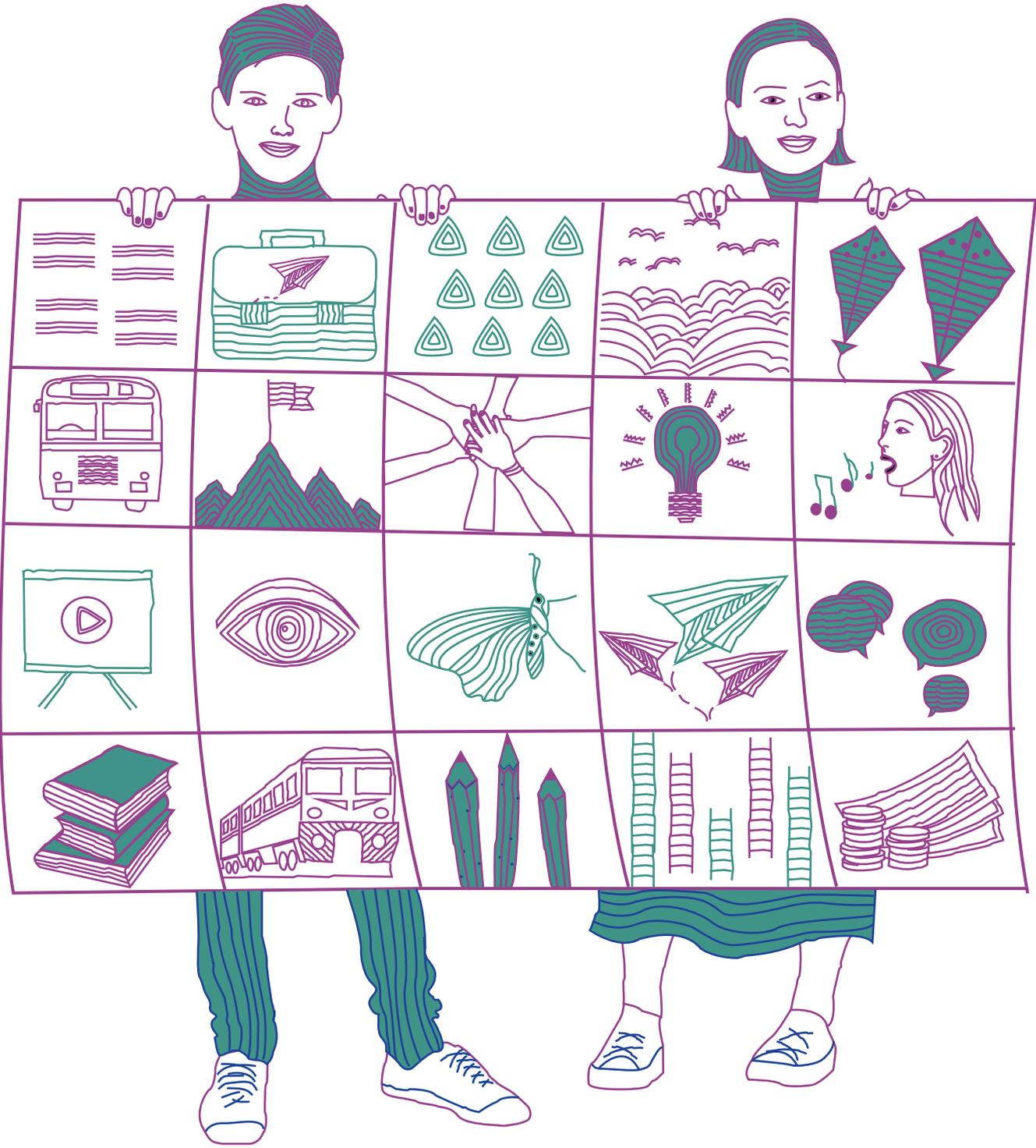


AKSHARA

Annual Report 2016-2017



AKSHARA

Annual Report 2016-2017

Head Office

AKSHARA CENTRE
Dhuru Building, 2nd Floor,
[Opposite Bank of Maharashtra]
Gokhale Road, Dadar (West),
Mumbai 400028, India
Tel: 022-24328699

Email

aksharacentre@vsnl.com

Websites

www.aksharacentre.org

Website for info on violence against women

www.standupagainstwomen.org

Social Media

Facebook : <https://www.facebook.com/AksharaCentre/>

Twitter :

[#gaanarewrite](#) 

Akshara is a project of FREYA-India, a registered Trust, No. F 1656 (BOM), with an exemption from Income Tax under Section 80G and with a FCRA registration.

Acknowledgments

All our program officers contributed to the making of this Report. Nandita Gandhi conceptualised and wrote the Outline. Reetika Subramanian wrote it up. Poornima Mandpe proofed it and Sakina Daginawala designed it.



THE AKSHARA STORY
for the year
2016 TO 2017

If numbers could tell a story, India's tryst with gender equality is long and grim. India ranks 127 out of 152 countries in UNDP's Gender Inequality Index, 2014, only above Afghanistan among the SAARC nations. Likewise, in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index 2014, India stands at 114 out of 142 countries. The ranking is based on four parameters including economic participation and opportunity, educational achievements, health and life expectancy, besides political empowerment.

The story doesn't end here.

More than 100,000 illegal, sex-selective abortions are performed every year; the overall sex-ratio of the country stands at an alarming 943 women for every 1,000 men. In terms of literacy, the gap indicating a gender disparity in the access to education facilities is 65.46% literate females to 82.14% males.

Year after year, even as government schemes and programs are rolled out with the promise of empowerment, parity and safety, the situation on ground remains harsh. The unequal conditions and patriarchal mindsets continue to define a woman's everyday life, making eve-teasing, rape and abuse, a norm.

Vision, Goals and Strategies:

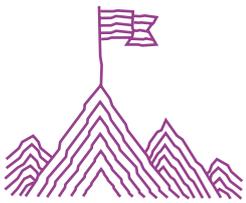
Painfully aware of these gaps in inequalities and vulnerabilities, Akshara Centre has been striving to bring women and men in India on an equal footing since 1995. As a not-for-profit organisation-cum-resource centre with a very strong and enthusiastic cohort of volunteers and ambassadors, Akshara is fuelled by its strong vision, goals and strategies.



VISION



To establish a gender-just
and violence-free society



GOALS

To enhance societal consciousness on
gender inequality

Empowerment of women and youth
Breaking the cycle of poverty, vulnerability
and disempowerment of girls

Gender sensitive youth by initiating
personal and social change

Prevent violence on women

Promoting gender inclusivity in three
cities of India by 2020

Fostering partnerships for gender-just
laws and policies

STRATEGIES



Training and mobilisation of youth and
women

Promoting solutions through lobbying
with local authorities and institutions

Mobilising public support through
campaigns

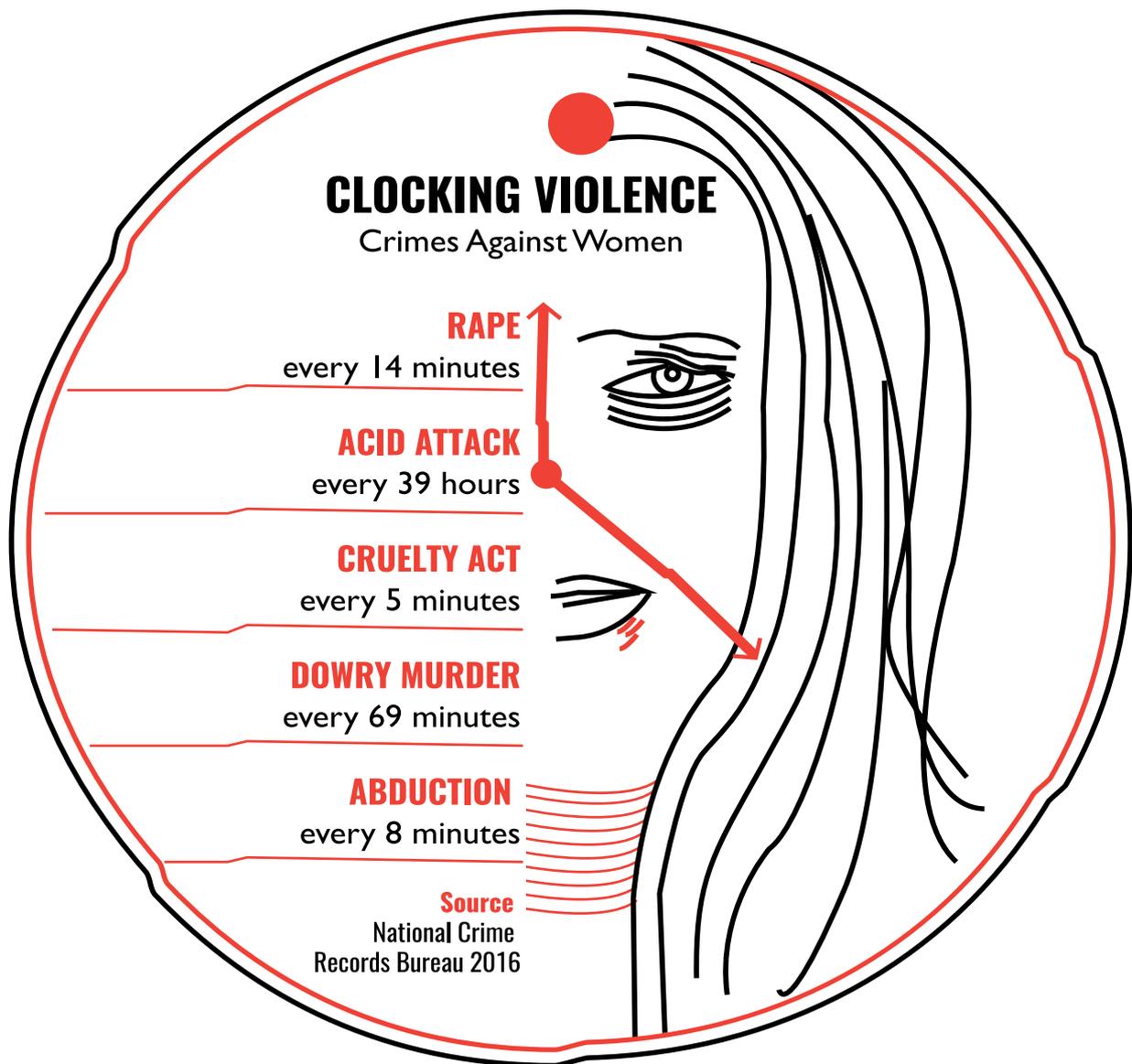
Information dissemination and
participatory research





