

# **WSS perspective document on sexual harassment and mechanisms for redressal of complaints**

**WSS (Women against Sexual Violence and State Repression) is a non funded grassroots effort to challenge the layers of patriarchal privilege and entitlement that protects and promotes such structures of power in all arenas. Historically, violence and the harm done to women and marginalised sexualities has remained unacknowledged and sustained without redressal, even by democratic movements. Over the last decade WSS reports, dossiers, publications and films have exposed and highlighted the connections between different acts and forms of violence in different spaces by different actors – from the state and its institutions to families and communities, from schools and universities to workplaces, from the local thana to the highest levels of the administrative and judicial system. It is this understanding of sexual violence that informs this document and fuels our commitment to ensure that it is acknowledged and redressed.**

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## 1. Background and Context

This document is the outcome of a series of discussions within WSS in Delhi that began in late 2016 and picked up pace early in 2017. The purpose of this process was:

- A. To share experiences of and develop a perspective on sexual harassment, sexual violence and a range of other ways in which women are undermined (which we have grouped under the term 'gender discrimination') in different kinds of institutions, including spaces of progressive political interaction.
- B. To outline our political perspective on how these questions may be approached and dealt with, including but not limited to redressal mechanisms.
- C. To propose a redressal mechanism for WSS.

Initially prompted by our own experiences, the discussions took account of the questions thrown up by #metoo in the US in 2017, and debates around 'the list' and disclosures of several cases of sexual harassment and violence. In October 2017, the list of alleged perpetrators compiled by Raya Sarkar polarised debate among feminists. WSS made a public statement in support of the list. We see the list as symptomatic of the abysmal failures of 'due process' in academic spaces, despite years of struggle by feminists, progressive organisations and allies. In some quarters, the list was seen as an attack on progressive voices, prompting questionable shows of support to the alleged perpetrators, in the name of fighting fascism or tackling 'real' political issues. WSS rejects deferrals of 'internal' critique – whether on gender and sexuality, or other forms of oppression. We are only too aware of the deep inequalities and differences among women, which are sharply heightened in contexts of sexual harassment and violence. Therefore, it needs to be said right at the outset that we found ourselves repeatedly having to remember that what we have to say here impacts women who are marginalised in myriad ways – as religious minorities, by their sexuality, as dalit and tribal, through disabilities of all kinds, to name only a few. This must be kept in mind when, in the course of our reflections here, we refer simply to women as a general category.

We need to develop new ways of naming and exposing the myriad forms of interpersonal and institutional violence that women, transpersons and other oppressed groups face, mechanisms for holding perpetrators accountable and processes for addressing imbalances of power more generally. As we finalise this document for wider sharing (October 2018), another round of testimonies of sexual harassment from diverse workplaces have exploded into the glare of public life via twitter. Starting in the entertainment and media industries, testimonies are being shared across a range of institutions, including NGOs and educational institutions. Questions are being raised about the extent and depth of sexual harassment and its connections to wider practices and structures of misogyny and discrimination in ways we could not have fully anticipated when we began our own discussions. It is our hope that the present statement will speak to this moment as well.

## 2. Definitions

### **Sexual Violence**

Sexual Violence is any sexual act or attempt to obtain sexual acts by violence, threat, manipulation or coercion, between intimate partners, known persons, strangers, and under conditions of war or armed conflicts. It is one of the most pervasive, traumatic and brutal forms of violation of a persons' right to life and dignity.

### **Sexual harassment**<sup>1</sup>

- Any unwanted sexual advances of a physical, verbal or non-verbal nature: including looks, comments, touch, act, threat or communication (including textual, electronic, visual or graphic) that impedes or undermines the person at the receiving end.

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<sup>1</sup> This definition has been put together after discussions within WSS and a reading of the following texts: The Booklet on Sexual Harassment by Gender Studies Group, Delhi University (2015); Hostile Hallways: Bullying, Teasing, and Sexual Harassment in School (2001); Drawing the Line: Sexual Harassment on Campus by Catherine Hill and Elena Silva (2005); The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013.

- These acts include but are not limited to any **forced** physical contact or advances, demands, pressure, or harassment for sexual favours, sexually coloured remarks, lurid stares or gestures, showing (without consent) pornographic or sexually explicit content, and bullying, coercion or intimidation with a gendered or sexual component.
- It includes the creation of a hostile retaliatory environment, use of objects as extension of the sexualised body, inappropriate promise of rewards for sexual favours or implied or explicit promise of preferential or detrimental treatment (quid pro quo harassment), and any single or repeated act that creates an undesirable, uncomfortable, humiliating or hostile environment for living, working, learning, or political activity.
- This may take place in a formal or voluntary institution, or an inter-personal space.

