

2016 Annual Report

AKSHARA/FREA





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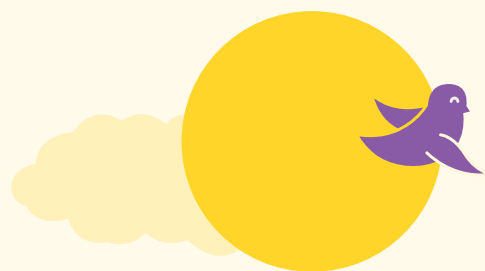


Highlights of the Year 2015-16

Akshara 's central focus is on empowerment of women and girls and it uses the strategies of mobilizing communities of young men and women and building the capacities for prevention of violence; empowering young women through education and skills; raising gender awareness and coalescing all the programs with advocacy for the city of Mumbai.

 **1** *Making Mumbai safe*

2 *Public awareness campaigns*



Empowerment of women and girls

3 *Skills for young women*

4 *Creating gender champions*

227 young women
learn job skills

290 young leaders
take social actions

'Mela' travels
to 4 states and
2000 youth

Public campaigns
reach 10,114 people

441 youth get
gender training

The DP is
En-Gendered!

It was a year of some great work with the addition of three new programs to the list of existing initiatives.

Involving Girls in the Empowering Dreams Program



The Empowering Dreams Program [EDP]: Akshara has been engaging with economically and socially under privileged young women and girls aged 16 to 25 in order to support their educational and career dreams. Over the last 13 years, Akshara has supported more than 1500 young women to complete their education and develop life skills. Akshara provides these young women with scholarships for higher education, equips them with understanding and resisting gender-based discrimination and violence. They are also provided with ample opportunities to develop leadership capabilities and work skills to enhance their employability prospects. They are given free training in life-skills, career guidance, self-defence and perspective-building via workshops. Thus, they are able to assert themselves and take sound decisions in their lives. These women are confident, financially independent and gender-sensitive youth leaders who are now inspiring others too.



Expected Outcomes

Akshara's Interventions

Current Realities



In the last year, Akshara provided scholarship to 162 young women out of nearly 300 applicants. What sort of young women do we support? The selection for the 'Akshara Course' or a combination of financial assistance, technical and life skills is done on the basis of need and eagerness for education rather than on school or Board exam marks.

The numbers of young women in each year of the three-year program were:

- Year 1: 110 Total: 162
- Year 2: 31
- Year 3: 21



These women are from all over the city and 47 different colleges. All scholarship beneficiaries were pursuing professional degrees/courses ranging from commerce, engineering, nursing, social work, management, dance and photography.

17% of the young women came from single parent households, mostly supported by their mothers, while few were orphans living with their relatives or in shelter homes.

Almost 70% of the girls whose education Akshara supported belonged to the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Nomadic Tribes, and Other Backward Class. However, the percentage of Muslim girls benefitting from financial support remained low. The monthly family income of the scholarship beneficiaries was between Rs. 3500-15000. The average family size was more than five members.

**Dalit &
OBC
backgrounds**

**Low income
households**

**16 to
25 yrs**



162 young women

The Impact We Make

Akshara's methodology is process oriented with its beneficiaries getting the benefit of financial assistance as well as skills and information. Akshara differs in its approach with educational Trusts which give scholarships on basis of merit [exam marks] and with livelihood and leadership building organisations, which only give skill based inputs. Akshara has combined the two approaches as it will help bring about a more multi-dimensional change in the lives of young women. Mentioned below are some areas of impact:

- 36 young women out of 52 who were in 2nd and 3rd years of college, got jobs! This is an amazing and important step for them. 26 of them got full time jobs and the remaining 10 got part time jobs. Overall the number of women applying for full times jobs has increased.

- At Akshara, young women are always encouraged to take up post-graduation studies and this year five girls were selected to pursue further studies in their respective fields. Two young women are being mentored to learn photography and pursue it as a career option.



The illustration below enunciates the role of 25 women who were mentored as leaders. They had a major part to play in facilitating five of Akshara's activities this year.