**THE RIGHT
TO LIVE
WITHOUT
VIOLENCE**





In India, every 14 minutes, a woman is reportedly raped. A forced abortion is reported every 19 hours. Multiply these numbers by 24x7, 365 days a year, and the outcome is staggering. As per the National Crime Records Bureau data, as many as 2.24 million crimes against women have been reported over the past decade. 'Reported' being a key word above; considering several women continue to feel intimidated or disregarded by the law and society.

Hinged on these unfortunate, everyday realities of several women, Akshara has been working to effect sustained change at the very core of the problem: the mindsets of people. Through a range of well thought-out programs and interventions, Akshara's highly motivated team engages the communities of youth and women with a common goal to ensure that every woman in India can claim her right to live fearlessly, without violence, 24x7, 365 days a year.

Gender Sensitising Young Men and Women

With more than half its population under the age of 25 years and two-thirds less than 35, young India is bustling with a new generation that harbours different ideas, questions and potential. In fact, it is predicted that our young democracy will have the world's largest workforce by 2027, with a billion people aged between 15 and 64 (Bloomberg Analysis, 2017). India is thus, going through the sort of demographic transition that many nations over the years have, except on a far bigger scale.

In this race to progress, however, several youth especially those from socially and economically marginalised communities and neighbourhoods, find themselves bypassed. Even as the country is undergoing a massive demographic transition, socio-economic disparities have meant that the benefits are not evenly distributed across the country. The problem is not 'development' per se, but the inequalities that it seems to accentuate. Low family incomes, lack of access to education and a good job, social structures and stigma, do not provide a platform to several

youth, who may otherwise be open to new and unorthodox views. Young women have to further endure additional layers of exclusion and exploitation on account of gender bias. In an attempt to bridge one type of gap - between access to information and gender awareness – Akshara has been striving to provide youth with a platform for greater political participation, engagement at a policy-level and improving their quality of life.

Based in low-income pockets of Mumbai, the 'Youth for Change' and 'Empowering Dreams' programs work with marginalised youth in order to enable them to reflect on their own lives, views and prejudices on gender equality and violence against women. In doing so, the youth introspect and question existing notions of patriarchy, masculinity and power in society. The programs help these young men and women to channelize their inner agency to become 'Gender Champions', as they take up the challenge of working with other students, and involve themselves in socially-relevant tasks and advocacy to build a gender-just society.

Our Gender Champions

A glance at some figures

This year we trained **502 youth** to be Gender Champions

Their Profile



Age

90% were in the age group of 14 to 20 years



Studying

46% Commerce; 14% Arts; 13% were from Science disciplines



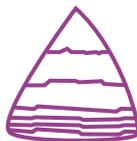
Income Levels

44.5 % had a family income of Rs 5,000 to 10,000



Religion

78% were Hindus; 13.7% were Muslims; and 10.5% were Buddhists



Caste

62.2% belonged to the Lower Castes

Types and Numbers of Trainings

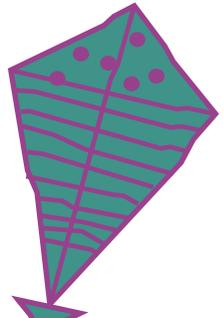
NUMBER OF GENDER AWARENESS TRAININGS

10

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS IN ALL TRAININGS

846

The Impact of Gender Sensitizing



The range of violence against women is wide from severe coercion to everyday sexism. No matter what the seriousness of the issue, our society often pays only lip service to it. The judiciary comes up with the lowest conviction rates, police ignore such FIRs and everyday sexual harassment does not even feature in the existing societal discourse.

In a bid to alter this apathy and overcome the indifference to violence on women in their everyday lives, Akshara encourages and supports students to make the personal political and take social actions.

Over the past year, students have used several public platforms including community film-screenings, public discussions, wall paintings and festival pandals, in order to create public awareness on gender rights, equality and intersectionality. These public engagements, which have also been noticed by the media, have reached out to several thousands of people, directly and indirectly.

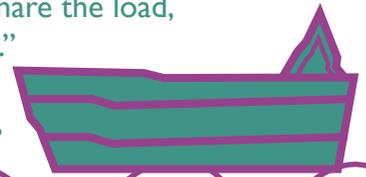
A] Share the Load Campaign

As a part of the Youth for Change Program, students facilitated dialogues on sexual division of labour in society. In the months of September and October, students from 24 city colleges organised film-screenings on the topic and followed it up with compelling discussions and debates. Over a span of two months, the message resonated with more than 3,000 young minds, encouraging them to put an end to these gender-based inequalities in labour.

A POEM

“Don’t let anybody tell you the same,
That helping at home is a shame,
Be a part of the change,
Someone like the blessed rain,
Be proud, among the crowd,
You are the one to share the load,
Sail the equality boat.”

-Anam , K.C College,





B] Wall Painting

Armed with paint, brushes and a robust imagination, student participants from Akshara's Empowering Dreams program painted several public walls and toilets in their communities with inspiring pro-equality messages. Undertaken in partnership with eight organisations, this endeavour reached out to more than 24,000 people.



C] Reclaiming the Night

Women fear the night because they feel unsafe and open to all forms of violence on the streets. To break this fear and regain self-confidence, the Reclaim the Night campaign organises a Night Marathon for young women and men. Nearly 400 of them participated in the run before going around the city in an open bus and walking on the streets. The strong message put across by this act of resistance was covered extensively by the media.

D] Outreach to Colleges and other Educational Institutions



Akshara participated in the training program held by the Maharashtra State Women's Commission for colleges against sexual harassment. Akshara produced and distributed 10,000 booklets on sexual harassment and how students can recognize harassment and prevent it.



E] Election Campaign

In the wake of the Mumbai Municipal elections in 2017, Akshara mobilised several young women to learn about elections. More than 60 first-time female voters were registered in the course of this campaign. During the course of personal engagements and conversations, Akshara realised the need to bring out the demands of the girl voters. Accordingly, a 'Girls Charter of Demands' was put together, which included over twenty demands under the themes:

Right to safe and free mobility and freedom from violence

Right to hygiene, health, and well-being

Right to safe spaces to learn and grow

Right to an enabling, inclusive and non-discriminatory social environment

The young participants reached out to over 10 electoral candidates in four municipal wards of the city and the demands were sent out to many agencies including UNICEF.

F] The Ganpati Festival

Devotees thronging the city's popular Ganpati pandals as a part of the ten-day-long festivities were given an opportunity to click selfies for a purpose. Planned by the girls in the Empowering Dreams Program, who had participated in Akshara's gender inclusivity workshops, these 'selfie stalls' were set up all over the city. The devotees were given innovative props, which included moustaches, spectacles, hats, frames and cut-outs, bearing powerful messages and pledges such as 'say no to violence', 'freedom from fear', 'make my space'. This initiative reached out to more than 2,000 people.

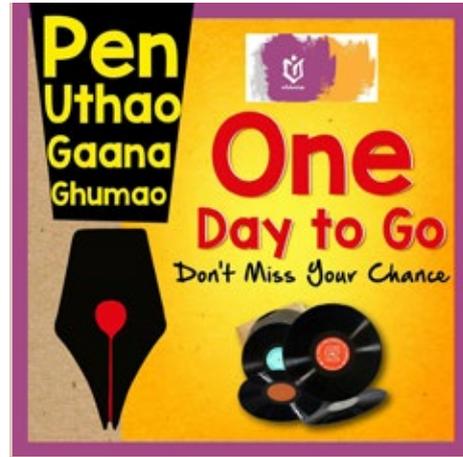




The Methodology of Gender Sensitising



In order to break the silences and dispel myths around gender and sexuality, Akshara facilitated interactive gender workshops with the youth. Undertaken as a part of the Youth for Change and Empowering Dreams Programs, a range of workshops touching upon sensitive topics such as sex and gender, unequal relationships, consent, gender violence, sexual division of labour, queer sexualities, and health were conducted. The conversations enabled many to clarify, unlearn and relearn several ideas that had previously not been vocalised by them. Using films, interactive methods and popular portrayals of sexist roles, the conversations created a platform for the youth to hone their critical thinking lens, respect themselves and become more comfortable with their inner feelings and sexualities. Most importantly, the workshops served as an entry point for several participants to initiate conversations with their families back home on issues that are looked on as 'taboo'.

