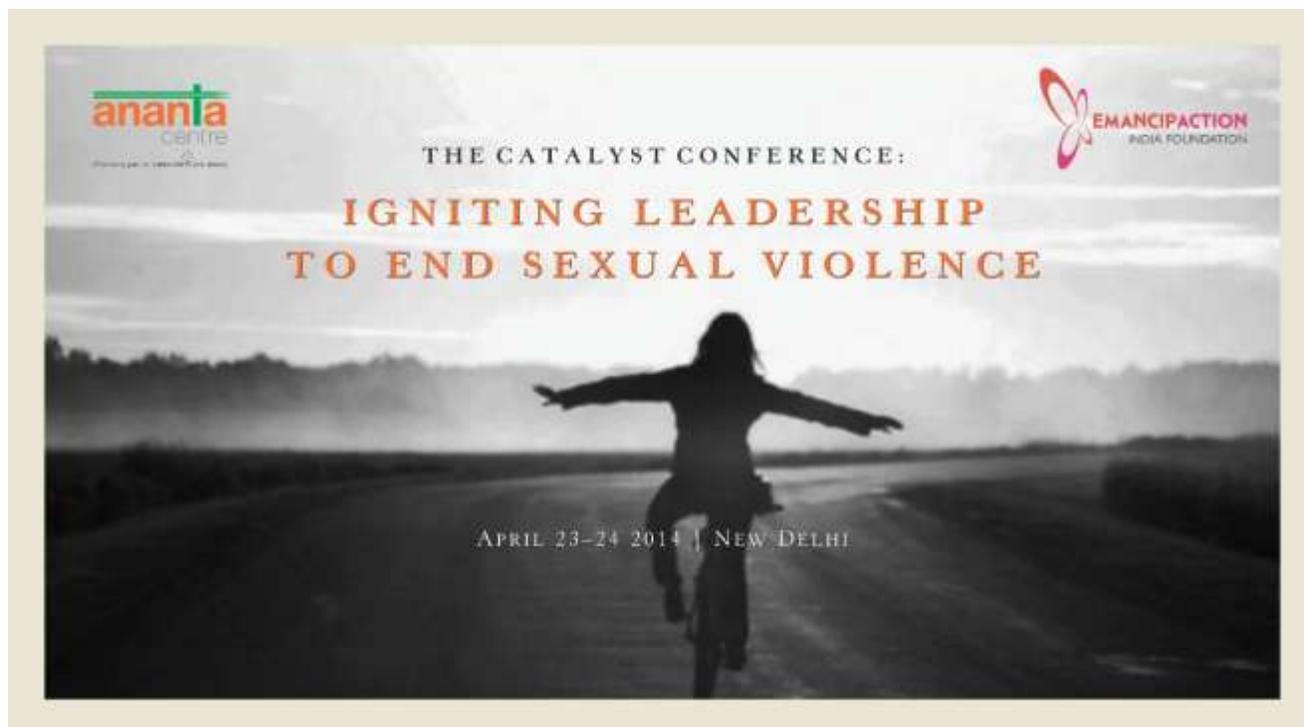


# The Catalyst Conference: Igniting Leadership to End Sexual Violence

April 23-24, 2014 | New Delhi, India



## Conference Notes



## Contents

<b>Overview</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Key Learnings</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Key Outcomes</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Key Statements made at the meeting</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>General Recommendations</b>	<b>14</b>

## Overview

### Background:

- Jointly convened by the **Ananta Centre** (*formerly part of Aspen Institute India*) and **EmancipAction India Foundation**, ‘**The Catalyst Conference: Igniting Leadership to End Sexual Violence**’ was held in New Delhi on April 23-24, 2014.
- The Conference was attended by nearly 200 young leaders from the government, private, and non-profit sector
- Ms. Naina Lal Kidwai, Country Head-India and Director, HSBC Asia-Pacific, chaired the meeting.

### Goals:

- To inspire and equip a cadre of India’s top leaders to become catalysts of change in the fight against sexual violence against women and children.
- To advance the conversation about sexual violence by providing a forum for experts from a variety of fields to go deep on the key drivers of violence, and raise awareness about the solutions which create significant, measureable change

### Panel Discussions:

- Economic Empowerment: Is A Job Enough?
- Men’s Attitudes: Where Do They Come From?
- Implementing The Law: How Can The “Rule of Law” Rule?
- Education: What’s Going On In the Classroom (Or Not)?
- Arts and Media: Problem or Solution?