While instances of sexual harassment may or may not involve physical violence, the emotional and psychological violence experienced by the complainant during (and after) the period of harassment and social pressures adds to the traumatic experience. This often continues as the survivor seeks redress for the harassment that she has faced.

Standards of acceptable behaviour are built around notions of male entitlement; the autonomy and bodily integrity of women and transpersons is of little concern. It is no surprise, then, that in most institutions, the concerns of women and transpersons are trivialised and cast aside, when they are raised at all.

The filing of a complaint demands tremendous courage from survivors in naming their experience, both amidst a culture of silence before the complaint is filed, and climate of suspicion after. The aftermath of speaking out – in the form of slander, rumors, gossip and defamatory remarks – takes a huge toll on survivors. The vilification of complainants is often disingenuously defended as free speech and dissent. Such attempts to render the context of power relations invisible must be actively opposed. Creative and effective solutions will require collective thinking, and must be done as a priority.

### **Consent in the context of a relationship**

- The Criminal Amendment Act 2013 has provided a set of definitions around consent in its legal aspects.
- Discussions indicated that relationships are riddled with much tension over the continued need for affirmative consent and difficulty ensuring respect when consent is withdrawn or broken down.
- Consent, even when given in any interaction or relationship can be withdrawn at any time. Once consent is withdrawn, continued romantic or sexual words or actions are not protected by the past and actually constitute sexual harassment.
- An ethics is also called for when dealing with 'rejection' and 'heartbreak'. This opens up the question of thinking about a range of behaviours which may not cross a legal boundary, but certainly cross an ethical one, and can lead to distress. This is discussed below as gender discrimination.

### **Gender Discrimination**

Some experiences recounted in our discussions did not fall under the categories of sexual harassment (i.e. unwelcome sexual advances) and sexual violence, but were nonetheless traumatic, violating experiences that impeded the ability of those affected to live with security, autonomy and dignity. Various kinds of predatory conduct are easily overlooked because they are normalised in the language of both law and politics. The term 'teasing', for instance, can hide extreme forms of bullying and predation, while also denying survivors' experiences and often saddling them with crippling self-doubt. Who among us has not wondered - "did this *really* happen to me? Was it *really* so bad? Am I overreacting?" These forms of behaviour must be clearly distinguished from sexual harassment, which does not in any way diminish the detrimental impact they can have on a person's well-being. Practices of shaming and undermining women and transpersons are pernicious even when not explicitly sexual in nature.

We use the term gender discrimination to cover instances of differential treatment based on a person's gender identity or gender expression which creates discomfort, humiliation

or fear, and/or places a person at a disadvantage relative to another. Gender discrimination would include deprecatory comments, slander and discrimination in the course of work/study.

### **Contexts of Sexual Harassment**

We identify three contexts in which sexual harassment and gender discrimination take place:

- a. Institutional spaces such as educational institutions and workplaces.
- b. Voluntary bodies, including but not limited to progressive political organisations, networks and other spaces of political activism such as joint fact finding, programmes or solidarity work.
- c. Personal relationships, including but certainly not limited to romantic or sexual relationships.

Only formal institutions are bound by law to have redressal mechanisms for complaints of sexual harassment. The question of how to ensure redressal in voluntary spaces is addressed here.

### **3. Sexual Harassment and Gender Discrimination in Progressive Spaces**

It is often assumed that progressive organisations and spaces will be free from gendered discrimination and violence. In the course of our discussion, however, many of us recounted experiences in such spaces ranging from sexual violence to gendered discrimination. The problem goes beyond inattention or a failure of critique: one kind of political commonsense in these spaces (including left organisations) trivialises these issues. Gender questions are treated as apolitical, and even divisive or disruptive of 'real' political work. Often, the vocabulary of sexual liberation is deployed to pressure women into sexual intimacy, as when sexual acts are demanded as proof of one's radical and



'progressive' attitudes. In addition, here are other experiences narrated by WSS members in meetings:

1. Character assassination
2. One's credibility as an activist or organiser can be tied to one's sexual history, the details of which are often avidly discussed and embroidered along the way.
3. Intimate partner violence being designated a 'private' matter, to be dealt with privately, hence rendering the scope for redressal moot.
4. Patriarchal sexual morality is pushed in the name of the 'masses'. Sexual relationships outside the framework of heterosexual marriage are shamed and denounced, often without any discussion of the political and ethical stakes in sexual intimacy and personal relationships.
5. Pressuring people to be sexually intimate in the name of political solidarity or demonstrating one's radical or progressive credentials.
6. Body-shaming
7. Women face pressure, both covert and overt, to de-sexualise themselves in order to be 'taken seriously' in political circles

#### **4. Intersections**

Relationships and sexual relations across caste, class and community are often riddled with additional dimensions of power and dominance. A power imbalance, as a consequence of differences in social or economic status, makes people vulnerable to coercion, enforced by the threat of social humiliation and ostracism. As WSS, we recognise and appreciate the courage that it takes for a complainant to file a case of sexual harassment against a perpetrator in the face of social, economic, cultural and political pressures.

The current political climate further underscores the need to recognise the intersectionality of oppression and develop mechanisms that build alliances between organisations, individuals, people from marginalised sexualities and marginalised communities, and all people fighting a grossly in-egalitarian social structure, a brutal state, conservative political and social forces, and the onslaught of neoliberal capitalism.

### **Institutions, process and mechanisms**

Perpetrators are often in positions of power or authority over survivors. This power may be explicitly justified, or couched in 'progressive' vocabulary making it difficult to recognise predatory behaviour. Perpetrators (in most cases, men) in positions of power can usually count on being shielded and even defended by their institutions, friends and colleagues despite grave allegations made against them. When a person dares to call out another's behaviour for what it is, the onus tends to fall on the complainant to convince the collective of its nature and its adverse consequences on their life. These and other forms of complicity need to be named and challenged.

While some sexual harassment committees in particular institutions have been held up as models, a number of problems remain such as: breach of confidentiality, victim blaming, protection of the accused, using confidentiality to protect the process and perpetrator from scrutiny even after the process ends, and questionable interpretations of gender neutral provisions, all of which have greatly diminished faith in their effectiveness. That notwithstanding, the legacy of autonomous CASH committees is under attack. ICCs formed under the most recent UGC regulations and the SH Act of 2013 flout fundamental norms required for autonomous functioning of a committee against sexual harassment.

## **5. The survivor's experience: Feminist perspective on redressal**

Interactions between men and women or transpersons unfold in a context of gendered power. This can be further complicated by power imbalances to do with, among other things, class, caste, age, disability and position. Sexual harassment and violence is always

an act of power on the part of the perpetrator, *which is born out of, legitimised and normalised by misogynistic social assumptions about sexual conduct*. Survivors are liable to these ways of thinking as well: often struggling to see coercion for what it is, and dwelling on the ways in which we ‘provoked’ or ‘deserved’ it.

Due process (in legal or quasi-legal bodies), for the most part, is animated by a patriarchal and masculine sensibility. The range of acceptable sexual conduct and notions of consent and ‘force’ are defined largely from a patriarchal point of view. Instead of an unambiguous indictment of the use of coercion, we often encounter – in law, in public discussion, in commonsense – an attempt to define what level of coercion is *acceptable*. This is the underlying dynamic when an extraordinarily brutal rape provokes public outrage but rape marked by less brutality prompts an enquiry into the survivor’s sexual history. Or the fact that stranger rape is the paradigmatic model of rape in our public imagination, even though it accounts for a miniscule percentage of reported rapes.

From the naming of the experience, to sharing with others, filing a complaint, and facing the aftermath, each step is a struggle in which women and transpersons frequently find themselves unsupported. Complaints of sexual misconduct or violence are viewed with skepticism and suspicion. The bogey of ‘false complaints’ is invoked to block recognition of the pervasiveness of sexual violence. Ironically, complainants and not perpetrators become the objects of intense scrutiny. We need to break the culture of suspicion, silence and victim blaming. In addition to the wider tasks of transforming relations and sensibilities, discussed further below, we need ‘due process’ that is animated by a feminist sensibility.

The task is to create conditions in which complaints can be investigated fairly and thoroughly, without gendered or other forms of power distorting the process. We must aim to build institutions where the experiences of women and transpersons will be validated, and will find a sympathetic ear. Institutions that prioritise only legalistic redressal may fall short of the support needed for persons undergoing the trauma of sexual violence. Creative ways of engaging with the complainants and respondents – guided by a feminist sensibility – need to be considered in order to transform a vitiated space into a democratic one.

