

16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM

AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

2018 | Day 14



WHO IS TO BLAME...?

One afternoon I visited Neha at the Child Care Institution (CCI) she was placed at. Neha was thrilled to see me and couldn't stop smiling. As we spoke, Neha* asked

NEHA *Didi, I overheard one of the girls talking to the other girls and warning her to not talk to me as I am infected with some bad condition. Is the condition so bad that people will stop talking to me?*

Neha, you are aware that there is a certain virus in your blood which has resulted in this condition. To stop the growth of the virus you are under medication. Having this condition does not mean you won't have any friends. Don't let such thoughts affect you. I'm happy that you came and spoke to me, I will certainly try and speak to the other children. I think you should also go and talk to your friend, share about your condition, let her know that you are under medication and that your condition won't harm anyone around you.

**SOCIAL
WORKER**

NEHA *Will I ever get cured from this condition?*

I didn't know how to convey the harsh truth, to tell her that the HIV virus inside her blood cells has built a permanent abode and medication can only control further growth of the virus.

The medicines you are currently taking is hindering the growth of the virus and you will observe the progress in coming weeks.

**SOCIAL
WORKER**

Neha seemed a little hopeful, but the tinge of self-doubt was visible in her eyes. Neha bid me goodbye leaving for her Mehendi classes.

*Name changed to protect identity

Contd...



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Neha is a 15-year-old girl who was recently detected with HIV and is currently placed in a CCI for her rehabilitation. The possible point of the virus's transmission inside Neha's body could be her contact with an infected syringe when she was compelled to work as a rag picker, undetected mother to child infection or an undisclosed sexual assault.

We discussed this case during our case management sessions, discussing the immense pain and neglect this child had gone through in the past 15 years. One question struck me and continues to bother me - **Who can be blamed for the violence and condition Neha is in today?**

Neha is already a victim of circumstance - created by poor financial conditions and/or carelessness of another. To add to her miseries, she is also facing violence in the form of being shunned by people due to lack of sensitivity and awareness. Neha understands the importance of taking her medication on time, but she is yet to understand the condition and accept the fact she will have to live with the HIV virus for the rest of her life. At the CCI she attends Mehendi classes with keen interest and dedication.

Violence has infinite shades, it isn't just physical harm but mental and emotional suffering which is often difficult to perceive. Many young children like Neha, are victims to such systemic violence.

*Name changed to protect identity



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