

MWF NEWSLETTER

Nov – Dec 2019

About Muslim Women's Forum

MWF is a not for profit organisation formed in 2000. Its primary objective is to provide Muslim women a platform for expressing themselves on matters directly affecting their lives. The organization is unique as it acts as a catalyst with many stakeholders in addressing issues pertaining to Indian Muslim women. Educational uplift, self-reliance, social development, legal reform and political empowerment; MWF advocates all these.



News & Events

Exhibition: Pathbreakers:

The Twentieth Century Muslim Women of India

Venue: Jawahar Bhawan, Dr. Rajendra Prasad Road, New Delhi

Date: 11- 13 November 2019.

Field Visit and Knowledge Building Workshop in Assam, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh

Assam: 13 - 18 November 2019

Madhya Pradesh: 25 – 27 November 2019

Uttar Pradesh: 1 - 3 December 2019



Interaction with women of Devghat and Koilareha Goan (UP)



MWF Assam Fellows teaching children at a community library set up by the JHAI Foundation in Majitvita.





**Workshop: Understanding Islam :
Theology, Sociology & Legality**
Venue: Patna, Bihar
Date: 17 - 18 December 201



Understanding Islam is a residential workshop designed by MWF to explore understandings, provide clarity on the religion's various aspects and create dialogue. The effort is to enable dialogues of peace and harmony within communities to uphold the secular fabric of India.

Meri Kahaani, Meri Zubaani

Rajiya Khatoon
MWF Fellow from Chhatarpur

I came to know about Muslim Women's Forum and the Leadership & Capacity Building Training for Muslim Women organised by MWF from Afsar Jahan didi. Ruth and Reyaz from MWF conducted my interview in Jhansi on 28 February 2019. That is also how I learnt about Dalit Shakti Kendra (DSK). I used to work in a call centre for five years. But I thought that if I want to make a difference, I should join this training. I am very grateful to MWF for this opportunity.

At DSK, everything was well organized. We were encouraged to participate in all the activities, reading exercise, photography class, group discussions, morning exercise, cleaning and cooking etc. My gratitude to Martin Bhai, Pradip Bhai, Indu didi and Neelu didi for the capacity training, the kind which has never been made available to us before. The training transformed me to be an independent and free thinking person I always wanted to be. Meeting girls from 18 states of India, learning with them, discussing the social issues of different communities helped me to understand my own social issues better. I also took beauty parlor training as my vocational course. Reena didi trained us for two months. When Reena took a 10 days leave of absence, I taught the class in her absence. That makes me proud.

Three of us girls from Chhatarpur travelled back from Ahmedabad to our respective villages surrounded by unknown people in the train, for me this was an achievement, we acquired so much courage. It would not have been possible before. After getting back home I started visiting the Anganwadi centre in Chhatarpur, Ward no 37 and Deri Road Bidi Colony to conduct survey for MWF and from there I moved on to other villages. I held meetings of girls and formed a group, built a library, taught children in my library. I would like to continue to work for empowerment of women in my community.



Rehana and Rajiya started their community work soon after the completion of their capacity training at DSK

MWF Field Visit

MWF Delhi Team visited Tezpur and Barpeta (Assam), Koraon (Uttar Pradesh) and Chhatarpur (Madhya Pradesh) to assess the work and performance of MWF Fellows from these areas. The team also conducted field visit in areas where Fellows are working, held small workshop wherever possible and started dialogue with individuals and other organisations. Here, we will highlight our visit to Chhatarpur, Madhya Pradesh.

Chhatarpur, Madhya Pradesh.

25- 27 November 2019: In Chhatarpur, MWF have two Fellows, Rajiya Khatoon and Rehana Khatoon. Since their residential leadership and capacity training at DSK for 2 months, they both had come a long way. We met Rajiya and Rehana at Afsar Jahan's office at Chhatarpur Mahila Jagriti Manch. Afsar had been a role model for Rajiya and Rehana right from the beginning. By October 2019, they have already conducted MWF baseline survey at 10 villages in Chhatarpur district. We were impressed with the detailed registration book and records they maintain.