A formal process of investigation into complaints through available mechanisms of redressal is ideal when taking the alleged perpetrators into account. However, though the fight for justice can be empowering, the process is often very arduous and emotionally taxing. What was strongly articulated in our discussions is the need for care and support to those who are experiencing sexual harassment and the mental debasement that accompanies it. This includes creating support for those who are helping others, because of the kind of emotional work this demands.

It is crucial to listen to the survivors' narration first, before asking them to provide proof. Pressuring them for evidence immediately is harmful and may discourage them from speaking out. It is also important that they speak about their experiences only as and when they are ready. It is crucial that those close to the survivors make all efforts to support the survivor, proactively reach out to available and acceptable mechanisms of redressal and build a culture of support and care that is driven by the impulse to transform patriarchal systems into democratic ones.

## **6. On Dealing with Alleged Perpetrators**

We must encourage all efforts to investigate and transform institutional and personal codes that are permissive towards sexual harassment and gendered violence, as well as efforts to build alternative, democratic codes that do not diminish anyone. Where such efforts are being scuttled or curtailed, we need to engage fearlessly in both critique and collective struggles.

Where the culture, climate and consequences of sexual harassment is being actively transformed and efforts are being made to build an alternate, democratic climate, it is important to take note and engage with such efforts.

Where cases of sexual misconduct are widely known but have not been addressed, public interactions and speculation must be minimised to ensure that the space for speaking out remains open to those who have experienced violations, but who may need time and space before they choose to do so.

We must therefore consider a range of responses towards perpetrators of sexual violence, harassment and gendered discrimination keeping in mind the scope for rectification, willingness to transform one's behaviour, to accept consequences and, if desired by the survivor, willingness to engage in some kind of reparative process. Where acknowledgment and rectification are not forthcoming, we must seriously consider disengagement and distancing, or legal redressal.

When a person close to us is accused sexual misconduct, what do we do? Do we keep silent and wait for it to blow over? Stand with the survivor? Stand apart, pending some formal resolution? What of the personal or social costs of standing against alleged perpetrators? There is no doubt that a situation of this sort demands complex emotional negotiations which can be deeply rattling. To make recommendations on how we might handle this is indeed a fraught question, but we believe that democratic and feminist politics offers us certain definite things to think about, of which we list a few here.

- a. We should aim to let our actions be guided by political and not just individual considerations. Does our silence render us complicit in a culture of misogyny that demands unquestioned subservience, and punishes those who speak out?
- b. Our personal experiences with alleged perpetrators can be an unreliable indicator of the truth of someone else's complaint. Do people – men, but also women and transpersons – not divide the world into 'good' women worthy of respect, and undeserving 'bad' women?
- c. As difficult as it may be to extricate ourselves from close ties with alleged perpetrators (which may be as much about genuine intimacy and affection as about opportunities and networks), we must remember that hesitation or failure to take a principled stand can produce self-doubt, and a loss of 'voice' for the survivor.

- d. We must think of this as part of the demands this moment makes on us – to open our inner lives and personal choices to political scrutiny in the best traditions of self-reflexive feminist politics.

### **Limits of legal redress**

As a women and transpersons' network that recognises the role of the state in perpetuating brutal violence against the people of this country, especially on women, transpersons and children, the path chosen by the complainant may or may not involve legal recourse. In such cases, WSS needs to support the survivors while respecting their agency and refrain from moral judgment, criticism, intrusive questioning or any action that can aggravate or be construed as hostile. We may not be able to take up cases of sexual violence, harassment or gendered discrimination, but as individuals belonging to diverse fields and expertise we can take up cases. Here, we recognise the limits of the legal systems of redressal available to us. Meanwhile, the larger struggle against patriarchy and state violence must consider structural sexism, misogyny and impunity enjoyed by the state and its actors.

## **7. Mechanism for Redressal**

Progressive spaces are hardly free from oppressive practices. Gender based discriminations intersects with discrimination based on caste, religion, language and other social identities. We need mechanisms to check these practices within the WSS network, in interactions among organisations, networks and individuals.

To this end, mechanisms have been set in place for addressing these issues at two distinct levels – within the organisation (network of organisations and individuals that constitutes WSS) that we identify as intra-organisational and across organisations that we identify as inter-organisational.

WSS recognises that as a network where several of us identify gender identities outside the hetero-normative projection of biological sex and recognise hierarchies of age, caste, class, positions of power among others, there is scope for harassment and potential for turning into vitiated spaces. We acknowledge that we are not exempt from forms of harassment amidst us and to that end a preemptive mechanism to address them are necessary. Thus, as an essential part of transformative politics, we have established an Internal Committee against Sexual Harassment.

