

## **The Last Girl First: World Congress Against Sexual Exploitation**

SLC students, with the encouragement from the Principal Dr. Rabi Narayan Kar and under the mentorship of Dr. Kusha Tiwari, participated in the three day International Congress on **The Last Girl First: World Congress Against Sexual Exploitation** as volunteers. This was a great opportunity provided to them by SLC and Apne Aap Women Worldwide.

“**TO BE A PROSTITUTE IS NOT A CHOICE**”. This line is quoted by APNE-AAP’S founder Ruchira Gupta who introduced “The Last Girl First: World Congress Against Sexual Exploitation”. The agenda of this congress is to take care of that last girl who is low caste, poor, marginalized and is a woman of color. SLC students got an opportunity to participate and contribute in the success of this International Congress held from 29<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2017. It was 29<sup>th</sup> January, 2017 when we, the student volunteers, stepped into Indian International Center wearing T-shirts that read :

SEX IS NOT WORK

OUR BODIES ARE NOT FOR SALE

:- APNE AAP

The students got a great opportunity to meet and interact with delegates from all over the world and especially the Hollywood actress Ashley Judd who attended the congress and spoke about her own experiences of childhood exploitation and trauma. The Congress began with Ruchira Gupta introducing her organization Apne Aap and the conference theme ‘Last Girl First’. The Congress saw participants from countries like Canada, South Africa, Bangladesh, India. There was a speaker named Fatima Khatoon who shared her story of child marriage and prostitution. She is from NAT community where inter-generational prostitution still prevails. Anjali Diamari, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> day, spoke about the need for everyone especially men to join hands in the fight to end sexual exploitation. The audience gave a standing ovation to courageous Soni Soori who unflinchingly told her story and shared her experiences of torture in police custody. Then some extremely powerful statements and anecdotes were shared by speakers. One such speaker was Ana Maria Coral, an expert on trafficking from Spain, who said “There is an intent to banalise and normalise prostitution which is scary.”

The SLC volunteers under the leadership of Dr. Kusha Tiwari, Covenor of WDC SLC National Conference, learned a lot from this event as they were part of the whole process of organizing and attending to the delegates from different countries. This International Congress exposed them to the modalities involved in the organization of such large scale events. The student volunteers met Principal Sir after coming back from the Congress and narrated their experiences of meeting many exciting people.