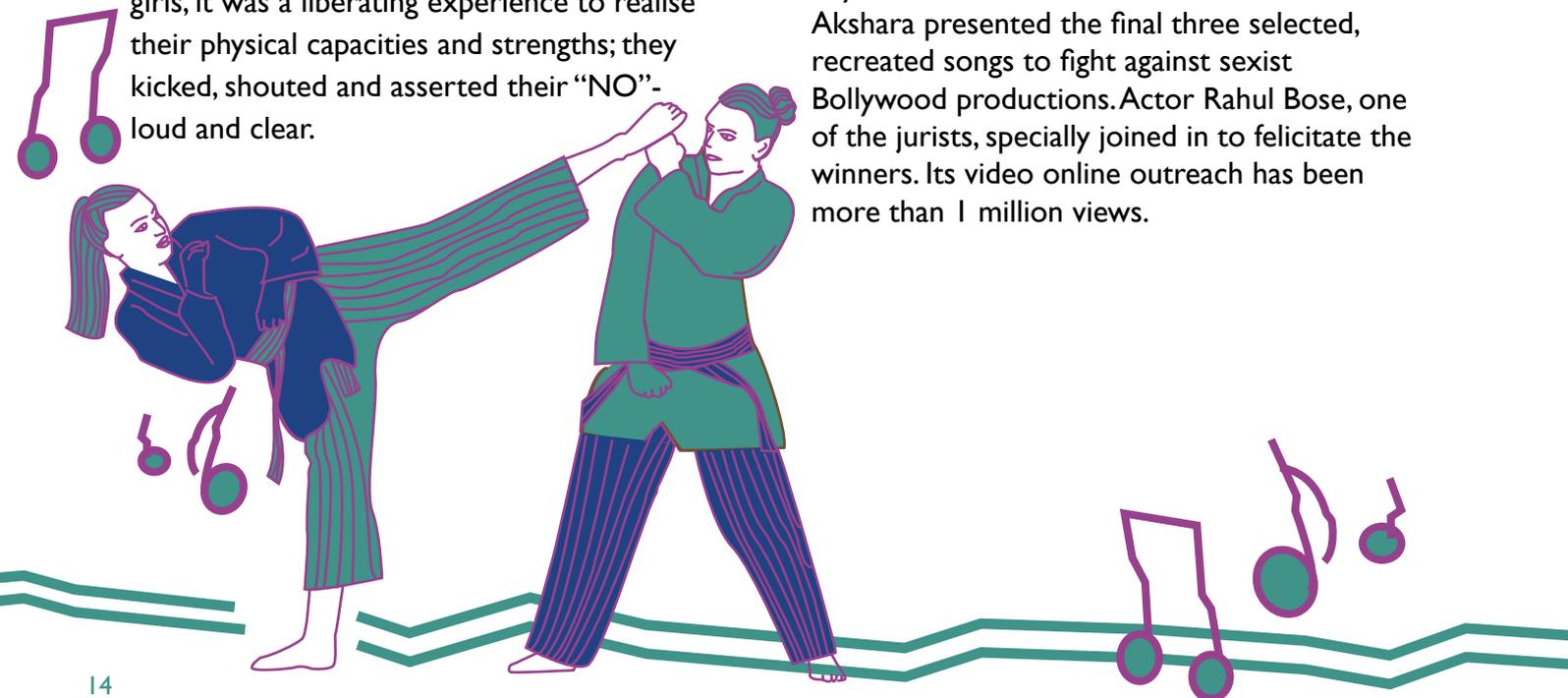


A] Training in Self-defence B] Gaana Re-write Competition

From desolate streets and bus stops, to packed locals rains and buses; classrooms and households- women, both young and old, have recounted disturbing experiences of sexual assault. In order to ensure that they don't remain silent spectators or victims, Akshara encourages women to fight back by building their physical and mental capacities. 105 young women were trained in self-defence by a Win Lido expert. Taking off from their own individual experiences of harassment, the women were trained to not look at themselves with shame and disgust as a 'victim'. Instead, they were asked to build on the embodied knowledge of their experience and drastically alter their responses. For many girls, it was a liberating experience to realise their physical capacities and strengths; they kicked, shouted and asserted their "NO"- loud and clear.

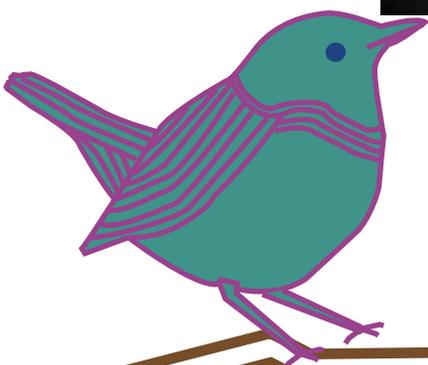
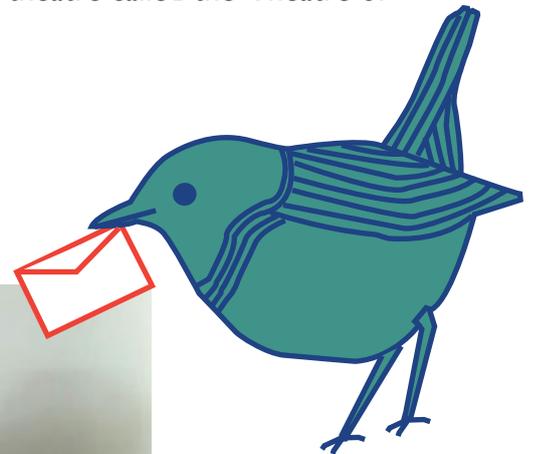
Bollywood's 'item numbers', with their misogynous and objectifying portrayals of women, have been a reason of great anger among several women. In an attempt to challenge these portrayals of sexual harassment, control and degradation, Akshara launched a nation-wide 'competition-cum-campaign' called 'Gaana Rewrite'. The event organised in partnership with partnership with Eksaath, Girls Count and One Billion Rising invited people to rewrite sexist lyrics of popular Bollywood songs.

The response from the youth, both online and offline was enormous as Akshara reached out to more than 100 colleges in Mumbai city alone. At the Kala Ghoda Arts Festival, Akshara presented the final three selected, recreated songs to fight against sexist Bollywood productions. Actor Rahul Bose, one of the jurists, specially joined in to felicitate the winners. Its video online outreach has been more than 1 million views.

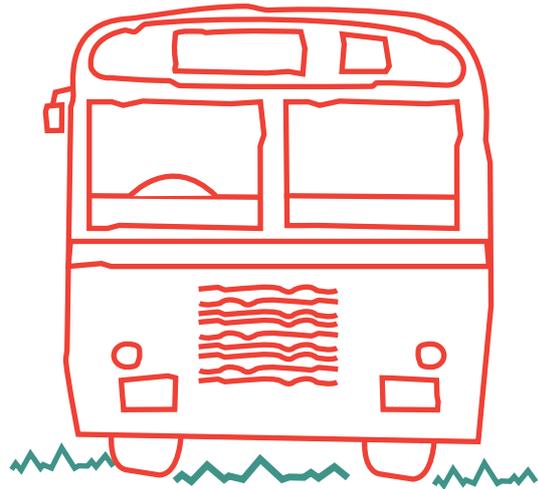


C] Learning Equality in Intimate Relationships

Most mainstream portrayals of 'love' in movies have normalised stalking, control and violence as a part and parcel of relationships. The female character often gives in to these violent propositions. Add to this, the looming pressure from peers to be validated as "cool" for successfully having wooed and 'pataved' a girl. Challenging these misogynist portrayals and pressures of love and unequal relationships, Akshara facilitated workshops on introducing the concept of 'consent'. Akshara's team encouraged young boys and girls to openly discuss topics such as infatuation, fantasy, love, sexual preferences and romance. Tied together with personal stories, anecdotes and popular references, the participants were encouraged to not feel guilty about saying "no" in situations they were unsure of. The conversations served as a means to discuss pressing issues such as healthy and unhealthy relationships through a form of theatre called the 'Theatre of the Oppressed'.



Gender-Sensitising Transport Personnel



Mumbai's lifeline, the local trains ferry nearly 75 lakh passengers every day. Of these, nearly 16 lakh women use the suburban network in the city and its surrounding areas, day-in and day-out. As if navigating through the crowds wasn't an everyday challenge enough, one in every four women commuters face the additional burden of groping, pinching and eve-teasing. The situation is no different on board the packed BEST buses. The iconic red buses that cover the length and breadth of the city, is reportedly a space for discomfort and harassment for city women. According to a survey undertaken by Akshara in 2011, of the 4,225 women interviewed, 46% said that they had been sexually harassed inside buses, while 23% said that they had faced it at bus stops.