In addition to a committee against sexual harassment, WSS needs a collective deliberation on how other oppressions and power dynamics based on caste, class, or ability, operate within the organisation, and on the need for developing a political vision and redressal mechanism for the same.

### **Internal Committee against Sexual Harassment**

The sections below on the specifics of the constitution of internal committees should be taken as indicative rather than conclusive. WSS is a loose national network and by virtue of this structure will offer many logistical challenges. Hence the full details of the workings of the committees being suggested below will need to await implementation and be open to appropriate revision as more experience and understanding is gained.

## **A. Intra-Organisational Mechanism**

### **Constitution of the Committee**

- The election of Internal Committee against Sexual Harassment to address issues of gendered discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual violence must take place in the annual national meeting.

- This committee can be approached by any member of WSS for issues arising within WSS and its members.
- This internal committee will be an elected body with a minimum of 7 members and a maximum of 10 members. Attempts would be made to have a member from each unit of WSS across the country along with at least two national conveners presiding over its functioning.
- The tenure of this committee would be for a maximum of two years and the election for the same will take place in the national meeting of WSS for that year.
- Two national conveners will preside over the functioning of the committee. After the election of the members, the committee will elect one internal convener for the committee who will be responsible for ensuring coordination between its members, organisation of online or in-person meetings when necessary, ensuring a quorum of more than half the members for decision-making, and setting the agenda for the meeting. This convener will work in coordination with the two presiding national conveners and strive to ensure democratic functioning, unbiased and fair hearing of complaints and accountability to the members of WSS.
- The jurisdiction of the committee extends to cases pertaining to any member (brought by one member against another member(s)) arising in the course of the networks activities.

### **Eligibility for Committee**

- Eligibility of those who can be members are a minimum active participation of 2 years within WSS and majority consensus of WSS general body to ensure wide acceptability and responsibility towards WSS.
- An empanelment of a pool of external members should be chosen from different geographical locations and professional expertise and allotted by an unbiased roster. The majority decision of the members of the committee is needed for the appointment of external members to the pool.



## Responsibility of the Committee

- On filing the complaint, the complainant(s) has/have the right to hear from the committee within two weeks announcing the beginning of the investigation in writing, including details of the external member(s) chosen.
- Committee has the prerogative to discuss and deliberate on the complaint and decide to accept or reject the complaint on the basis of prima facie evidence. The reasons for the prima facie acceptance or rejection of the complaint must be in writing and requires the consensus of the committee. Intimation of the acceptance of the complaint, full details of the complaint and prima facie grounds for acceptance of complaint should be made available to both the complainant(s) and respondent(s) within two weeks of the complaint being filed.
- The complainant(s) has the right to raise objections to the presence of any member(s) in the committee who the complainant(s) views as being prejudicial or who may have a conflict of interest in the case. In such a scenario, the committee can ask said member(s) to not participate in the specific case at hand and/or find a suitable replacement from within the active members of WSS for the specific case. The prerogative for accepting or rejecting this request requires two-thirds consensus of the committee.
- The committee is obliged to investigate and assess the case and provide its recommendations within two months (60 days after the beginning of the investigation). This can be extended for another month (30 days) contingent on circumstances and functional considerations of the committee. Reasons for this extension need to be provided to the concerned parties in writing, and the committee should communicate its final decision to the complainant and respondent in writing as well.
- All processes and procedures involving the investigation of the case should be documented in writing. Recording devices and other electronic media will not be

used for documentation. Written documents must be kept with all other WSS national documents. Confidentiality and identity of the complainant must be protected.

- The complainant(s) and the respondent(s) both have provisions to appeal against the decision of the committee. This appeal will be heard by the sitting national conveners. The decision of the conveners will be final and communicated to the complainant and respondent.
- The confidentiality of the proceedings must be maintained by the committee at all costs and any breach of trust or confidentiality can and will result in said member being asked to leave the committee pending further investigation.
- All decisions of the committee must be formally placed at the national meeting every year before the general body of WSS. The general body has the right to hold the committee accountable for its decisions.

### **Responsibility of the Complainant(s) and Respondent(s)**

- Any complaint made to the committee should be submitted in writing or put in writing and authorised by the complainant(s).
- All communication between various parties linked to the case and the processes should be documented in writing where possible.
- The recommendations of the committee should be respected even as they may be critiqued. These should be read as the considered view of the democratic body and rectification should be made where required keeping the range of responses to complaint and process of redressal in mind.