78% reported an increase in public speaking skills
79% reported an increase in leadership and decision making
55% reported an increased clarity about life goals

Nearly 80% increased their confidence and leadership skills

25 girls trained to handle 4 Melas
12 conducted film screenings and discussions at Kala Ghoda Festival
2 taught basic computer in a BMC school children
10 participated in a Women's Day event

25 girls mentored as community leaders

Girls interacted with 1548 children through KK Melas
117 BMC children taught basic computers
Nearly 2000 people reached through community - based actions

Girls reached out to over 3500 people

EDP: A process driven program

Welcoming New Girls:

Khula Aasman means open skies in Hindi and is a metaphor of the opening up of possibilities in the young women's lives. This is usually the first event of the year, organised to welcome and orient the new batch as well as celebrate the achievements of those in the previous batch.

This year the event was attended by 194 girls and 95 parents.

The Chief Guest of the event was Ms. Alpa Vora, a representative from UNICEF, who felicitated the graduating batch and encouraged the new batch to make the most of their time with Akshara. Along with the chief guest, three senior girls were the guests of honour. They were part of the program and have made great forays in the fields of engineering, management and fashion respectively. They spoke of how Akshara was instrumental in enabling them to take the first steps towards achieving their dreams: not only by providing financial support but also giving them a platform to develop a holistic personality.

Building A Gender Perspective

Gender

Violence against Women

Developing Life Skills

Self Defense

Health & Relationship

Financial Literacy

Adventure & Leadership

Learning Employability Skills

Basic Computers

Accountancy

English Speaking

Presentation Skills

The Equality and Rights Training

Perspective building workshops are meant to deepen the understanding of the young women about gender, sexuality, and society. Through interactive exercises and games, the participants are introduced to concepts such as gender, patriarchy, violence against women, and masculinity.

Gender workshop:

A basic gender workshop is held every year for the new batch of young women. This year, 76 girls participated in the gender workshop.

The distinction between 'gender' (socially-learned behaviour) and 'sex' (physiological difference) as the basis for differentiating between men and women was explained using games, role plays and other participatory methods. The discussions lead to the understanding of patriarchy and how it operates through various institutions in the society, including marriage, religion, education system and media.

The girls got a chance for self-reflection and recalled instances when they had encountered or seen gender discrimination in their families. They realized how patriarchy affected their lives in terms of power, ownership of assets, opportunities, education and social participation. The workshop thus was an eye opener for them, reversing years of conditioning which convinced them that inequality between men and women in society was natural.

Violence against women workshop:

A workshop on understanding gender-based violence and sexual harassment was conducted in which 53 girls participated. The workshop educated the participants about the various types of sexual harassment women often face, the root causes of such violence, and the legal redressal mechanisms available to fight against any such occurrence.

The workshop emphasized that sexual harassment of any kind was never the fault of the woman, and hence they could not be blamed for it. The girls were made to realize that it was due to patriarchal notions of shame and honour rather than genuine concern for their safety that severe restrictions were put on women and girls – to dress appropriately, to not be out late,



to not draw attention to oneself in any way. The workshop helped boost the confidence of girls. Many of them were earlier hesitant to travel alone beyond their daily routes, but were now shedding their fear and exploring areas of the city they had never visited before.

Life skills training

Akshara also provides training in certain core life skills such as confidence building, financial literacy, and self-defence. Following trainings were conducted as part of the life skills curriculum designed for participants.

Self-Defence Training:

Akshara organised a workshop on self-defence in which **90 young women** participated. The workshop was conducted by a leading trainer of Win-Li-Do in India. Win-Li-Do is a type of martial self-defence technique developed specially for women. The participants were trained to physically and mentally defend themselves against a range of sexual assault as well as everyday forms of harassment in public places and elsewhere. The training included learning techniques of physical self-defence as well as other non-violent strategies of responding to the threat of violence. Some of the strategies included having a confident body language, assertive tone of voice, being vocal about harassment, naming the act and learning to say no.