In order to ensure that all women can commute without any fears of harassment, Akshara worked with bus and train personnel to tackle the issues head-on. Through a range of training modules and sessions that have been put together based on real-life experiences of the women commuters, notions of gender-based violence and prevention are discussed. Consequently, the dire need to create safe and inclusive spaces for the city's women- young and old- was set as an agenda. At the systemic level, Akshara has been able to support the establishment of the 103 police helpline, expanding the role of BEST conductors to play a preventive role against sexual harassment in the bus; setting up of a gender resource centre within Mumbai's Municipal Corporation; and bringing up safety systems within Railway Protection Force.

Rail Personnel Trainings

240

Government
Railway
Police

318

Railway
Police
Force

75

Mahila
Squad



NUMBER OF WORKSHOPS
With Bus And Train Personnel



Bus Personnel Trainings:

410

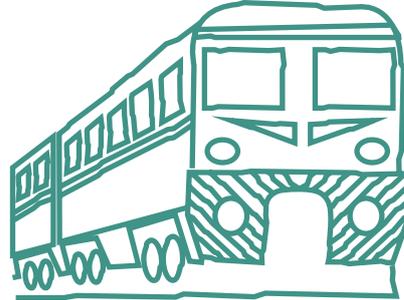
Bus
Conductors



The Method

The trainings and workshops with the Railway Authorities were designed keeping in mind the situation on ground and the role that the train personnel can play in putting an end to women's every day experiences of violence and harassment. Using audio-visual tools, interactive group discussions and film-screenings, Akshara touched upon sensitive and crucial issues such as prevention of violence in public places, the role of the personnel, and more importantly, the ways in which they can initiate action. The training also included expansion of role of RPF to include women's safety as part of their role

In addition, women police personnel (the Mahila Vahini) were provided separate training on women's safety and access to transport. Based on these conversations, Akshara developed a comprehensive



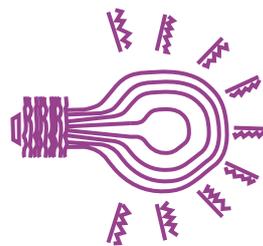
booklet for Railway Protection Forces' men and women personnel on how to address issues related to women commuter's safety and prevention of sexual harassment. More than 1000 copies were distributed to all personnel. This was a joint production of Akshara and RPF.

Responding to the requests from the Mumbai Suburban Railway Authority, Akshara organised a workshop in April 2016 to enhance the overall functioning of the Internal Complaints Committee. Feedback from the external members in the committee in the months following the training revealed that the extent of internal sexual harassment had noticeably reduced.



Reaching out to BEST Bus Personnel

In the course of one year starting April 2016, Akshara's team conducted workshops for BEST Bus conductors, drivers and senior inspectors. The training sessions focused largely on the issue of sexual harassment, linking it with gender discrimination that commonly exists in our society even today. The session dealt with breaking down the definition of sexual harassment, types of sexual harassment, legal remedies and the survey findings of Akshara. A combination of film-screenings, group discussions, presentations, and role-plays were used to facilitate the training. Many important questions were raised by participants during the group discussions. Preventive steps and interventions to combat sexual harassment faced by women commuters were discussed in the training sessions.





THE BASIC HUMAN RIGHT TO BE PRODUCTIVE

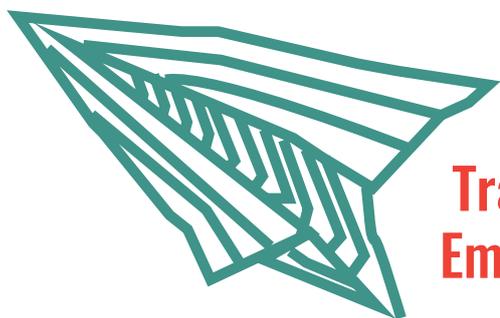




Nearly 35% of the country's women and girls have never entered a classroom; they cannot read or write. As per the Census of India 2011, the number of illiterate males in the country are approximately 18%. This gap is an indicator of the wide gender disparity in the country, where not enough attention is paid to female education. According to the UNDP's Gender Inequality Index 2014, India stood 134th among 152 countries in economic participation. Without much education, countless women are compelled to take up low-paying, unskilled and less dignified jobs such as domestic work, organised prostitution and as migrant helpers.

These inequalities are spread over even to the urbanscape. A 2012 report on global employment trends put together by the International Labour Organisation has revealed that even as more than 60% of young urban females are a part of the informal sector, unemployment among those with graduate and post-graduate degrees continues to be as high as 15.7%. The saga doesn't end here. Nearly 46% of urban women with regular wages have no social security or employment benefits, while 58% have no written contract for their jobs (National Sample Survey Organisation 2011).

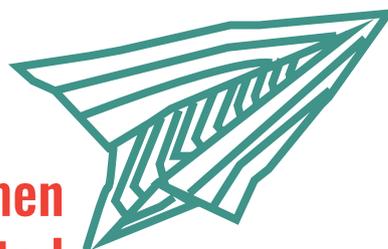
Akshara has been paving the way forward through inclusive capacity-building programs for young women. The Empowering Dreams Program has as its focus young women from poor, socially underprivileged backgrounds and women-headed households. Through a combination of life and livelihood skills, Akshara's team works closely with the women to develop their all-round leadership potentials. 'Soft' skills include confidence building, negotiation skills, teamwork, leadership and public speaking. Whereas 'Hard' or technical skills include basic computer skills, Tally and spoken English which can improve their prospects of gaining employment in better-paying and regular jobs. This journey of learning is deeply rooted in the understanding of everyday gendered realities and experiences, wherein they are given information about their legal rights and skills of self-defence against all forms of gender-based violence.



9

**Training Workshops for
Employability were held**

270
**Young women
participated**





Employability Workshops

Akshara's employability workshops as a part of the 'Empowering Dreams' program have ensured that several young women have been able to find secure jobs, and in turn, dignity and identity. The workshops focused on:

A] Placement Opportunities

These workshops gave the participants an insight into the various stages in finding a job in an extremely competitive environment. Thus, in the resume writing and interview skills workshops, important tips on making the CV and cover letters more impressive were discussed. Mock interviews and communication workshops were also conducted to give the girls a glimpse into what would lie ahead. 36 girls were able to get better employment.

B] Financial literacy

This component gave them an idea of handling money – earned, saved, or for investments.

C] Specialised career planning workshop

As a part of the workshop, the girls were encouraged to envision a five-year career plan and personal goals for themselves. They also attended a Career Guidance Fair to understand the job availability in the market. Towards the end, Akshara also facilitated an additional placement guidance workshop which helped girls to get access to information on jobs that matched their skills and training. In response, girls with updated CVs increased from 52% to 74% and 42 girls secured jobs (29 in full-time, 13 in part-time work) as of April 2017.







**THE BASIC
HUMAN RIGHT
TO LIVE
WITH DIGNITY**



Mumbai is often perceived as 'safe' for its women and girls. People often boast about taking the last local train alone, walking on the streets in the early morning hours, and more importantly, clocking in extra hours or staying out late. However, it is in this very 'safe' city, nearly 95% of the women claimed to have been sexually harassed at least once in public spaces (HT- Akshara Survey, 2011).

Akshara's work in the sphere of turning public spaces into safe ones emerges from the idea that a city that is safe for women is safe for all its citizens. Collaborating with UN Women's program called the 'Safe City', Akshara has incessantly strived to create safe access to public spaces including safer public transport for women commuters. The interventions and strategies draw from a rights-based, feminist approach against all forms of gender-based violence.

Through a range of campaigns and interventions, Akshara has engaged myriad stakeholders to bring public awareness to the issue of women's safety in public spaces.





