

FEM

Core Group Meeting: Forum to Engage Men

Venue: NCAS, Pune

Time: 10.30 a.m. - 2.00 p.m., 13th April 2013

Key Agenda of the Meeting

- Welcome and introduction
- Confirmation of the minutes of the last meeting held on 30th October 2012
- Review the action taken and progress
- Explore the way for speeding up FEM process.
- Commissioning our positions papers
- Discuss Strategies for joining hands with other groups for better implementation of the laws related to empowerment of women and prevention of gender-based violence.
- Review of FEM as an and initiatives on OBR(One Billion Rising)
- Update and discussion on the forthcoming global symposium to be held in Delhi during 2014.
- Discuss the proposal of Sujata Khandekar
- Discuss compilation of article written around the Delhi Agitation
- Vote of Thanks

Satish Singh, Convener of FEM, welcomed all the participants to the FEM core group members, and shared the need to seek more members as well as ensure that there is an opportunity to discuss debate and plan to take forward the work of FEM .

Through consensus Abhijit Das was requested to chair the meeting. After a brief self-introduction by all the participants; Abhijit gave a brief background on FEM

"FEM" was established five years back, it was established to facilitate women's empowerment and gender equality through work with men. One immediate task of the Forum was to counteract the organisation "Save Indian Family Foundation" which opposed and demanded the withdrawal or drastic modification of Section 498 A of the Indian Penal Code (intended to protect married women from domestic violence) on the ground that it was anti-male. FEM realized that the need of the hour was to mobilize like-minded individuals and organizations from different regions of the country and from different segments of our society - both rural and urban - to ensure the active participation of men in promoting gender justice. The recent Delhi incident involving the torture, rape and consequent death of a young woman poignantly underscored the urgency of bringing together men committed to gender equality even as it provided space for women to assert their rights.

Satish distributed copies of the FEM brochure and appreciated the contribution of Mangesh Kulkarni who took the lead role in drafting and finalising the brochure. He also thanked Sanjay Srivastava for suggesting a few alterations which were incorporated in the final draft of the brochure. He shared the key decisions of the previous meeting held on 30 October and shared the action taken report which was as follows:

Sr.	DECISION	STATUS
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1	If the organizations working on the issue of gender equality in the areas where FEM members work, an interest in male involvement in these issues, - we should approach them and support them.	Several initiatives in this regard: i. Initiatives around OBR-FEM were publically acknowledged during 14 th February event in Parliament Street- A report is under preparation on the role of FEM in OBR. ii. CFAR approached FEM for resource support for 15 days road show in Delhi on issues of VAW and Gender Equality. CFAR acknowledged FEM support. Report is pending. iii. Meeting on 11 th January with SANGAT with around 70 participants from Trade Unions, University students, NGOs, etc.
2	Those participating in this meeting will be considered Institutional/ Organisational members.	Organisational profile needs to be filled and sent.
3	For networks/ organizations, the membership fees will be Rs.1000/- per year and for individual membership, the fees will be Rs.250/- per year.	Meeting Minutes sent to Listserv on January 30. No requests have been received so far.
4	All FEM members will constitute the General Body. Members of the Governing Board will be chosen democratically and with representation from all states.	Need advice to move forward
5	There will be two Volunteers apart from Satish Kumar Singh. We will call this the Oversight Committee for Monitoring. This Committee will oversee all matters pertaining to expenditure incurred by FEM.	No volunteers were nominated earlier Now, Anand and Subhash would be volunteers
6	CHSJ will house the FEM Secretariat	Ongoing
7	The Secretariat will inform all the previous members also. The new brochures will be sent to them.	Brochures have been/ are being sent to Regional Coordinator's offices.
8	The website will be named FEM	DONE www.femindia.net
9	All members of FEM should send in material for the website and Facebook page.	Very little material received. Secretariat will prepare the organizational profile to upload on website.
10	The finalized brochure will be uploaded on the website.	Brochure is uploaded
11	The Facebook page should be started immediately and the material should be uploaded.	Facebook page was started, some material was uploaded- Action around OBR from different states
12	There should be a core group for running the website. A two- three member committee is necessary for this and this will do physical monitoring or through other means.	Not done

