

MEET YOUR PEERS



Committee for Managing Gender Issues

This month, CMGI brings to the community from around the campus, voices of students part of bodies like the CMGI, SASH, and Ally, all working on gender, sexuality, and related issues. We believe it is important for the community to better know and understand these spaces to combat harassment and discrimination and together strive for a safe and inclusive space.

****Please note that, although all these bodies are important in their own capacities and complement each other, the CMGI is the only body that takes up and addresses complaints regarding sexual harassment. To that end, only CMGI is capable of taking up official complaints for due processes.**

What is CMGI? How does it contribute in making the institute safe, inclusive, and accessible for everyone?

"The Center for Management of Gender Issues (CMGI) is the Internal Complaints Committee for redressal of complaints related to sexual harassment. The CMGI is an IIM Ahmedabad wide committee with a vision to address sexual harassment issues, bring sensitization, and develop an intellectual community that can further bring awareness and sensitization to a much wider audience inside and outside the campus. With the inclusion of professors, external members, and student representation, CMGI is a diverse and safe space to reach out in case you face or observe any sexual harassment or gender discrimination issue. With an external member on board, it has the scope to neutralise bias and power structures within. It upholds the clause of confidentiality and follows a strict redressal mechanism reinstating faith in due processes in the institute."



Sanpreet Singh joined IIM Ahmedabad after 9 years of corporate experience and has been part of similar initiatives for the past 4 years to tackle social stigma and bring awareness about the LGBTQ+ community. His inclination towards CMGI comes from the space matching his ideology of working on similar concerns. As a student member representing CMGI, he is working towards making IIMA a more welcoming, inclusive, and safe place.

Why do you think such a body is necessary in an institute like the IIMA?

"The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 mandates the constitution of a committee to create a campus free of discrimination, harassment, retaliation or sexual assault at all levels. CMGI is such a necessary body to not just work proactively towards curbing harassment but sensitizing an entire set of staff, faculty, and generations of students about their rights and responsibilities to create a safe space for all, irrespective of their gender. Personally, I often sense resistance/hesitation to file a complaint and at times filing one and retracting it later. This is a complex phenomenon situated in the socio-psychological realms of the survivor's position, often stemming from feelings of threat, job insecurity, reputation loss, powerlessness against the perpetrator, and stigma. A body like the CMGI can armor against the fears and help by extending support during this unsure phase. An equally pertinent issue where CMGI is necessary is to stop the rumor-mongering and offer protection of identity to both the complainant and the respondent. While it is necessary to protect the complainant's identity on account of safeguarding her against any further harassment or bullying in the workplace, defamed before being proven guilty can have various adverse effects on the respondent's personal and professional life leading to ostracization by the community at large and negative perceptions formed among faculty and student cohorts, further impacting an individual's career and life."



***Kashika Sud**, a Doctoral scholar in the Organizational Behaviour area, has a keen interest in gender and leadership. As a CMGI member, she wishes to unravel the silent positions of many subjected to harassment. Her primary purpose is to offer help in utmost humility and sensitivity to the डर (Fear) eventually manifesting itself into शर्म (Shame) or मजाक (Ridicule). She wishes to assist the voice of a vulnerable segment intending to bring about a change by creating awareness, building trust, and minimizing lapses causing delay and derailment of justice.*



Ananya Jain was born and brought up in Dehradun. A misfit among too many engineers, she studied Agriculture. She spent the past year reflecting, understanding herself and her stances on common issues and is a vocal and an opinionated person. A very approachable person, she is also the student representative of CMGI

Why are you a part of CMGI and what does it mean for you?

"CMGI is an essential body in an institute like IIMA consisting of people who are selfless, approachable, and willing to take a stance. Being a part of this space means a lot of unlearning and learning on multiple issues related to gender and sexuality. It means coming out of one's comfort zone, learning to be empathetic and sensitive, and acknowledging privilege and power relations in the society, one we are all part of and contribute to. Being a part of CMGI is very important to me because I feel that there should be some students whom other students can approach in necessity. It is often assumed that a place like IIMA would not be host to inequalities in terms of gender and sexuality but the reality might be different. There is a need to work in this domain and ensure that no one feels unrecognised based on their gender. Harassment is just one of the many issues I want to address as a representative. Creating awareness and sensitising people towards topics of concern would be my priority."