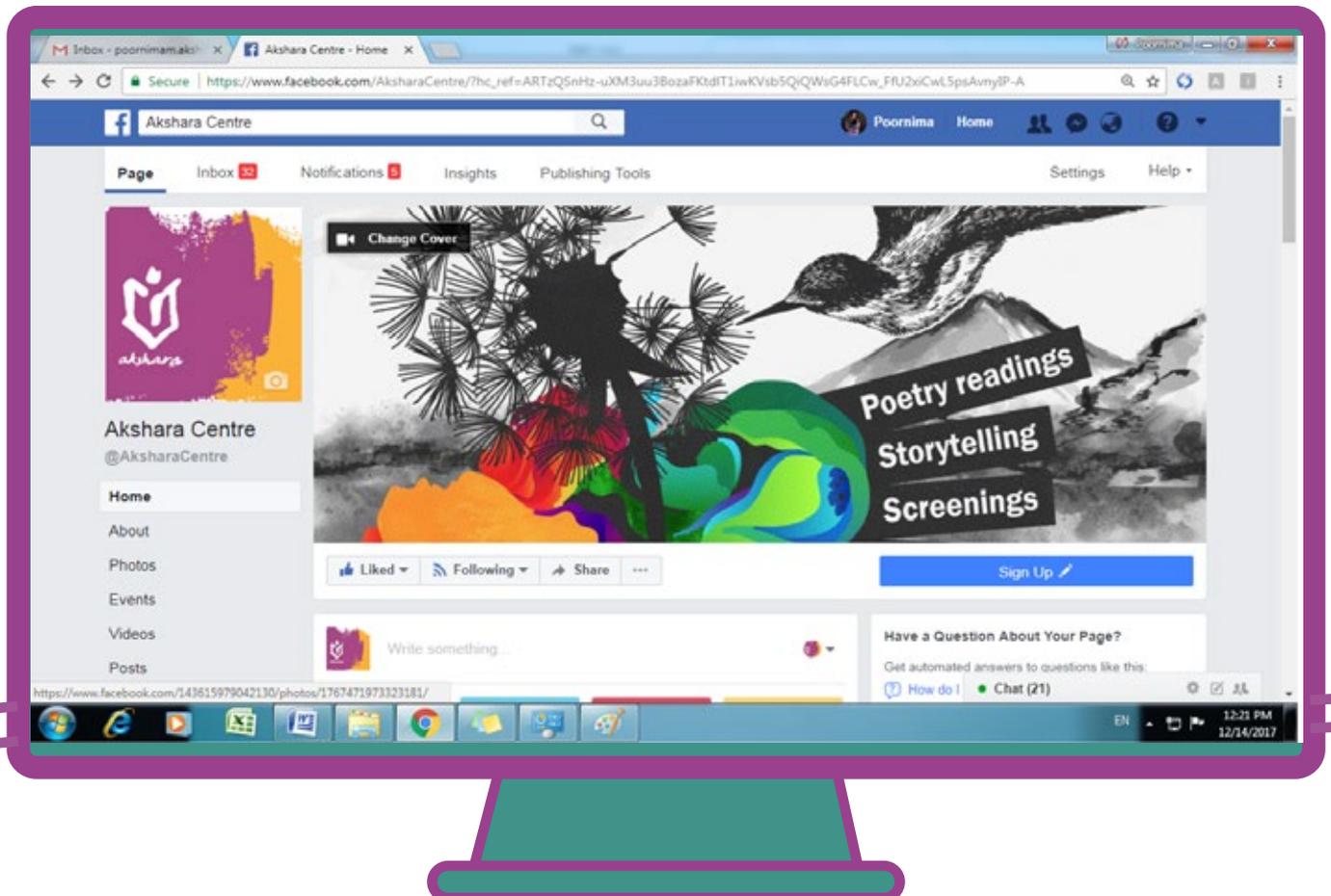
A] The Campaign for Train Commuters

Nearly 16 lakh women travel by the Mumbai locals every day. As they navigate their way through the teeming crowds on the trains and platforms, several women have been touched, groped, pushed, kissed, abused, teased...without their consent. Hinged on these daily experiences, Akshara facilitated trainings for train personnel [mentioned earlier], surveys, safety-walks and audits of stations as a part of its Twarita III Railway Campaign. The core issues related to the women commuters' safety in Mumbai Trains were put forward. In July 2017, Akshara designed and displayed 1,000 publicity stickers to spread word on Railway's toll-free helpline number 182 in all ladies' compartments of the Mumbai locals. Correspondingly, 1,000 comprehensive booklets for the women personnel of the Railway Protection Force were created to address the issue.



B] Gender interventions in the making of the Development Plan 2013-24

Akshara's unprecedented work in the realm of gender inclusivity in urban spaces received a huge push during the planning and workings of the Revised Draft Development Plan, 2034, put together by the Mumbai Corporation of Greater Mumbai. Akshara joined the **Hamara Shehar Campaign**, which includes multiple civic society stakeholders collectively demanding an inclusive Development Plan for the city. A separate Gender Group was set up in response to Akshara's persuasion, inputs and contribution. More importantly, over the course of discussions, debates and exchanges, the group agreed to introduce a new chapter to allocate space for multi-purpose housing and care centres in the city. Akshara's work in creating an inclusive and safe city was also acknowledged by the UN Women in New Delhi, when the Centre was invited for the 'Safe Cities Global Leaders' Forum' to present the successful work modules that had been created for making Mumbai safer for its women.



C] Reaching Out: Online and Offline

Standing in between the voices of women and girls on one hand, and the larger, policy-makers on the other- Akshara's work has drawn extensively from devising and managing campaigns to push for change. Putting to optimum use the diverse range of social media platforms and software, Akshara has constantly made the personal public, and thus, political. The response, over the years, has been extremely encouraging. Akshara's initiatives and ideologies, thus, have spanned audiences, far and beyond.

For instance, as a part of the 'Share the Load' initiative in collaboration with Ariel, nearly, 7.25 lakh people were reached out to through blog posts. Similarly, in Akshara's flagship 'Gaana Rewrite' campaign that mobilised public response against misogynous Bollywood lyrics, nearly 31.24 lakh views were documented on the Logical Indian's website and Akshara's Facebook page. In its own personal networks, Akshara has a strong following. The website has recorded over 71 lakh visitors; the Facebook page has nearly 5,600 followers; and the more personal 'Youth Katta' (closed page) group on Facebook has 343 friends. Even our Youtube channel, which as more than 25 home productions, has over 6.48 lakh views till date. Apart from its web presence, community members closely follow Akshara's work and events even through the personal What's App groups, which has 276 members.

Akshara's field-immersive work and lobbying with policy-makers has also been covered extensively in the mainstream media. Over the past year, 33 mentions have been recorded in English and in local language mainstream newspapers; besides several websites, portals and blogs.

D] Vachaan Hak: Occupying Street Reading Spaces



Akshara's undeterred engagement to build young women leaders in communities continued through its Right to Read Campaign using community-based street libraries. By mobilising nearly 40 representatives from four community libraries, Akshara's young participants from the Empowering Dreams program, made a detailed presentation of the work done so far on the significance of making street libraries more women and gender-friendly. Their suggestions were welcomed by the stakeholders. Independently, the girls have also been trained to hold meetings with their local leaders to invite support for this campaign. Over the year, four such meetings were held in different pockets of the city.



E] Local and Global Campaigns

Akshara's work has often tied the very local to the global. As a part of the 16 Days of Activism fortnight, leading to International Human Rights Day on December 10, 2016- young women backed by Akshara's staff and volunteers, actively organised and participated in city-wide meetings and events. More than 150 participants attended the screening of the film, 'Suffragette', which touched upon women's century-long struggle to attain the right to vote. The main focus of these events was to establish and recognise women's rights as human rights.

These conversations even continued during the Women's Day celebrations in March 2017. Standing shoulder-to-shoulder with other women's organisations in the city, Akshara participated in a protest rally against the alarming religious fundamentalism and demonetisation on Women's Day. The rally witnessed the protest voices of more than 200 women and girls, who had come together from different organisations including Stree Mukti Sanghatna, AIDWA, SNEHA, Vacha, Anubhuti, among others.

F] Women's Rally

On the same day, Akshara also collaborated with the G5A Centre for Contemporary Culture reaching out to nearly 250 audience members, through an event on Understanding Consent: The Spoken and the Unspoken. The three-hour event was opened with a film screening of Morality TV and Loving Jihad, a film by Paromita Vohra who later took part in a discussion with Mumbai University professor Dr. Gita Chadha. After the film-screening, a panel discussion was moderated by Dr. Nandita Shah, Co-Director of Akshara, on the theme of 'Feminism at Work'.





MEDIA PRODUCTIONS AND DISSEMINATION





A kshara's long innings on the ground so far, through direct engagements with the community, policy makers and civil society has successfully managed to bring back gender equality and justice to the public discourse. In its endeavour to reach out to the communities, from where the various programs and projects were first imagined and incepted, Akshara has devised several innovative games, manuals and videos. These works have ensured that the conversations on gender and sexual violence remain alive and relevant among men and women in the country, cutting across socio-economic and cultural barriers.