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	Those networks who are associated with FEM should nominate Volunteers for this.	
13	The membership fees should be deposited within the next 15 days. CHSJ will give the fee receipts.	Not done
14	Two persons should decide jointly what the work of the Secretariat should be in the next 6 months. The recommendation/ proposal should be sent to all members immediately and if no response is received within 7 days, it will be considered final.	Expectations from the Secretariat, Key Decisions and Minutes were circulated to members, some suggestions were received and finalized documents were sent to the Listserv on 30 th January.
15	All decisions of the meeting will be forwarded to all members. Those who wish to comment or give some feedback must do so within 15 days. If there is no feedback/ comments within this time, subsequent feedback or comments will not be included.	

Soon after Satish's presentation Abhijit said that FEM participated in the OBR campaign and made its presence felt in the larger scenario of gender-activism; however the communication, energy and resources required for the Forum have not been generated. Two things are important: one is the secretarial function; but the second is generating members' interest and this has been low. So it would be good if we could discuss how the members outside Delhi feel about FEM.

Some of the key observations/ suggestions made by the participants were as follows:

Anand Pawar: Some OBR events were undertaken in Maharashtra: chiefly in Mumbai and in Pune. However in Pune (at the planning stage as well as during the campaign) FEM did not play any role in OBR. Samate Sathi Apan Purush – a collective of men and organizations working on gender equality and engaging with men in Pune, was strongly active; but it was difficult for just one person who was a FEM member to create visibility for the Forum in the city. It is difficult to make the presence of the FEM felt in Maharashtra as the Forum has very few active members in the state. Many people associate themselves with FEM, but they may not always work under the Forum's banner. Besides, there are quite a few organisations independently working on men's issues. There is a need for them to come together and form an identity.

Abhijit Das: FEM has also not been doing much in terms of providing resources, or promoting wider discussions and debates; so if we undertake such activities, it would probably bring in more visibility and connect people to FEM.

Mangesh Kulkarni: There are several like-minded organizations working on gender issues in Pune and we should meaningfully collaborate with them in pursuit of shared objectives. If FEM serves as a clearing-house of useful ideas/information and as a catalyst for promoting joint activities, it could gain greater visibility as also recognition, and would be acceptable as a common platform.

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Abhijit Das: The environment has changed due to the Delhi episode and a question that is constantly being asked is: 'Where are the men who should be taking up the cause of gender justice?'. And we respond and tell them that our comrades/fellow-activists are present everywhere and are taking initiatives and actions not only in Delhi but also in other places.

Subash Mendharpukar: There is a need to (re)design the FEM website in such a way that it adequately facilitates and reflects the initiatives seeking to promote gender justice by involving men. Groups should be encouraged to use this website through their press-note/ press release, etc. This shall also solve the problem of 'identity' that is bothering many groups/ individuals in Maharashtra.

Mangesh Kulkarni: Every college/university is supposed to set up a women development cell for promoting gender justice. FEM should identify and network with such cells.

Abhijit Das: We need to create an outreach programme and link ourselves with regional initiatives and interventions. Our website can play a meaningful role in initiating and sustaining such efforts.

Anand Pawar: I strongly feel that many like-minded activists/organizations do not want their work on gender issues to carry the FEM brand/tag.

Subash Mendharpukar: While the FEM website should reflect feminist men's activism on the international and national levels, we should go the extra mile to highlight small but significant activist initiatives in remote places by ensuring that the people involved in them will voluntarily provide relevant information and in turn benefit from such partnership.

