

# The Influencer bulletin

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When we welcomed you to the Influencers journey to empower the disempowered, we had promised that your support and voice will enable millions of nameless, faceless women to access social justice and equal opportunity. This issue brings you updates on a much-needed legal cognisance of an abusive “procedure” - the two finger- virginity test and shares stories of systemic change being engineered from our grassroots coalition partners CORO India and Association for Advocacy and Legal Initiatives (AALI).

## The launch of the Influencers



It was a day of celebration and deliberation on 31st January when determined minds from the business, media and development sectors converged in Mumbai to celebrate the launch of the Influencers, and reiterated the need for such collaborative initiatives to address mammoth concerns like that of gender equity and justice. [Read on for more details.](#)

#WEinfluencers

Save the Date for the next convening -  
June 20, 2019, Mumbai

## Freedom from Discrimination and Violence

The Maharashtra Government has given a much needed cognisance to a derogatory procedure which is often used to “determine the virginity of girls”. Commonly known as the “two-finger” test, victims of sexual violence are forced to undergo this as a medical procedure as part of the investigation into the crime they were subjected to. The tests are also used as a customary pre-martial examination of brides-to-be among some communities; Maharashtra’s **Kanjarbhat community** among one of them.

In response to a media report on the above, the National Commission of Women had written to Maharashtra’s Women and Child Welfare Department seeking investigation in the matter. After Ranjeet Patil, the Minister of State for Home, met a delegation of social organisations on the subject, he emphasised that the test will soon be a punishable offence in the State.

Incidentally, the procedure was banned by India’s Supreme Court in 2013 and guidelines were released by the Government clarifying that it has no bearing on cases of sexual violence. Yet the practice continues, as documented in [testimonies of those who have undergone it.](#)

#shametosupport



## Grassroots Leadership

This month, in Marathwada region of Maharashtra, a different kind of election was held in the first week of January; a rehearsal of sorts for the upcoming panchayat elections. The peculiarity of this event was that only women were part of this election from filling up the candidature application to campaigning for their candidature among voters and from voting to actual counting. For the first time, these women saw, understood and learning electoral process very closely. They took a complete ownership of the election as it was their organisations election and no male interference was there.

[Read more here](#)



*This “election” was the brainchild of Ekal Mahila Sanghatana (translated as single women’s organisation) - having 13,000+ women as members, facilitated by **CORO India** and EdelGive in Marathwada region of Maharashtra. It was as formed in 2015 as an initiative to build a breed of single women leaders who will in turn mobilise their peers to reduce violence against single women and change the age-old mindset of society towards them.*

#grassrootsleadership

## In the News



### A fight against casteism that began and ended with a haircut!

In western Rajasthan, casteism goes deep, so much so that for years, barbers have been turning away lower-caste clientele. But it’s a different story in Chamu where a long struggle has opened salon doors for everyone. [Read on](#) about how CORO’s fellowship programme for grassroots leaders wrote the story of inclusion for a caste-discriminated community in Rajasthan.



### Systemic Change for Sustainable Impact

If the trend of low reportage and lower convictions of perpetrators in cases involving violence against women needs to be corrected, custodians of law who will fight this battle for justice legal guardians need to be equipped with the tools they need. Our NGO partner in Lucknow, **Association for Advocacy and Legal Initiatives** conducted a workshop with a group of 45 lawyers for orienting them on the laws that exist for children and women’s protection and how their role is critical in executing justice is delivered rather than denied or delayed.

#WEinfluencers