The complainant(s) and respondent(s) are expected to maintain confidentiality of the proceedings and not attempt to influence the members of the committee during the course of the investigations. If the complainant wishes to take complaint to another forum or body, or to the public realm, since this might have an effect on the committee, the complainant is expected to inform the committee of the same.

The Internal Committee against Sexual Harassment is an elected body that is answerable to the members of WSS and must make all efforts to see past the political, social, economic, cultural, regional, religious and sexual orientations and identifications of the complainant(s), respondent(s) and individual members of WSS and focus on ensuring democratic functioning, free and fair hearing of cases and accountability to the members of WSS as its highest responsibility.

## **B. Inter-Organisational Mechanisms**

Acknowledging the difficulty of addressing complaints that extend beyond WSS and pertaining to members of organisations considered partners of WSS, inter-organisational mechanisms have been constituted for situations where WSS members file complaints against people belonging to any organisation WSS considers its political ally, with whom WSS undertakes joint work and campaigns. In such a scenario, the Internal Committee against Sexual Harassment along with the national and state level conveners of WSS are expected to take the lead in addressing these complaints in a free and fair manner as well as ensure that the complainant(s) and respondent(s) get due hearing and redressal. These are the mechanisms in place -

- If partner organisations don't have a Committee against Sexual Harassment, WSS should encourage them to constitute one. WSS will be looking for appropriate ways to gain inputs from partner organisations in proceeding with the complaint.
- This document may be shared with organisations we work with and any disagreements with the partner organisation should be discussed and resolved to enable each organisation's policy to improve. Partner organisations can call upon WSS to strengthen these processes/understanding within their organisations. If partner organisations disagree with core principles in this document WSS should reconsider the terms of engagement with those organisations.
- The complainant can file a complaint with the WSS Internal Committee against Sexual Harassment.

- The committee is obliged to inform the national conveners as well as the state conveners of the place from where the complaint was filed.
- The members of the committee are expected to assess the complaint and accept or reject it and give reasons for the same in writing within two weeks of filing of the complaint. If they accept the complaint, it would constitute the date of beginning the investigation.
- If the complaint is accepted, the committee is obliged to inform responsible persons in the organisation it considers its ally about the individual against whom the complaint is filed for an explanation in writing.
- Simultaneously, the committee is expected to build mechanisms with the ally organisation to address the complaint in a democratic manner, with the WSS ICASH inviting external members including those active on the partner organisation's Committee Against Sexual Harassment on a case-by-case basis to jointly investigate the case at the earliest, find resolutions suitable to the organisations in question and those involved in the case. The survivor should have the right to submit a written request to remove any members from the partner organisation's committee who they feel would provide a prejudicial view.
- All communication and proceedings are to be documented in writing.
- The official complaint, on being received by the partner organisation, is to be acted on within three months (or 90 days) of the filing of the original complaint.
- The complainant(s) and respondent(s) must be intimated of the acceptance or rejection of complaint, the beginning and end of the investigation as well as the decision of the committee on the specific complaint during the course of the investigation.
- The complainant(s) and respondent(s) would be expected to maintain confidentiality, remain accountable to the organisation(s) of which they are a part and respect the decisions of the committee (constituted by and with responsible persons of each organisation).

- WSS must consider means of accountability implementation of which can be ensured, and these means should not solely depend on processes within the partner organisation which may or may not implement accountability in its full spirit.

The committee is answerable to the members of the organisations and must ensure democratic functioning when resolving the case at hand.

**While fighting for better redressal mechanisms will continue to be a top priority, we need to think additionally about gender sensitisation and deepening our understanding, so that reflections on power and dominance are not limited to the matter of complaints alone.** To be truly meaningful, systems of redressal can only exist in the context of open, ongoing political discussion on social structures, forms of social power and the ways in which these shape our experiences as gendered subjects. The aim should be, as Beauvoir has remarked, to destroy the notion of gendered power altogether. What are the forms of concrete, collective, every day practice that we must commit ourselves to translate these lofty ideas into feminist praxis? In the discussions over the last few years, WSS has grown as an organisation and the principles which it upholds have been strengthened. We intend to continue to engage with the on-going debates around ways of dealing with sexual violence and remain open to questions and scrutiny by all who are fighting for democratic and progressive principles.