Abhijit Das: People do come and look for best practices and other than Programme H and Parivartan no other best practices are available as we have not created any visibility despite the fact that there is a body of best practices on working with men. FEM could serve as a platform providing visibility to those small attempts and actions which reflect the work done by men to promote gender equality.

Mangesh Kulkarni: It is necessary for FEM to adopt a clear political perspective and take a position on larger issues involving men, masculinities and violence that flow from State practices like imperialism in the global arena and the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) at the national level. We must also take into account the complex interrelationship among caste, class and masculinities. If this is not done, the Forum would be seen as just another funding-driven NGO bandwagon lurching from project to project.

Anand Pawar: We do individually take a stand on and participate in deliberations pertaining to issues like AFSPA in a larger conflict-resolution framework.

Satish Singh: We do need to focus on the nexus between caste/class and masculinity, especially in the context of violence against women.

Representative from Astitva: we did decide to share our work on men with Delhi to be put on the FEM website

Abhijit Das: There is a need to look at the politics of visibility. It is important to ensure that the voices of men working constructively on gender issues are heard and recorded. Otherwise they will get drowned out,

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generating the impression that only women raise their voices on such issues. FEM could share position papers, campaign-related information and other resource materials through its website.

Mithun: Mumbai has witnessed a good deal of interest in work with boys and men. But then as I am working under the banner of a women's organization, I am confused as to how it is possible to project a FEM identity. My organization is part of the larger women's movement and it would be difficult for me to understand how to include FEM in this framework.

Deshmukh: We undertook OBR activities, shared a press note, and encouraged men and boys to discuss the rights of women. Through OBR we do have a sense of belonging to a larger network of men; however we usually undertake these events and activities along with other organisations who have the resources and we do have to wear their caps or T shirts. So difficult to promote FEM in this situation.

Nita: Language is a huge barrier we would like to share our stories in the blog and internet however our stories are written in Marathi as a result we have not been able to contribute to FEM. But these stories have been discussed with media

We do have an identity crisis as people see us through the lens of 'Samajhdar Jodidar' Project and not as members of FEM. We have undertaken rally, etc for OBR locally, but have not involved in taking up these activities at the district or state level; we should have been involved in meetings in district, or state level, and our work with men should have been promoted at this level.

Mithun: Visibility is important. The state level FEM contact point should make an attempt to collect and report on gender equality work undertaken in Maharashtra through the FEM's website. There is also a need to highlight stories of men who suffer when they stand up against violence. For example Keenan and Reuben or Santosh who were killed when they protested against eve teasing, this was not highlighted much. Nobody came forward to support these men and so taking up involving boys and men to address gender based violence/discrimination is a huge challenge as men and boys think that they will face the same same thing is going to happen to them as Keenan and Reuban. There is need to promote what the stand of a boy or men should be when they see gender based violence/discrimination and this needs to be promoted through the FEM Website

Mithun: In colleges we have been working on and addressing the problem of sexual harassment and eve teasing; the FEM could provide support at the national level for our work at the local level.

Abhijit Das: Feminist organisations do have areas of disagreement but they have a clear agenda and come together on certain issues; we do not have a clear agenda and there is a mistrust and insecurity amongst us. There is a need to build our agenda on the model of MASVAW in Uttar Pradesh.

What is FEM's position: we started with a focus on men, masculinity and gender based violence, but we are also talking about caste, class, etc. It is high time we brought out a set of issues/position papers on key issues.