What regarding gender and related issues resonate with you the most and how has or how do you think CMGI navigates or can navigate those?

I believe what resonates with me most about gender and related issues is how common, almost unifying, negative experiences are in our country and yet the extent of apathy that exists towards solving (or even acknowledging them) shocks me. As was clearly brought out in the first 'Safe spaces' meeting of the CMGI, nearly all of us, having faced discrimination ranging from casual sexism to mental and/or physical abuse have a plethora of horror stories to share and battle scars to show. I was astounded by the number of "Me toos" that came about in our small gathering and by the end of it, I felt both enlightened, having learnt from the struggles of others and connected to something larger than myself through a common thread of empathy and understanding. And that is exactly what we at CMGI hope to do – assist in solving for any wrong-doings, lend a shoulder of support and solidarity, and increase mindfulness for issues we did not previously know, acknowledge, or understand. At the end of the day, we hope to make each and everyone at IIMA feel like they belong, are heard and are never alone in their thoughts, opinions or experiences and I am looking forward to contributing in my small way to making that happen.

***Simran Somani** is a qualified Chartered Accountant who has previously worked with PwC and Nestle India and has interned with P&G in the Brand Management function at IIMA. She is extremely honoured to be one of the student representatives of the CMGI and hopes to contribute to the mission of making the community a safe, inclusive space for all by aiding in spreading awareness and enhancing sensitivity around issues of gender and sexual minorities.*



Subarta Chakraborty is an agricultural engineer. Engaging with an NGO working with mentally challenged people and interning at a drug rehabilitation center, she often had to confront the struggle of LGBTQ+ people as they were brought as mentally ill patients by their families, which is the foundation of her allyship. Through her role as a member-coordinator of IIM Ally, she wants to spread the awareness of humanity as such and work on subliminal conditioning.

What is IIM Ally and what are the kind of issues it picks up or deals with? Is sexual harassment a concern for the LGBTQIA+ community and what steps can IIM Ally take to alleviate the situation?

"IIM Ally is the LGBTQIA+ resource group of IIMA. Our defined objective is to increase awareness about LGBTQ+ issues and create a safe space for the students irrespective of gender identities. We encourage open discussions and expressions of gender identity both offline and online. The activities of IIM Ally are focused on campus life, business workplaces, and the social inclusivity of the community. The SIG collaborated with organizations like Humsafar Trust, American Corner, Kashish Arts Foundation. Sexual harassment is a severe concern to the LGBTQIA+ community. A survey (by TUC) says around 70% of the community people are susceptible to sexual harassment in the workplaces. This is a hidden epidemic, and the more we become aware of the problem, the more we can prevent it. An Ally group doesn't consist of core members only. There are networks at various levels (for example we represented IIM Ally at the international Ally forum of Reaching Out MBA). The nexus increases the collective bargaining power and creates a sense of security."

Why is a separate body like SASH important on campus, ie., why is a student run body to combat sexual harassment important despite the formal body to combat it (the CMGI) existing and has student members?

Sexual misconduct and harassment happens even at the most renowned institutions. Unfortunately, those being harassed are unlikely to speak up due to fears of consequences and victim-shaming. While a legal body like CMGI is crucial to investigate cases of harassment and bullying, SASH is important because student bodies are usually more approachable and easier for members of our community to access. SASH also helps members of the student community actively voice and plan events to combat harassment. Student activism to prevent sexual harassment makes us and our classmates more aware and vocal of the issue itself. SASH as a body, allows students to give feedback, speak of anything that's made them uncomfortable and find solutions together. Sometimes, people may be unaware of how they could be excluding someone (for e.g. leaving out sexual minorities in survey forms), or may not realise how something they say or do could hurt someone. (for e.g. insensitive jokes on social media) SASH plays a role in spreading awareness and disseminating information to the community. While CMGI is crucial in leading investigations of harassment, SASH works along with CMGI to make the IIMA community more aware of what constitutes harassment and makes student members more active in preventing forms of harassment.

Kangana is a lawyer and coordinator of SASH. What she wants for all members of the IIMA community is people (irrespective of their sexuality or gender) to be able to make choices without fear of external judgements, stereotypes or expectations. She wants each one of us to feel safe and know that the institution will stand by us if we have been discriminated against or wronged.



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