Health and Relationship Workshop:

An important part of perspective building is the knowledge of one's own body and its functioning. There is a sense of fear and taboo around the body, especially with regards to reproduction and sexuality. A residential workshop on health and relationships hence created a safe space for the young women to understand their bodies better, open up about fears and insecurities surrounding their bodies, and demystify myths related to menstruation and sexuality.

They felt that the process of understanding their bodies was a first step towards loving their bodies. Further, the discussions around relationships were also appreciated by the girls, who wanted a space to share experiences, questions and anxieties about their romantic relationships.



Leadership and Adventure Camps:

Akshara organized Adventure Camps for 44 young women. The sports and adventure activities focused on fitness, and helped in removing their apprehension about outdoor games.



Financial Literacy



Many young women with whom Akshara engages with lack the financial know how to handle their own finances. To overcome this, a financial literacy workshop was organized which introduced the girls to concepts such as investments, mutual funds, term deposits, loans, and so on. They were also made familiar with everyday banking skills such as writing a cheque, withdrawing or depositing money. Young women who did not have their own bank accounts were helped with opening one. The workshop proved to be an important one for many of the girls. According to Roshan Bharati (TYB.Com, Chetana College), "Financial literacy workshop taught me about mutual funds and how to make other such investments. I read more on the topic and started with economic planning for a financially secure future."



Skills Trainings



Technical Skills Workshops:

To challenge gender stereotypes pertaining to technical skills, a workshop was organized to teach participants the small technical household skills such as repairing of electronic items, operating an electronic board, etc. among other things, the workshop equipped them and made them more confident and independent. It enabled them to handle such issues on their own and also reduced their dependence on the men in the family.

Theatre Workshop:

A Theatre workshop was conducted with 10 girls. The girls were provided training in the basics of appearance, voice modulation, body language and other such aspects required for stage performance. Confidence and clear speech were especially emphasized. The workshop was a delight for the girls as it helped them to participate in the cultural activities of their college and community.

Employability Workshops:

This year Akshara organized four employability-related courses focused on imparting technical skills to the participants which would help them increase their employability prospects.

Basic Computer Workshop:

The objective of the course was to provide the participants with the skills and knowledge to explore the common productivity software applications (Word Processors, Spreadsheet Programs, and Presentation Programs) used in day-to-day life and work. The training methodology consisted of theory sessions along with practice including discussions and problem solving.

The senior girls learnt how to use the Internet and the world of information became open to them. They were able to fill online college admission forms on their own.

The outcome of the basic computer course was a steady increase in the young women's interest and comfort with computers. A safe and regular space has been created for them in the office to come and practice their computer skills.

English Speaking Workshop:

Lack of good English speaking skills becomes an obstacle in the employability prospects of many young women. Akshara organised an English speaking workshop for 7 days which honed their spoken English skills as well as gave them the confidence to speak without fear or hesitation.

Sara Tandel and Sonali More both filled the online form for Masters in Social Work in Tata Institute of Social Sciences.

Shraddha Shinde used the computer skills for studying for her engineering degree.



Tally Workshop:

CNC, a firm that deals in tally trainings and placement, provided a course in Tally to 25 girls. The girls were confident that getting certified in Tally would provide a significant boost to their resumes and aid in getting jobs as well.

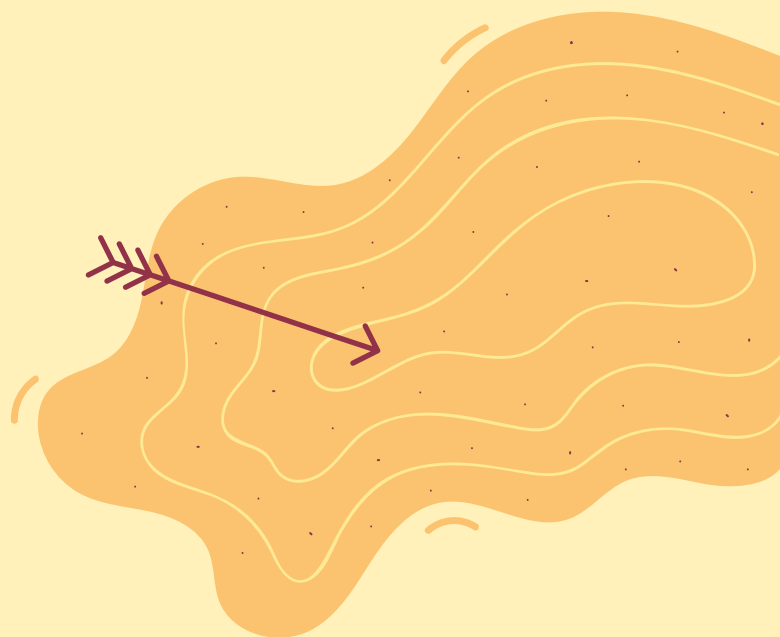
Presentation Skills Workshop:

Different skills sets are essential for those who aspire to seek jobs or start their own business. These include making a resume of one's own, making a basic PPT presentation, and also the right body language for interviewers. Accordingly, a workshop was conducted for teaching these useful skills.



Young women were explained the difference between a resume and a bio-data, and were helped in making their own resumes. 10 young women were also given first-hand knowledge in understanding how interviews were conducted.

55% girls reported an increase in clarity about life goals. Further, among the young women who participated in the career guidance workshops and fair, most reported having a more sharper and clear vision of their career goals.



Leadership Trainings

The Learning Community for Adolescent Girls in Mumbai was formed to share resources and learning and to create a larger platform to empower girls; where they themselves were leading interventions within the community. The aim of this community was to make essential interventions by girls so that they become proactive and participate in public life and develop leadership skills to directly address the barriers they face. Every year, Akshara, along with six other organizations working for adolescent girls participates in the Learning Community Project and trains 10 girls under two mentors from the organization in leadership and project planning skills to address the issues faced by them. This year, the focus was on making public places equally accessible to women who spearheaded the 'Vachan Hakk Andolan' or the Right to Read Movement [more in Campaigns].



Other Activities

Gender Equality in Schools:



Akshara has also developed an innovative way, using the concept of a 'Mela' or fete to start dialogues on gender stereotypes, division of labour at home, focusing on gender equality. Young women leaders from EDP took upon themselves to organise such Melas in nearby schools. The first one was held in Jan 2016. In March 2016, two more Kishore Kishori (Adolescents) Melas were held in BMC schools, where children as well as teachers learnt gender equality through games and discussions. Our young women were active organisers and were trained as volunteers and more importantly as facilitators for the Kishore Kishori Melas. As many as 1548 students from the age group of 10-14 years participated along with 30 teachers in all 3 Melas.

"The efforts taken in the Mela to spread awareness among the students through fun activities is very interesting and worth repeating. It goes a long way towards shaping a generation of students who are sensitive and capable."

Meghana Bhadsawale, Asst. Teacher, Hindi Medium School, Prabhadevi

Municipal School Students learn Computers:

Akshara was also requested by a BMC school to train its students (in std. 7 to 10) in basic computer skills. The school was provided with computers for around two months. Two of Akshara's young women who had completed the computer course were asked to take the classes. They taught as per the school syllabus. A total of 117 students from the school participated in the training.

Youth for Change Program: creating gender champions



Introduction: engaging young men

The goal of Youth for Change Program [YCP] is to empower youth to understand the notions of gender violence and support the endeavour of gender equality.

With India having the largest population of youth in the world, it is imperative to raise their consciousness to gender inequality. Akshara believes that the youth have the interest, eagerness and the potential to bring about change in society. Involvement of both young men and women is essential for this transformation.

The YCP brings together youngsters from around 20 colleges to participate in this initiative. The workshops touch upon topics like understanding patriarchal and masculinity notions and recognizing how systems reinforce this power. The youth are empowered to change the repressive mindsets, both of their peer group and community as a whole. The program introduces young groups of change agents, who work with other students and involve themselves in socially relevant tasks and advocacy to build a gender just society.



The Youth We Work With



Akshara directly engages with 400 under privileged youth from 20 low resource and non-elite colleges in Mumbai.

70% are first generation learners. Their parents had little education especially their mothers and are from conservative and traditional backgrounds.

