

Changing  
my life...



changing  
our world





## I was a woman... an 'untouchable'... worth nothing.

*"I used to be a woman full of fear. To toil, to cook, eat, sleep – that was my routine. I was not even bold enough to talk to my husband face to face. I suffered his beatings, and worked to fulfil all our family needs. I took whatever wages I was given. I believed that my daughters should not go to school. I was afraid of the landlords, of the police. I never thought a woman could fight back. I never thought that life could be different."*

In India, Dalit (or 'untouchable') women fall at the lowest rung of the caste, class and gender ladder. Most work as servants, labourers, scavengers or prostitutes. Violence against Dalit women, including gang rape, is widespread and often goes unreported and unpunished. Public humiliation – such as being paraded naked – and abuse by employers, landlords and the police are commonplace. Discrimination against Dalit women is brutal, and systematic. They are denied the right to own land, to choose their employment, to refuse marriage, and they have little access to education or healthcare.

**The word 'Dalit' literally means 'broken to pieces.'**

59p will pay for a newsletter, often read aloud to illiterate Dalit women, with vital information about women's rights.

## Picking up the pieces

For the last ten years, WOMANKIND Worldwide has been supporting local organisations in Southern India which work to empower rural Dalit women. The women come together in village groups (or 'sanghams'), where they gain the skills and knowledge to take control of their lives. In the sanghams, women are able to speak out about domestic or sexual violence, to join small-scale credit and employment schemes, and to organise and lobby for basic services like roads, water, electricity and transport.

*"One day, three women visited us. They encouraged us to create a sangham [women's group] in our village. 'What do I know about these things?' I said. 'What's the use of me joining any sangham?' In spite of my doubts, I decided to join. For the first time, I was able to share my experience with other women. Many things became clear to me. New ideas flooded into my mind. I received a small loan, and was able to earn money from rearing some goats. With women in my sangham, I joined a protest when a girl was raped in our village. We demanded justice - that the rape of young girls should never again take place in our land. Being part of the sangham gave me so much courage."*

**Now I believe that 'women united' can achieve anything.**

## We are changing our lives. We are making history.

*"Women from 32 sanghams came to our village to sit in the road and demand a bus stop – and we got it! We have created a second sangham in our village, and are supporting women candidates for the district Panchayat [elected committee]. Now, we are joining our voice to other women across India and around the world calling for an end to domestic violence, racism and rape."*



15,000 Dalit women have now been involved in projects supported by WOMANKIND in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. Increasingly, they are able to organise large-scale gatherings – public hearings, demonstrations and conferences. 5,000 women attended events for International Women's Day in 2001. Many women from the sanghams have been elected to district councils, and WOMANKIND has been working with our partners to press for government reforms and to give a voice to Dalit women in national and international events.

£103 will pay for a regional campaign on women's rights or domestic violence, involving 100 Dalit women.







**"Now I know that if there is an important issue, five thousand women will come and protest about it."**

Subbulakshmi, elected leader of the Dalit Women's Movement, Tamil Nadu

**With your help, India's Dalit women can change their world.**

## **Personal → local → global. Helping women to connect.**

By supporting WOMANKIND, you can enable the world's most marginalised women to have their rightful voice – in their families, communities, countries, and increasingly, at the international level.

We rely on your support to enable us to run our programmes, and to carry out our advocacy and campaigning in partnership with women's groups. Most recently, we have helped to ensure that women's issues – including the rights of Dalit women – were represented at the UN's World Conference Against Racism in Durban in early September. Without your help, none of our work would happen.

## **Your support will make the world of difference.**

WOMANKIND's work with Dalit women is just one example of our **Civil Literacy** programme. Civil Literacy focuses on giving women access to legal rights, human rights, decision-making and active citizenship.

Through this unique approach, WOMANKIND is enabling many thousands of the world's most marginalised women to gain the knowledge and skills to recognise and take up their rights to full participation in society. **Please give whatever you can to enable us to continue this vital work.**



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