A] En-Gendering Games for Equality

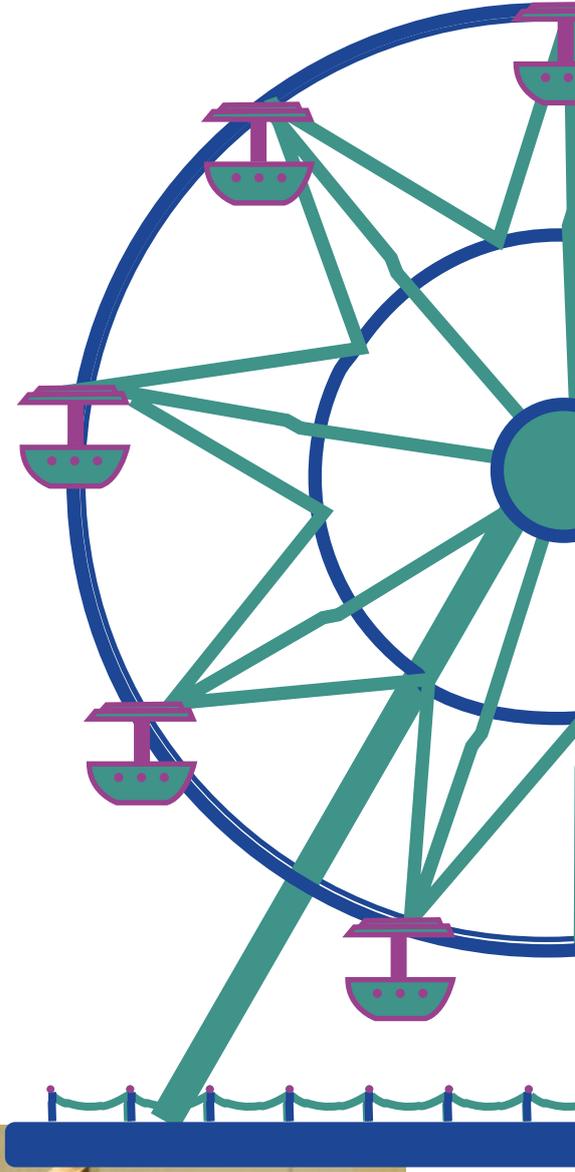
“The Kishore-Kishori Mela is very good concept, various types of stalls are in this program. We have to change our mentality and realize that boys and girls are equal. Students also enjoyed this program and it was good to see some of our older students taking interest in school. It was a really good exposure for the students.” Pramila P. Nikumbh, Teacher, Babasahib Ambedkar Municipal English School

Drawing from the enthusiasm and fun associated with a community ‘Mela’ or a fun fair, Akshara conceived the ideas of the ‘Yuvati Mela’ for girls, a ‘Yuvak Mela’ for boys, a ‘Ma Beti Mela’ for mothers and daughters and a ‘Kishore-Kishori Mela’ for children. The Melas use games, information stalls and fun exercises for young people to engage with gender discrimination, gender-based violence, masculinity and male privileges, in a non-academic and easy manner. Breaking free from the idea of an intense classroom discussion, the games in the Melas are conducted by young people for young people.

Please check Akshara website for a video on the Mela:

<http://www.aksharacentre.org/akshararesources/#videos>

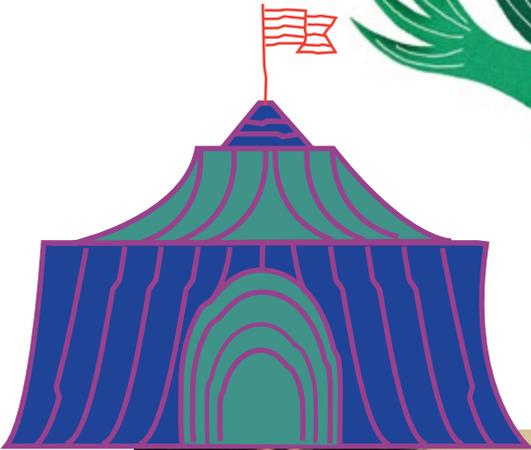
In the ‘Kishore-Kishori’ Mela, adolescent participants studying in nearby schools were invited on board for a self-reflexive journey to break gender norms and create equal opportunities for boys and girls. In all, **1548 students** in the age group of 10-14 years participated in the three Melas that had been organised by Akshara. In addition, the SPGRC-MCGM that had partnered with Akshara, further promoted Melas in 11 schools with help of other organisations. In all, they managed to **reach out to more than 5,500 students.**



Simon Says:
Tota Na Bano



Tota
Na
Bano



Akshara usually organises Melas in bastis, schools and colleges. As part of an up scaling program, the Melas were taken to four different states in the country.

Nistha (West Bengal)



Humsafar (Lucknow)



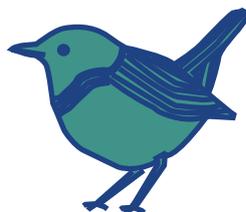
Ruby Social Welfare Society (Nagpur)



Shaheen (Hyderabad)



B] Mapping Change in Girls



Akshara's work over the years has been witness to the transformation of young women in the ways in which they negotiate their everyday lives and vulnerabilities. In a bid to creatively document this close relationship that Akshara shares with its young participants in the Empowering Dreams Program as a mentor, friend and guide, the Mapping Changes Program was established in 2015. It continued as the young participants also participate in the process of knowledge production. They self-assessed the impact of Akshara's programs on them rather than be assessed by the organisation. Using a range of creative methods such as photography and journal writing, story-writing and personal vision writing workshops, the young women who have been associated with Akshara for 10 years re-imagined gender possibilities in their own lived realities.



c] National Youth Consultation, October 18, 2016, Mumbai

By 2020, the average age in India will be 29 years, compared with the average age of 37 years in China and the US, 45 in West Europe and Japan, thus making it one of the youngest countries in the world. These young people, especially those belonging to the underprivileged sections, are navigating a rapidly changing environment with advantages and challenges which has given rise to new trends in risk taking, fear, frustrations but also of hope and optimism. In order to inform its working with youth, Akshara organised a Consultation which brought together knowledgeable people from women's, mixed organisations, small and big CBOs and NGOs, livelihood programs, educational institutions, and networks for one day to discuss their understanding of today's youth, their voices, challenges, dilemmas and attitudes.

The objective of this Consultation was to understand issues of conflicts and contradictions faced by youth in our globalised society as they negotiate with structures of power, weigh their economic options, swing between different value systems and gender beliefs, gauge their politics and social lives. Each session was kick started by a facilitator followed by a discussion and exchange of ideas and experiences.



Education, Skills and Livelihood: given the rising levels of education, what is the ground reality of underprivileged youth in the context of the new market opportunities and their own aspirations ?

Identity, Choices and Freedom: how do youth see themselves or what is their self-image?

Citizenship and Participation: youth have become an electoral bloc but how involved are they in demanding progressive policies or their rights?

Culture and Consumerism: How do youth balance the 'traditional' and the 'modern'? How do they handle the forces of consumerism and peer pressure?

Family and Networks: Youth often negotiate with their families to fulfil their own aspirations. What sort of compromises do they make in dress, education, work, marriage, place of residence?

D] Reading Room and Reference Facility

To provide young city students with a platform to access relevant information on all aspects related to gender such as gender rights, issues, policies and strategies, Akshara's Reference Facility was set up in the MCGM's Gender Resource Centre. With more than 5,000 books, curated film DVDs, banners, posters, ideas for Melas - the various resources focus on issues related to gender realities such as domestic violence, sex-selection, sexual abuse and the various myths on masculinity. They are regularly accessed by college students, university researchers, NGOs, young gender activists, etc.

The classification system has been customised and is marketed to other organisations under the name of 'The Akshara Feminist Classification System'. The library also effectively doubles up as a reading room for girls and women studying for exams. Most of them belong to socio-economically backward sections of society, with little or no privacy and space to study at home. In the beginning of the academic year, 3,000 leaflets were distributed with information about the library in two Municipal wards to generate awareness about the resources on offer.

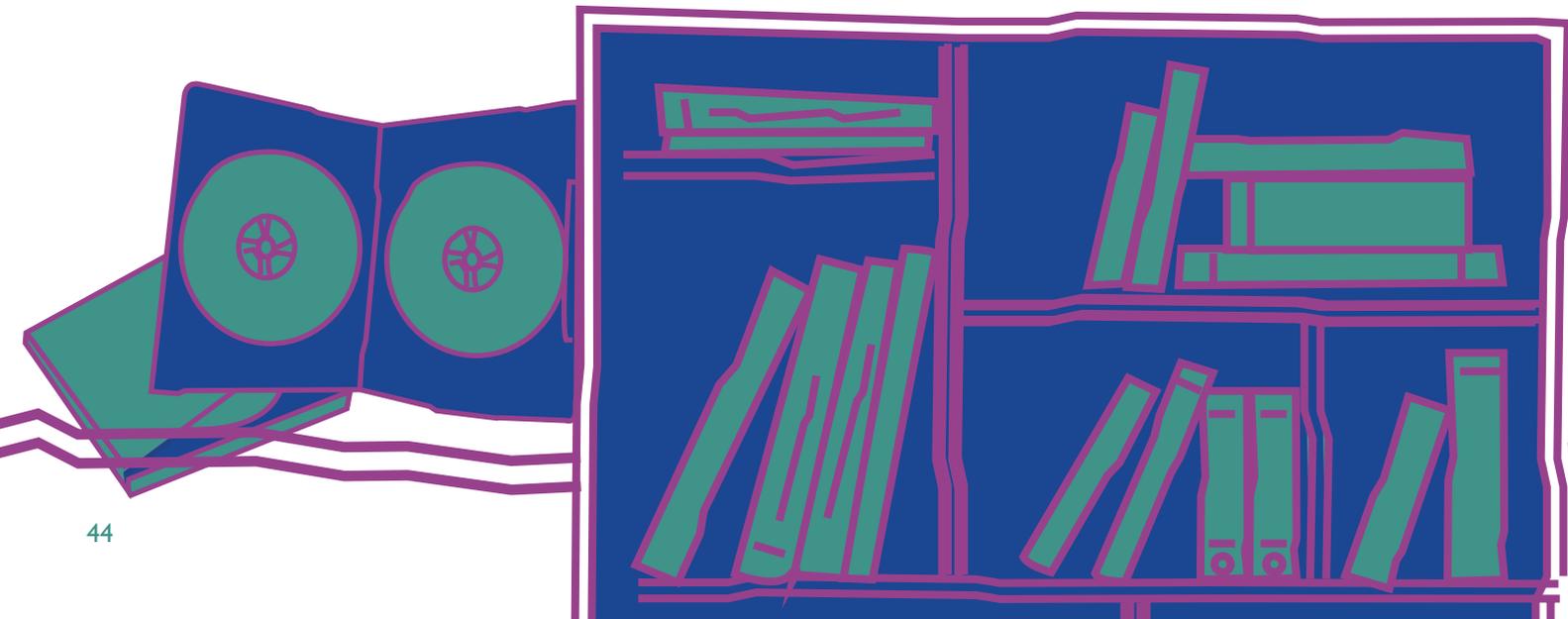
Utilisation

Akshara's library is utilised in a variety of ways:

- i. Several organisations, right from NGOs to colleges, borrow resources, such as DVDs, Placards and banners for the events they organise.
- ii. Akshara library has become a hub for college students and university researchers seeking information on gender.
- iii. The library doubles up as a reading room for girls and women studying for exams. Most of them belong to socio-economically backward sections of society, with little or no privacy and space to study at home.