31% of the students belong to Scheduled Caste or Other Backward Classes. The others were from religious minority groups or upper castes.

The cumulative family income of 80% of the students is below Rs. 20,000/- per month.

50% or half of them are balancing part time jobs and their studies.

They are from the age group of 18 to 24 years.



However, despite hardships and attending classes, these students found time to attend Akshara's program. They actively organized and participated in all the activities and campaigns throughout the year.

The Impact We Make


400 students from 20 NSS college units are assigned to Akshara every year. These youth form WE or Women's Empowerment Clubs and organise their own activities with the support of Akshara staff. Impact is assessed by the Base Line and End Line forms which the students fill up at the beginning and end of the academic year. The majority reported:

- An increase in their self-confidence
- A shift from a conservative to a more equality based gender perspective
- Increase in participation in social actions
- Development of leadership capabilities


Students speak...

Harshala Sanghvi

Harshala acknowledges that while her mother first planted the seed of gender equality in her mind, it was Akshara that nurtured it. She feels Akshara has helped her transform from a shy to a wonderfully self-assured young woman.




"When you speak out loud against injustice, it gives other people around you the same courage. Next time they'll know that what's happening is wrong and they'll raise their voices. It creates a ripple effect. Together we can make change."



Earlier Shubham would avoid doing household chores saying, "It's not my job". But after attending the workshops at Akshara, his attitude towards being helpful with household responsibilities has changed for the better.

He also opposed reservation of women in politics, education etc. but now he understands that reservations are not discriminatory towards men, but rather a way of giving women equal opportunity as men. His suggestion to Akshara is that issues of different genders (LGBT) should also be addressed because most students are still unclear about this.



"I didn't have clarity on sexual harassment apart from knowing that it was bad. After working with Akshara, I have a more conceptual understanding and I raise my voice against it. I already knew that women should be treated with respect but I do so more consciously."

The Impact We Make

Akshara is allocated 20 to 60 hours per student per college in the time which we have to generate interest in the students, orient and involve them in workshops and actions. The time given is short and to make the most of it, Akshara's workshops and activities have to hit the right cord.

Forming youth led clubs

40 leaders

230 gender advocates

Training workshops

film screening to spark discussions

workshops to enhance organisational skills

Taking up social actions

campaigning to make railways safer for women

auditing of 19 railway stations for women's safety

The main objective of the activities and campaigns is to bring a positive change in the mindset of the youth - the future of tomorrow. It is important for them to understand the root cause of gender inequity, which is perpetuated by constant social conditioning. They are motivated to work towards bringing about a change in behaviour both at an individual and systemic level. Through the workshops and programs, Akshara helps to bring about gender sensitization and inspire the youth to become gender advocates.

All the efforts have resulted in an increase in confidence of the youth, mainly due to the various interactions they had during the workshops, making new friends, and the leadership roles that they undertook throughout the year. A comparison of the Baseline and Endline surveys taken at the beginning and at the end of the year with the same set of students helps to understand the impact of YCP on these young change makers.



Gender Equality Sensitization

An introductory workshop was organized for the Women's Empowerment [WE] Club members to train and acquaint them with the concepts of gender and sex, masculinity, patriarchy, sexuality, sexual harassment and violence against women.

The workshop was attended by over 105 students from around 20 colleges. The topics in this two day workshop ranged from:

1. Concepts of Sex and Gender
2. Gender Socialization
3. Power Relations
4. Sexuality & masculinity
5. Sexual harassment

The workshop began by clarifying the difference between biological characteristics and socially learned behaviour. They were explained the concept of patriarchy and how it results in unequal power relations. These concepts were explained through fun games, role plays and interactive discussions. The focus then shifted to discussing the concept of sexuality. The importance of giving consent and asking for consent was highlighted. The discussions among the trainers and the youth, was then guided towards the larger theme of sexual harassment and safe city.

