

ONE DAY ORIENTATION ON SC/ST POA ACT 1989

On March 20, 2025, **Parvatiya Mahila Vikas Trust (PMVT)** organized a one-day orientation session for its core team members on the **Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act (SC/ST POA Act)**. The event was facilitated by resource persons from *Project Mukti* and aimed at enhancing the capacity of field staff to effectively **identify, respond to, and support victims of caste-based atrocities**, especially in the context of rural Himachal Pradesh.

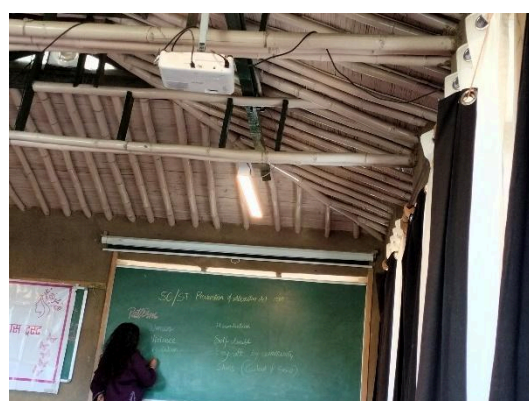
Welcome and Introduction

The orientation began with a warm welcome extended by **Ms. Nanki Bhardwaj** and **Ms. Seema Awasthi**, who walked participants through the program schedule and housekeeping instructions, such as maintaining phone discipline to ensure the session remained focused and undisturbed.

Following this, the **Chairperson of PMVT** formally introduced and welcomed the resource person from *Project Mukti*, highlighting her extensive experience and expertise in the field of anti-caste justice, women's rights, and community mobilization.

Understanding the SC/ST POA Act

The session started with an interactive approach. The **resource person from Project Mukti** initiated the discussion by inviting team members to share their existing knowledge of the SC/ST POA Act and their personal or second-hand



experiences with caste-based atrocities.

She emphasized that **atrocities are a systemic reality** faced by many from marginalized communities. In particular, she highlighted that **women from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes often suffer in silence** due to compounded discrimination—both caste-based and gendered. She noted that society's **patriarchal and feudal structures** often render such harassment invisible, especially when women themselves are unaware that what they experience qualifies as an atrocity under the law.

Lived Experiences Shared

A powerful moment in the session came when **Ms. Bimla Vishwapremi** shared her experiences handling atrocity cases in Himachal Pradesh. She reflected on the **risks to personal safety** she faced, especially as a woman confronting caste violence in rural settings—often under greater threat than her male counterparts.

Several PMVT team members also opened up about their **own experiences of caste-based discrimination and violence**, admitting that they had **not raised their voices in the past due to a lack of awareness** about legal protections and institutional support systems.

Key Causes and Insights

The session also focused on **analyzing the root causes** of caste-based atrocities. According to the resource person, key contributing factors include:

- **Lack of quality education**
- **Limited awareness of rights**

- **Feudal and patriarchal mindsets**
- **Socio-economic exclusion of marginalized communities**

The orientation encouraged the team to not only recognize these patterns in their fieldwork but also to address them through advocacy and community engagement.

After the lunch break, the orientation resumed with a second session led by **Mr. Sukhdev Vishwapremi**, who further elaborated on:

- **Action plans** to be followed when encountering atrocity cases in the field
- **The role and responsibility** of civil society organizations like PMVT in conducting regular sessions and training programs on the SC/ST POA Act
- **Systemic socio-economic exclusion** faced by SC/ST communities in Himachal Pradesh and the importance of sustained legal and social literacy

He emphasized that raising awareness and **proactively intervening** can significantly reduce the normalization of discrimination.

Conclusion and Next Steps

The orientation concluded with a collective agreement on the need to:

- Incorporate **regular capacity-building sessions**
- Maintain **preparedness in responding to atrocity cases**

- Create **support networks** within the team and communities
- **Document and report cases** more effectively