### Catalyst Sessions led by Delegates:

- Sex Trafficking - led by EmancipAction and Dasra
- Child Marriage - led by Dasra
- Partnering with the Government - led by Landessa
- Working with the Men - led by Equal Community Foundation
- National Awareness Campaign - led by Breakthrough TV
- Dance Therapy - led by Kolkata Sanved
- Holistic Healing for Trauma Victims - led by EmancipAction
- Using Technology to Promote Safety - led by SmartSafe

## **Key Learnings:**

1. Sexual violence against women in India is not merely a woman's issue, nor is it simply a legal issue. Rather, it is a crime that has dire implications for all of society – from the individual victims, perpetrators, and their families; to our educational institutions, and right through to our businesses – indeed, our overall economy. In short, a society that is deemed unsafe and inequitable for half its population can never meet its full potential.
2. The drivers of sexual violence against women in India are multiple, complex and not mutually exclusive. They include, but are not limited to:
  - a. Education – how boys and girls are educated
  - b. The law and how it is implemented
  - c. How girls and women are portrayed in the media
  - d. A woman's financial independence and empowerment
  - e. The socio-cultural norms impacting the acceptable treatment of girls and women in Indian society
3. The drivers of sexual violence are deeply rooted in Indian society. Thus, if we are to make any progress in resolving the issue, all sectors of society, individuals and institutions must be involved, well informed, aligned and deeply committed to change over the long term.
4. No societal change of this magnitude and complexity can happen without committed leadership from the very highest levels of government, with clearly stated goals, dedicated resources, societal alignment, and a long term commitment to supporting, measuring and replicating success.
5. Sexual violence is primarily about violence – domination, control and aggression – and less about sex/sexuality. Stemming and preventing this violence requires interventions that address a myriad of drivers, starting with the fundamental attitudes/beliefs that boys and young men develop about the value and acceptable treatment of girls/women in Indian society.
6. Male attitudes about girls/women are effectively formed by the time a child is 12 years of age. Interventions to promote healthy and appropriate male/female relations must therefore begin at a very early age, and likely need to be incorporated into elementary school curriculae.

7. A significant amount of attention must be given to training teachers who have often been raised and educated in an unhealthy male/female social environment themselves.
8. Effective solutions to the violence are not always intuitive. For example, it was learned, for example, that an *income* is not enough to empower a woman – in fact, a woman with a job in India is more likely to be battered than a woman without. But a woman with *assets* (land and/or an inheritance, for example) is much less likely to face violence of any kind. Interventions need to be evidence based, and systematically tested and measured for impact – and then scaled up.

## **Key Outcomes:**

### **1. Learning:**

- High degree of learning and thought-exchange among delegates and speakers
- One panellist called the conference “The most cerebral and thought provoking discussion on women’s safety that I have ever been a part of”
- Several delegates commented on the value of the Catalyst Sessions to directly address individual concerns/areas of interest

### **2. Collaboration:**

- Multiple individual commitments to inter-sector and cross sector collaboration and knowledge sharing.
- Delegates emphasised the need for a forum for ongoing sharing, discussion and learning and additional mechanisms to facilitate greater collaboration and partner between practitioners.

### **3. Advocacy:**

- Delegates invited to participate in Breakthrough T.V.’s “Catalyst” Advocacy development program
- Multiple delegates agreed to screen “Daughters of Mother India” for their networks to increase awareness of the issue.

## **Key statements made at the Meeting:**

### **Keynote Address:**

➤ **Speaker:** *Karuna Nundy, Advocate, Supreme Court of India*

- It is unfortunate that the issues of women safety are missing in these Indian elections. A poll says 91% voters believe sexual violence must be an election priority. Women safety is the second biggest concern for Indians after corruption. Why is it, then, that government after government have to be pressured to address these concerns?
- The issue of patriarchy runs deep in our system and is the root cause of all challenges faced by women. Each one of us has a responsibility, and a role to play in dismantling the patriarchy within ourselves and outside. It is also true that the government has to lead this in a significant way.
- If you look at the number of women candidates standing for elections in our country--and the spirit and space allotted to women issues in the manifestos of our major political parties--you would know how seriously we are taken. The message to them should be: we do not want your protection, we want our rights.
- The 'Womifesto' contains the tenets of 'Educate for equality', 'Make laws count', 'Put women in power' among others. If governance can roll back HIV AIDS and polio; then it can also enforce women empowerment.
- Rape cases are increasing, which is really worrying. According to recent research, nine in ten Indian agree that sexual violence is a problem. 91% men and 89% women concur that rape is a big issue for voters. This acknowledgment has to be a starting point of action, though some politicians do not get it.
- More women must enter the work space. Putting an end to sexual violence essentially means putting an end to the cycle of dependency. By being financially dependent, a lot of the vices that emerge from the vicious cycle of poverty and abuse can be curbed.