Rehana reported her visit to Gram Newari, a fishing village. Upon learning that most of the families were without ration card, she helped over 31 families to apply for one. They also helped re-enrolled 9 children back into school. They took us to **Ward No. 14, Eidgah Pahadiya**, a new area where mostly poor labourers and their families reside, we met a young bright girl, Henna, 13 years old. We learnt that she was made to stop her schooling at Class 9. It was Rehana who helped to convince her parents to let her continue. Henna is now preparing for her board exam. The Fellows would organize their library meet at least once every week. They taught the children, helped them with their schoolwork.

To the adolescent group, they gave beauty parlour training, the skill they learned from DSK and used it to engage the young girls who had come there.



Rajiya and Rehana gave beauty parlour training to young girls in their area



Henna, a young bright girl was showing us her artwork

Ward No. 37, Bidi Colony, Deri Road

At Aisha Masjid/Madarsa, over 30 women and children from different communities came to meet us. Most of them are beedi rollers and housewives. They earned a paltry sum of Rs. 180/- for their 3 days work. Pusha Puri, 36-year-old complained about the affect it had on their health. Farida Khan complained that the middlemen are taking a huge cut from their small earning. Some complained about not getting money for building toilets or that the contractors are building substandard toilets which are not in working condition, so many still prefer to go for an open defecation.



At Aisha Madarsa we hold a small meeting with the beedi rollers



With Rajiya and Rehana's help 20 people Gulganj have their Ayushman card made.



Gulganj

In Gulganj, about 100 Muslim families reside here, mostly migrant labourers from UP or nearby district of MP. Women are mostly engaged in beedi rolling earning upto Rs. 100 for every 1000 rolls of beedis. Fellows conducted survey here, and also helped a number of families in getting their ration card, Ayushman card and BPL card made. Not all households have toilets. Some said that they tried to meet the Sarpanch regarding this, but to no avail.

Mahua Jhala

Mahua Jhala village, a group of 15 women and children and few men came to meet us at Gopal Khushwaha's house. None of the household has any gas cylinder. Some said that they have toilet, but they are not using it. Here, Rajiya and Rehana covered over 73 households in their survey. Most children studied only upto Class 8.



Maukhera, Bijawar Tehsil

At Maukhera, we gathered at Zeba's house. We were told that earlier these areas were swarming with formidable dacoit gangs. The villagers, in need of extra protection, invited few Muslims to live here to help thwart the dacoits. Most of the Muslim families here have a farming land. We met a young girl, Arti who like other girls of the village, studied only upto class 8. Shabana Bano sitting next to her said that they have to go to the next village, Gopalpura, which is 9-10 km from Maukhera if they wanted to study beyond class 8. Most of the men are away in big cities in search of work. They all claimed that they have toilets. But some of them are using it as a godown and still defecate in the open.

Overview of the community work done by **Rajiya and Rehana**

1. They already covered 10 villages in Chhatarpur district where we observed that they have already established a good rapport with many of the people in these villages.
2. They expressed their strong commitment to continue their community work and make a difference.
3. They wanted to continue to build their capacity.
4. They mentioned how atmosphere at their own home have changed ever since they came back from the training. They slowly managed to gain support from the male members of the family who were earlier skeptical about the work they were doing. But seeing their commitments, they are now very supportive of their work. They mentioned how their brother who never used to help when it comes to domestic work before, is now helping the parents in their absence. It is a small step, but for girls like Rajiya and Rehana, it was everything.



Currently, both **Rajiya** and **Rehana** are at the forefront of the Save The Constitution Campaign and also at the Women organized protest against the unconstitutional law – Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) in Chhatarpur.

We, at MWF agree with the saying that change begins at home. We believe that if we want to change a community we must start with ourselves and apply what we learn to society. The story of Rajiya and Rehana is one such example. The baton needs to be passed on. baton needs to be passed on.

*Constant, slow movement teaches us to keep working
Like a small creek that stays clear
That doesn't stagnate but finds a way
Through numerous details, deliberately.
That is what gives us hope.
- Jalaluddin Rumi*

Support Us

MWF is connected to the grassroots through a network of community workers in partnership with other organisations. Your engagement and support could help us go forward.