Action Points	Key Persons/Organisations Responsible
FEM to have a national identity and presence through website, blogs, listserve etc.	Centre for Health and Social Justice (CHSJ)

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Enumerate resources persons who have facilitated men's involvement in gender issues.	CHSJ as a secretariat will take the responsibility to coordinate and come out with a list of resource persons who can facilitate and be positive speakers for engaging men in addressing issues related to gender and gender equality
Bring out a set of papers on the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Existing and proposed laws and policies on key gender issues and FEM's position on them. Amendment Acts and laws to protect and address gender based violence and discrimination and FEMs views and position on these. AFSPA in the context of men and conflict - suggested by Anand Pawar; Demilitarization of men's mindset - suggested by Subhash Mendhapurkar Sex-selective abortion and Abortion Rights. 	<p>Establish an editorial committee to facilitate preparation and publication of position papers. Prospective members: Subhash Mendhapurkar, Mangesh Kulkarni, Anand Pawar and Abhijit Das</p> <p>We could collate, collect and discuss relevant material while working on the proposed position papers. Some of the papers could be adapted from similar literature generated by women's rights groups with their prior permission.</p>
Expansion of Manifesto Editorial Committee	Mangesh Kulkarni will take the lead in developing the manifesto. Abhijit, Satish, Sanjay Shrivastava, Subash Mendharpukar could be members
Shapath patra/Pledge to be developed and promoted	Akshara has a pledge which it often uses in colleges and universities during its campaigns ; this could be adapted (Mithun to facilitate), write-ups supporting the pledge to be developed and shared Subhash Mendhapurkar these (pledge, write-ups/position papers] can be translated into Hindi, Tamil, Marathi, Gujarati etc by CHSJ
Violence Free campus campaign	Astitva and SPMM (Akshara is already doing it) will be promoting it in their own region and this could be shared in the FEM Network
Formation of Violence Free Campaign Committee	Mithun, Bali Ram (Convener) and Ravi (SPMM) will take this forward, develop a plan of action and share it with all so that FEM can promote it nationally too.
Sharing of relevant stories, photographs, voices from the field etc. in local language	CHSJ takes the responsibility to provide translation facilities, ensure global dissemination and document best practices..

Abhijit Das also shared the following on the Global Symposium to be held in 2014:

FEM will be hosting the global symposium in collaboration with the global alliance MenEngage - an acronym for Engaging Men and Boys for Gender Equality. Through this forum the first symposium was held in 2009 in Rio de Janeiro. 450 participants from 80 countries participated in it. Five years later it is going to be organised in India at Delhi. In Rio there were only dialogues and presentations; however, we would like the Delhi symposium to go beyond that format. Along with presentations and dialogues, we will create a space for practical and cultural expression through a Mela where innovative, creative methods will be used

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by participants to share their ideas and experiences. We will also be holding a rally to convey the message that men are equally concerned about violence.

Representatives of political parties, trade unions and mass movements will be approached to secure their participation in the symposium. We will also seek partnership with relevant Government agencies. FEM will encourage a bottom-up strategy and encourage members to organise four or five regional symposia prior to the global symposium. Financial and logistical support will be provided by FEM.

Mangesh Kulkarni: Recently an international conference on 'New Culture of the Left' was organized with the help of the ICSSR and the JNU. It was held at the JNU Convention Centre (New Delhi) where several parallel sessions were conducted. The forthcoming global symposium to be hosted by FEM could be similarly organized in collaboration with the ICSSR and the JNU.

Action Points	Key Persons/Institutions/Alliance
Organise Global Symposium in India	FEM will host the event
Key activities	Undertake regional events
Venue	JNU Convention Centre, New Delhi
Scientific Committee	Mangesh Kulkarni, Sanjay Srivastava
Organising Committee	Anand Pawar, Satish Singh

Sujata Khandekar's proposal was shared; however there seems to be confusion on what kind of collaboration it is seeking and what kind of work is envisaged. As neither Sujata nor any representative of her organisation (CORO) was present to clarify this, it was difficult to take a decision on the proposal.

The meeting ended with the release of 'Bap Lek Natyavishayiche lekh' - a compilation (by Samyak, Pune) of select Marathi writings on the father-son relationship. . The meeting ended with a vote of thanks by Satish Singh. All the participants were thanked for contributing to the deliberations; while Subash Mendharpukar and the NCAS team were specially thanked for providing logistic support.

Participants List

Sl. No.	Name	Organization	Email ID
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