### **Economic Empowerment: Is a job enough?**

➤ **Panel:**

- a) *Mirai Chatterjee, Member-National Advisory Council, Director-Social Security, SEWA*
- b) *Anisa Draboo, Landesa's National Communication & Advocacy Manager*
- c) *Naina Lal Kidwai, Country Head-India and Director, HSBC Asia-Pacific*
- d) *Aparna Mathur, Resident Scholar, AEI*
- e) *Mallika Kapur, CNN's Mumbai based international correspondent [Moderator]*

- Poverty is a significant factor in sexual abuse and violence. However, there is a distinction between monetary independence and land security.
- A lot more thinking needs to be done on the idea of providing job security to women. In India, there is a lack of reliable and well researched data on the role economic empowerment plays in reducing instances of sexual assault.
- The issue of income stratification is also crucial in the debate. Do the earnings/salaries of woman impact her exposure to violence? Some studies indicate that women who earn more or own wealth may encounter lesser violence, as this gives them an important bargaining status.
- Economic empowerment is not just about putting money in a woman's hand, but is also about food, basic social security, child care, pension and housing. Then, after she reaches a level of economic security, that's when we see a transformation
- For women, financial security should include land and property ownership. Owning land and property can change not just how a women sees herself but also the attitude of the family and community towards her.
- A job is not sufficient in itself. Public reaction to harassment cases involving working women has often been that such victims invite this upon themselves by working and socialising late at night.
- Private sector also has a key role to play in the debate on sexual violence. 70 per cent of private sector companies in India are family run businesses, and many of them have still not adopted best practices.
- Corporates can create gender sensitivity in employees by building a safe environment for women, put crèches in place and making workplaces safer with guidelines and committees.
- It is important to give women employees access to a twenty four-hour emergency helpline. People with power need to also use their influence to encourage others to take up these practices.

### **Men's Attitudes: Where do they come from?**

➤ **Panel:**

- Dipankar Gupta, Social Scientist*
- Rema Nanda, Founder and Trustee, Jagriti Youth*
- Neera Nundy, Managing Partner at Dasra*
- Rujuta Teredesai, Co-founder and Executive Director, Equal Community Foundation*
- James Abraham, Managing Director and CEO, Sunborne Energy Technologies*

**[Moderator]**

- Family relationships play a major role in shaping sexual biases at an early age. As children, they see the traditional roles that society hands out to women and these subtly influence their opinions. If they witness violence, it is likely that they will perpetuate or allow the same when they grow up. As a result, it is critical to address gender issues from an early age in families and encourage unorthodox roles for women in families and workplaces.
- Gender equality can be achieved in society only when people get rid of exaggerated, traditional age-old norms in a patriarchal system and enforce strict law. Gender inequality is deeply-rooted in our system and social institutions add fuel to the fire.
- The Hindu ritual of 'kanyadaan' is one of the social norms that is extremely damaging to women's rights and gender equality. The concept is the worst possible thing to do with a woman's dignity and it in a way creates imbalanced equation between the girl's father and her in-laws right from the beginning.
- The idea of joint family is basically is a 'gang of men.' Role of women in this place comes across as insecure, repressed and backward.
- Urbanisation has helped develop a crack in this concrete system that promotes the ideology that women don't have an important role to play in society.
- Urbanisation makes women more independent and aware of their rights. This has also created a situation where the family does not get to choose a son or daughter-in-law, as many cross-cultural marriages are taking place.
- A stronger and more effective law enforcement would also pave way for equality if more cases of sexual bias and gender equality were reported and addressed.
- Giving women equal inheritance rights would make them more secure and earn them respect in the family.
- The debate on women and sexual violence is incomplete without engaging the men. More men must be brought in to the table for lasting change. There are many NGOs that deal with women to address gender biases and violence but there are very few who engage men to change their attitude and behaviour.
- Regarding "eve-teasing," a common form of sexual harassment, a focus group of boys said they didn't intend to harm girls ("we're not monsters"), but they follow the examples of their peers and society.
- It is important to stop pointing fingers at men and start viewing them as agents of change. It is imperative to show them that such a change is not only beneficial for women, but also for them. It leads to better relationships; changes how women view them; brings respect for them in their community and organisation, and makes them role models for others.