Footfall:

In the beginning of the academic year, leaflets were distributed with information about the library in two Municipal wards to generate awareness about the resources on offer. Within a span of one year, i.e. April 2016 to March 2017, 979 people availed the library space of which 668 were students who had come for reading and studying.





E] The Women's Resource Directory

Resource Directories are pocket-sized booklets, which have information written and indexed according to geographical areas or according to the nature of the Support Organisations of a city, town or area. In spite of having the information on the Internet, one needs an offline, hard copy production, which can be distributed to women's groups, police and referral organizations like AskMe and Information Services. Most of these organisations do not have an easy access to the net and do a quick referral by looking up the booklet.

Since the past two years, Akshara has produced a Directory covering all organisations in Kerala. The latest is Mumbai.

F] Habitat III - United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development:

The UN General Assembly convened the Habitat III Conference in Quito, Ecuador from October 17th to 20th, 2016, in an effort to garner a global recommitment to sustainable urbanization through the implementation of a New Urban Agenda, that sought to address poverty, identify emergent challenges, assess what has been accomplished to date, and renew member states' commitments to sustainable urban development. The conference attendees comprised multiple stakeholders from government officials to academics and trade unions. Akshara participated in the civil society stakeholder forums geared at presenting models of community responsive and egalitarian governance on equitable and inclusive sustainable urbanization and how to engage with governments through civil society advocacy.

G] Women Deliver Conference 2016:

The 2016 Women Deliver Conference was held in Copenhagen, Denmark from May 16th to 19th, 2016. It was the largest gathering to discuss the rights and wellbeing of women and girls in over a decade, alongside being among the first major global conferences following the inauguration of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The focus of the conference was on how to implement the SDGs so they matter most for girls and women, with a specific focus on health – in particular maternal, sexual, and reproductive health and rights – and on gender equality, education, environment, and economic empowerment. Akshara was invited to present its work on use of data for advocacy.

Our Team

Our Supporters



Financial Statements

Press Coverage

Our Team



Our Supporters

Board and General Body Members

Dr Nandita Gandhi (Co-Director, Managing Trustee):
has been active in the women's movement for the past 25 years.

Dr Nandita Shah (Co-Director, Managing Trustee):
is a professional social worker, activist of the women's movement and a gender trainer.

Ms Abha Bhaiya is a founder member of Jagori, New Delhi, and Jagori Rural in Himachal; she is also an activist in the women's movement, a gender trainer and consultant.

Ms Anjali Dave has been working for over 15 years with the Tata Institute of Social Sciences' Special Cell for Women and Children along with the Mumbai Police.

Ms Nina Kapasi is a chartered accountant and concerned citizen, involved with setting up and streamlining financial systems.

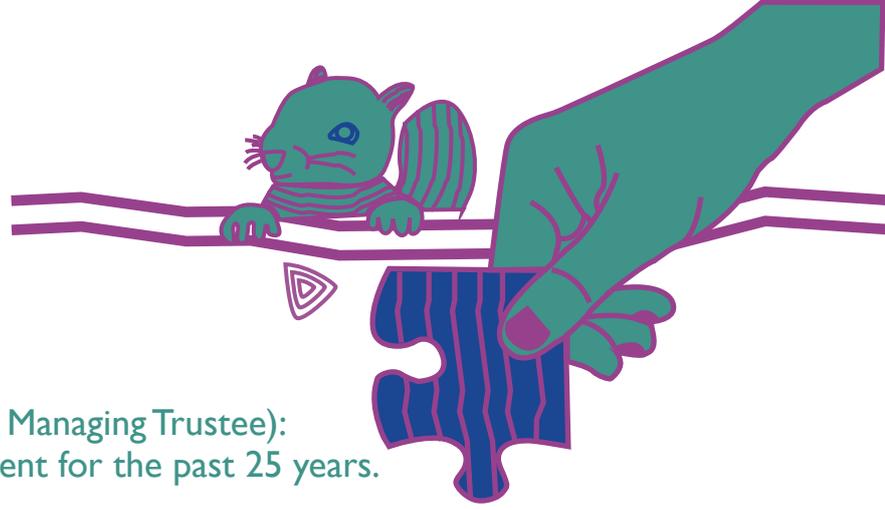
Ms Shimul Javeri Kadri is an architect who works on numerous public and private constructions and has helped Akshara design its space.

Ms Sudipta Dhruva is a Trainer, media specialist and producer of children's television shows.

Mr A K Roy is an activist working on the issues of development and the environment for the past 30 years.

Mr Gagan Sethi is founder of Jan Vikas and an Organisational Development expert for the past 30 years.

Mr Pravin Gandhi is an IT consultant.



Funding Partners

EMPOWER ,UK

VACHA ,INDIA

JAGORI,INDIA

MISEREOR, GERMANY

NATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR INDIA

GIVE INDIA FOUNDATION,INDIA

STUDIOSUS FOUNDATION, GERMANY

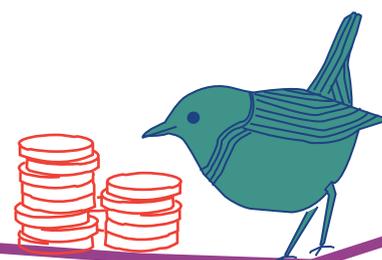
AMERICAN JEWISH WORLD SERVICE (AJWS), USA

AMERICAN EMBASSY (FINANCIAL SERVICES CENTRE)

ALKYL AMINES CHEMICALS LTD.,INDIA

UNWOMEN,INDIA

ENCOMPASS EVENTS PRIVATE LIMITED,INDIA



Donations from Individuals and Organisations

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CAA KWAN TALENT MANAGEMENT AGENCY

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MR. JAGDISH S RAVAL

KIERAN BAPTISTA (DANAMOJO ONLINE PLATFORM)

MR. HARISH R SALOT

UACTIVE TECHNOLOGY PRIVATE LIMITED

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Hinsa Virodhi Kriti Samiti

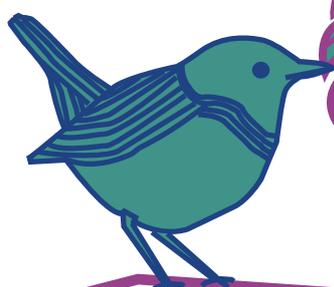
Learning Community

Financial Statements

Front For Rapid Economic Advancement -India (Akshara)
Abridge Financial Statements
For The Year 1St April 2016 To 31St March 2017

BALANCE -SHEET AS AT 31ST MARCH , 2017

FUNDS & LIABILITIES	AMOUNT (Rs.)	INCOME	AMOUNT (Rs.)
TRUST FUND/ CORPUS FUND	18,81,823	BY INTEREST	16,85,464
OTHER EARMARKED FUNDS	2,09,36,298	BY DONATION	1,89,151
LIABILITIES AND PROVISIONS	2,48,846	BY INCOME FROM OTHER SOURCES	3,10,175
INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT	1,34,51,955		
Total Amount	3,65,18,922	Total Amount	3,65,18,922



FRONT FOR RAPID ECONOMIC ADVANCEMENT
-INDIA (AKSHARA)

Income and Expenditure Statement
For the Year 1st April 2016 to 31st March 2017



EXPENDITURE	AMOUNT (Rs.)	INCOME	AMOUNT (Rs.)
TO PUBLIC TRUST ADMINISTRATION FUND	41,696	BY INTEREST	16,85,464
TO DEPRECIATION	92,581	BY DONATION	1,89,151
TO AUDIT FEES		BY INCOME FROM OTHER SOURCES	3,10,175
TO AMOUNT WRITTEN OFF	7,032		
TO MISCELLANEOUS EXPENSES	8,340		
TO SURPLUS OF INCOME OVER EXPENDITURE			
CARRIED TO BALANCE SHEET	20,35,141		
Total Amount	21,84,790	Total Amount	21,84,790

