

16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM

AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

2018 | Day 9



THE GREATER THE POWER, THE MORE DANGEROUS THE ABUSE

“Didi, I don’t think it is right to be beaten by Badi Madams when I did not do anything wrong.”

These are the words Vinita* was working up the courage to tell me. Vinita was 9 years old when her father tried to sell her into the sex trade. Her father was stopped in time, she has since been living in a Child Care Institution, hoping to receive quality education and live a life free of abuse and trauma. Can you imagine hearing these words from a child who has faced violence feel that it is wrong to be beaten ONLY when she did not do anything wrong?

My conversation with Vinita resulted in an investigation which exposed rampant physical abuse at the Institution she was living in, along with 60 other children who were placed there for their rehabilitation. It made me think about the reason Vinita took so long to open up about the abuse, because she was made to believe abuse is the normal condition of life.

In later statements, Vinita clearly stated that in the Institution, corporal punishment was the standard punishment for the smallest of mistakes – like being late for meals, leaving ones hair in a state of disarray, or breaking something in the kitchen.

These were children who had already witnessed some form of violence in their life, imagine their plight when they were forced to live under conditions where violence, as a means of discipline was the accepted norm. The biggest injustice against all these children was their lack of realization that they were victims of maltreatment. The idea of punishment to facilitate correction was ingrained in the minds of the children living at the Institution. The understanding that they deserve to be beaten was not the only violation of their rights. Vinita, along with the other children had internalized the belief that the Institution’s staff were providing them with food, clothing, and shelter and thus have earned the right to deliver justice ‘for their good’. This brutal violence resulted in the child being maltreated under the garb of discipline while being coerced into feeling gratitude for the same.

*Name changed to protect identity



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