## **Education: What's going on in the classroom (or not)?**

➤ **Panel:**

- a) *Rukmini Banerji, Director, Pratham*
- b) *Bindiya Nagpal, Program Manager, Girls' Education Program, Room to Read*
- c) *Manika Sharma, Director, The Shri Ram School*
- d) *Sameer Malhotra, Head, Department of Mental Health and Behavioral Sciences, Max Healthcare*
- e) *Amitav Virmani, Country Director, Absolute Return for Kids (Moderator)*

- There is need for creating platforms to spread awareness among students and amending the existing education pattern to address sexual violence. For holistic learning and sensitisation at an early age, educational institutions should go beyond classrooms.
- It is absolutely essential to constantly orient new teachers, parents & students on the issue of gender equality. Education has to go beyond schools and not restrict itself to reading. We need to create a safe environment for our staff and students.
- 85 percent of the children in India still go to government schools. Yet, government schools are not dealing with these subjects that can educate children about sex education, gender equality and leadership. They are also not adequately equipped to address these concerns.
- Teachers in these schools may be willing to touch upon sex-related topics and discuss them with children, but at the policy level these school teachers are not given the opportunity.
- For most of these children studying in government schools, their parents have never been to school themselves. So, to empower children, we need to create a balance by educating parents as well.
- Sexual Violence by family is very common – fathers, step fathers, brothers etc.–and these are not occasional incidents. Girls are also abused by school teachers and face constant harassment at school. We assume that education is ladder for their social mobility, but it is important to make schools safer for these girls.
- There is a distinction between genes and environment, and these lines are blurry. We find that each influences the other. When we talk about perpetrator, we see that though a part of their aberrant behavior may be inborn or innate, but most of the traits are learnt or imbibed.
- If youth and students are sensitized from a young age, it can help instill in them a sense of gender equality. We need more instillation of concepts and values of empathy and respect for the other sex through our education system.

## Arts and Media: Problem or Solution?

➤ **Panel:**

- a) *Sonali Khan, Vice President, Breakthrough India*
- b) *Vandana Kohli, Film Director*
- c) *Mallika Sarabhai, Indian Classical Dancer and Activist*
- d) *Sohini Chakraborty, Founder Director, Sanved*
- e) *Syeda Bilgrami Iman, Author, Editor, Communication Professional (Moderator)*

- The portrayal of women in India's Arts & Media Industry has shown hints of improvement but mainstream television and film continue to promote women in a demeaning light.
- Also of concern are recurring narratives suggesting that Indian women don't really mean what they say when they resist sexual overtures, or are raped simply as a means of creating conflict between the male lead roles. The way women are portrayed through the arts and media greatly influences how they are perceived and treated.
- There is hence a clear role of the Arts & Media industry in cementing gender stereotypes and reinforcing patriarchy. However, societal players can inspire action among individuals and change the status-quo.
- In recent years, India has seen a shift in portrayal of women in arts and media. Today, the media is increasingly objectifying women and sexual violence. The need of the hour is to make our content more gender sensitive and help promote awareness on the issue. The media should be used to question the prevailing bipolar discourse.
- Violence encompasses our daily lives. When we tell our children about bogeyman, or instill any sense of fear in them, that is a form of violence. Sensitising young audiences is crucial, and arts and media can play a great role in shaping minds.
- Sexual violence is preceded by verbal abuse. Look at our verbal abuse, most of which are derogatory to women. Acting against verbal abuse is the first step to reduce possibility of future assaults by the same individual.
- Media reports only horrific parts in cases of sexual violence in a bid to attract Television Rating Points. When will media begin to see the survivor as a human being? This is also a systemic cycle of violence that should be addressed.
- Media and technology are changing rapidly and reflecting changes in society and values. The advent of virtual world is affecting psyches worldwide. Video games for instances have a major impact on children's minds.

- Cinema is another powerful medium that shapes attitudes. Sociologists should be included in the film-making process to ensure messages are not damaging. Role models should be aware of how their words and actions impact impressionable youth.... The media should call them to task when they espouse damaging or derogatory language toward women.