FRONT FOR RAPID ECONOMIC ADVANCEMENT -INDIA (AKSHARA)
 Receipt and Payment For the Year 1st April 2016 to 31st March 2017

RECEIPTS	AMOUNT (Rs.)	PAYMENTS	AMOUNT (Rs.)
OPENING CASH AND BANK BALANCES	9,70,97	PROJECT EXPENSES	1,18,40,108
GRANTS-INDIAN	9,18,146	GENERAL FUND	11,109
GRANTS-FOREIGN	89,38,436	FDR INVESTMENTS	21,90,666
DONATIONS	4,11,651	FIXED ASSETS	25,900
INTEREST AND DIVIDEND	27,13,353	RENT DEPOSIT	90,000
OTHER FUNDS	5,16,934	TDS ON FD INTEREST	2,81,582
OTHER INCOME	7,37,025	OTHER EXPENSES	5,01,625
CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS EDUCATIONAL MATERIAL	10,142	CLOSING BALANCES OF CASH AND BANK	19,91,622
COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTION	37,126		
CURRENT LIABILITIES, LOANS & ADVANCES	1,24,956		
INVESTMENTS	15,53,566		
MEMBERSHIP FEES	300		
Total Amount	1,69,32,612	Total Amount	1,69,32,612



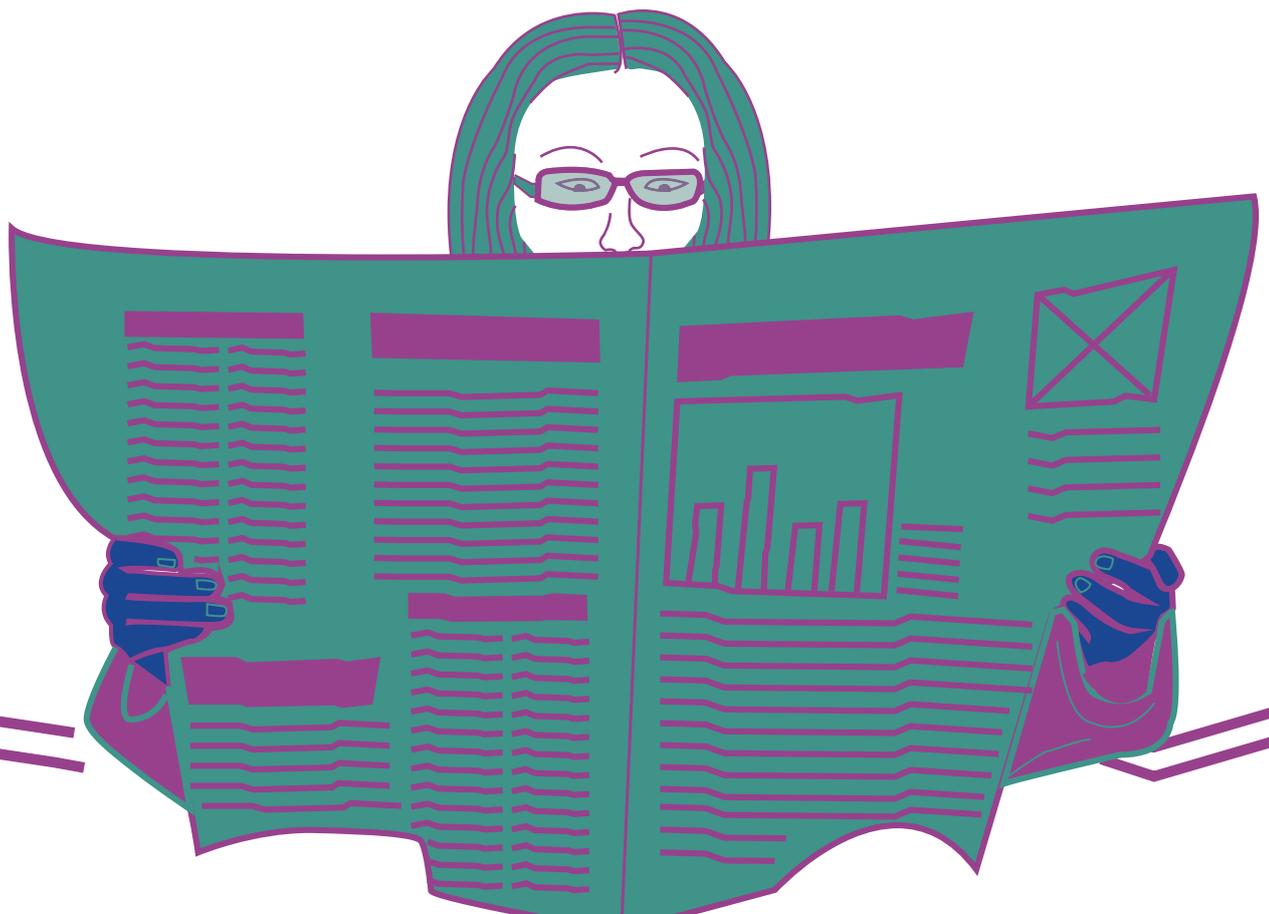
NAME	Position on Board	No. of Meetings attended	Remuneration
NANDITA GANDHI	SECRETARY	ALL	1018200
ANJALI DAVE	CHAIR PERSON	ALL	0
SUDIPTA DHRUVA	MEMBER	ALL	0
NANDITA SHAH	MEMBER	ALL	1018200
NINA KAPASI	TREASURER	ALL	0
ABHA BHAIYA	MEMBER	ALL	0
SHIMUL JAVERI KADRI	MEMBER	ALL	0

Slab of gross salary (in Rs) plus benefits paid to staff (per month)	Male staff	Female staff	Total staff
Less than 5000	0	0	0
5,000 – 10,000	1	3	4
10,000 – 25,000	0	6	6
25,000 – 50,000	0	4	4
50,000 – 1,00,000	0	2	2
Greater than 1,00,000	0	0	0
Total	1	15	16

Press Coverage

SR. NO	NEWS PAPER	DATE	ARTICLE HEADING
1	Lokmat	12-May-16	Justice for Jisha
2	DNA 	13-May-16	city demands justice for raped and murdered Dalit law student
3	Loksatta	13-May-16	Keralmadhil Vidhi Abhyaskrmachya eka vidhyarthinichya.....
4	Hindustan Times 	27-May-16	Development Plan: Stage set for Another BJP-Sena Tussle
5	Indian Express	31-May-16	30% women married under age 18
6	Lokmat	17-Jun-16	Tar Nivrutti Jahir Karnar (Airal)
7	Mid Day Gujrati	17-Jun-16	Randeep and Mary Kom ne promotion time
8	Mid Day	17-Jun-16	Care to share
9	Mumbai Mirror	17-Jun-16	Mary Kom hopeful of getting Rio Wildcard

SR. NO	NEWS PAPER	DATE	ARTICLE HEADING
10	Punya Nagari	17-Jun-16	Olampicsathi Aashawadi- Mary Kom
11	Sakal	17-Jun-16	Merychi Nivrutti Wildcardvar avlambun
12	The Hindu	17-Jun-16	Packing a Punch
13	Navbharat	21-Jun-16	Mary Kom ki Wildcard Milne ka Bharosa
14	Mumbai Mirror	01-Jul-16	Mumbai Learns a new way to board a train - queue sera sera....



SR. NO	NEWS PAPER	DATE	ARTICLE HEADING
15	Navshkati	09-Jul-16	Mahila Pravshanno, madatisathi 182 dial kara
16	The Times of India	09-Jul-16	182 is women's security helpline, not LGP grievance cell, RPF to tell citizens at drive
17	Indian Express	13-Jul-16	Helpline 182 to be popularised among women commuters
18	Mumbai Mirror	03-Aug-16	Biggest beautification drive of city stations planned in October
19	The Times of India	27-Aug-16	Global eye - Robust on robots
20	Lokmat	14-Sep-16	Sarvajanik Jaga Sarwansathi
21	The Times of India	29-Nov-16	Mum tops state crime chart, but not most dangerous city
22	Asian Age	28-Dec-16	Rewrite that sexist gaana - Snehal Velkar
23	Midday	28-Dec-16	Gandi baat's never been this good - Ashika Bhargav



SR. NO	NEWS PAPER	DATE	ARTICLE HEADING
24	Punya Nagari	29-Dec-16	BEST madhe laingik chalwad takraribabat karyshala
25	Hindustan Times	30-Dec-16	Non-profile organisation plans 7-km night run to reclaim spaces for women
26	Loksatta 	31-Dec-16	Hindi Cinemachi aashalli gani sudharnyachi mohim
27	The Hindu	31-Dec-16	Move to right the wrong lyrics in Bollywood songs
28	Navbharat Times	01-Jan-17	Gaana Pasand nahi....
29	Hindustan Times	09-Jan-17	They came. Ran and conquered the Streets
30	Hindustan Times	09-Jan-17	Mumbai Women Own the Night
31	Hindustan Times	13-Jan-17	Crimes against women rose in 2016
32	The Times of India	13-Jan-17	Crime dips 7.7% in 2016, but sexual abuse of women up
33	Navbharat Times	17-Feb-17	Mast mast nahi main ladaki badi hu sakht sakht