### **Implementing the Law: How can the “Rule of Law” Rule?**

➤ **Panel:**

a) *Neeraj Kumar, Former Commissioner of Police, Delhi*

b) *Farah Naqvi, Member, National Advisory Council*

c) *Duru Shah, Scientific Director, Gynaecworld*

d) *Nandita Rao, Advocate, Delhi High Court*

e) *Satvik Varma, Advocate, Founder-Independent Law Chambers (Moderator)*

- As India elects its next government, addressing sexual violence and ensuring safety of women and children needs to be a priority for the new leaders.
- The success of good laws lies in applying them effectively and universally throughout the country.
- Laws cannot prevent sexual violence. Laws come into action once the assault has taken place. They are hence just one tiny piece of the puzzle.
- There is a question mark over the deterrent effects of laws. Hence, it is important to change behaviours and mindsets through open dialogue between both men and women.
- The issue of sexual violence should not polarise men and women. Both are impacted by sexual violence.
- A society can have the best laws, but until there is strong and universal implementation, it will not be effective in preventing cases of sexual violence. For instance, there is a statute on murder, but homicides still continue.
- Another aspect is that police steps in only after the filing of a formal complaint. If cases are unreported, it is difficult for the police to take action. A sexual offence is an attitude problem, and it needs to be addressed.
- Strong legal steps are required to sensitise public on reproductive and sexual health.
- Parents and teachers must also ensure children learn to differentiate between good and bad touch.
- Gender differences are found in common households, which shapes attitudes of women and men. It is important that more women talk about their rights, demand rights and exercise rights.

- The problem of sexual violence is not a women issue anymore. It is now a citizen issue. If we really want sexual violence to end, we need to stop living in the Victorian era.
- Our parliamentarians have not grown up. Unfortunately, Indian parliament is still patriarchal. We need laws and implementation to ensure sexual violence becomes a crime and not an aberration.

## **General Suggestions from Participants:**

- **Judicial Reforms:**

- a) 10-fold increase in the number of judges and court infrastructure.
- b) Gender sensitization and interaction of judges with women from various walks of life / backgrounds - this may make them more open minded.
- c) Judicial handbooks for judges which contain the laws and the latest Supreme Court judgments on the issues of sexual violence.

- **Police Reforms:**

- a) Increase in strength of police personnel and number of police station
- b) Increase in the number of women, including Dalit and Muslim women in the police force
- c) Introducing changes in the training, so as to make the interrogation styles less brutal and more scientific using technology
- d) A separate investigation unit that does not have regular policing duties

- **Forensic Reforms:**

- a) A 100 -fold increase in the number of forensic labs, with at least one per city.

- **Municipal Reforms:**

- a) Improvement in street lighting
- b) Creation of half-way homes and women shelters within communities and facilitate reintegration of women into society.

- **Press Reforms:**

- a) Stronger self-regulation and guidelines to prevent media trials and content that is regressive and anti-women, both in news and in entertainment. This has to, of course, be more in the nature of non-coercive methods to protect the freedom of the press, such as "the male chauvinist of the year channel award" etc.

- **Economic Empowerment of Women:**

- a) Generating more jobs and economic avenues for women to make them financially stable and independent. However, need to create more assets than jobs.
- b) Establishing 24-hour emergency helpline for women employees.

- c) Ensuring proper implementation of guidelines and conducting random checks at workplaces through technology.
  - d) Stronger push for gender sensitivity from the company leadership.
- **Men's Attitudes:**
    - a) Introducing healthy gender practices from a very early stage of a child's life.
    - b) Giving women equal inheritance rights to make them more secure and earn them respect in the family.
    - c) Encouraging unorthodox roles for women in families and workplaces.
    - d) More men must be brought in to the discourse on sexual violence for lasting change.
- **Education:**
    - a) Creating platforms to spread awareness among students and amending the existing education pattern to address sexual violence.
    - b) Promoting holistic learning and sensitisation at an early age at educational institutions.
    - c) Constantly orienting new teachers, parents & students on the issue of gender equality.
    - d) Equipping government schools with sex-education training and modules.
    - e) Instilling values and respect among students for the opposite sex from a tender age.
- **Law Enforcement:**
    - a) Pressuring political leaders and next government to make sexual violence and women safety as their "priority items".
    - b) Facilitating open dialogue between policymakers, police, activists and academics on the issue of sexual violence and law enforcement.
    - c) Ensuring assault cases are reported to the police to enable legal action.
    - d) Introducing new initiatives to sensitise public on reproductive and sexual health.
- **Arts and Media:**
    - a) Making media content more gender sensitive to help promote awareness on the issue.
    - b) Sensitising young audiences on the impact of arts and media on attitudes and mindsets.
    - c) Acting against verbal abuse to reduce possibility of future assaults by the same individual.

- d) Including sociologists in the film-making process to ensure messages are not damaging.
- e) Role models should be aware of how their words and actions impact impressionable youth. The media should call them to task when they espouse damaging or derogatory language toward women.