Shifts in Views on Gender, Patriarchy and Masculinity

Youth who disagreed with the following statements	Baseline %	End line %
Girls who wear fashionable clothes tend to get 'teased' by boys.	51.8	60.0
It does not look good if men take up household work such as washing utensils, clothes etc.	54.1	67.1
Women should get married when their family asks them to.	55.3	67.1
If a woman/girl commits a mistake, it is okay to be verbally abused or beaten up by her father, brother or boyfriend.	55.3	62.4
A woman's beauty is her identity	30.6	54.1
Girls/ women are emotionally weak	48.2	72.9

At Akshara, the aim is to bring about a mindset change among the youth so that they recognize and break patriarchal, misogynistic practices that they encounter or follow in their daily lives. This process of unlearning and changing mindsets is slow, challenging and often met with a lot of resistance.

Many of them were gender sensitive from the beginning, as we can infer from the table above. But after the workshops we can see a lot more youth being positively sensitized towards the issues and rights of women.

The following table maps the changes in their views on masculinity post attending Akshara's workshops.

Young men who disagreed with the following statements around Masculinity	Baseline %	End line %
I think a real man is one who has a good body	42.4	62.5
It is demeaning for men to do household work	57.6	75.0
A real man keeps his sister and wife under his control	27.3	65.6

The questions above were specifically answered by boys. These questions were to gauge the change in perception of masculinity; a concept so entrenched in the psyche, especially young men who mold their behaviour based on their understanding of it. There was a significant rise in the number of men who disagreed with the popular notions of masculinity that characterize a 'real' man based on aggression, controlling nature and strong physique.

Leadership and Confidence Building

Besides gender perspective, one of the key aims of YCP is to develop self-confidence and leadership skills in youth.

The tables below showcase the vast improvement in their confidence level after being part of YCP programs and activities.



Youth who agreed with the following statements revolving around Confidence

Baseline % End line %



I am scared to express myself in a group discussion	23.5	7.1
I hesitate to put forward my views in a family discussion	22.4	11.8
I am afraid of taking new routes in bus or trains	28.2	15.3
I feel shy when I meet new people	16.5	11.8
The way I look is more important than what I do	36.5	18.8



Youth who assessed their ability with regards to Leadership

Baseline % End line %

I can speak in front of a group	34.1	42.4
I can plan and organize an event	30.6	36.5
I can plan a meeting	37.6	48.2



As is evident, YCP through its many activities and creative campaigns has engaged the youth and given them opportunities to grow. 61% of youth reported that they are confident to travel alone. Statistics reveal that by organizing and participating in various events youth have become confident. The activities involve travel, interacting with strangers, collaborating with professors and NSS Program Officers, mobilizing other students; activities that have helped students develop confidence and become responsible leaders.

Trainings for Application: Event Management Workshop

The event management workshop was a residential training program conducted for WE club leaders to impart the skills in planning, organizing and executing large scale events. 27 students from 13 colleges participated in the workshop.



The introductory sessions was conducted by our former volunteer, Kewal Ruparel, who works in this field. The workshop involved role plays in which the students planned and presented their event management strategies in teams. The workshop ended with the students watching the movie Masan and discussed the bold storyline and issues addressed in the movie. This friendly atmosphere at Akshara allows the youth to express themselves freely and grow as individuals.

Initiating social actions: putting the theory into practice

Film screening:

Media is a powerful tool that can put across important messages very effectively. Keeping this in mind, a package of films was screened this year, called 'Steps towards Change'. It included short films and documentaries on the subject of gender discrimination, masculinity, sexual harassment and violence against women. Student leaders from over 12 colleges took initiative and conducted the screening, attended by more than 600 youth. The response was incredible and the visual aid of the film loop appealed to students and helped spread our message.



University Radio:

In an innovative media campaign, Akshara along with University of Mumbai- MUST radio collaborated to create awareness about the various aspects of sexual harassment and violence against women. WE Club members themselves composed jingles, songs, shayaris, dialogues etc. for the recordings to encourage men and women to take a stand against sexual harassment and violence of any kind. An in depth discussion was conducted with 19 students based on their personal experiences of sexual harassment which helped many vent their feelings and experiences. University radio also helped create awareness about WDC's (Women's Development Cell) in colleges, the 103 helpline and allowed the youth to address the issue of sexual harassment.

Orientation and Safety audits:

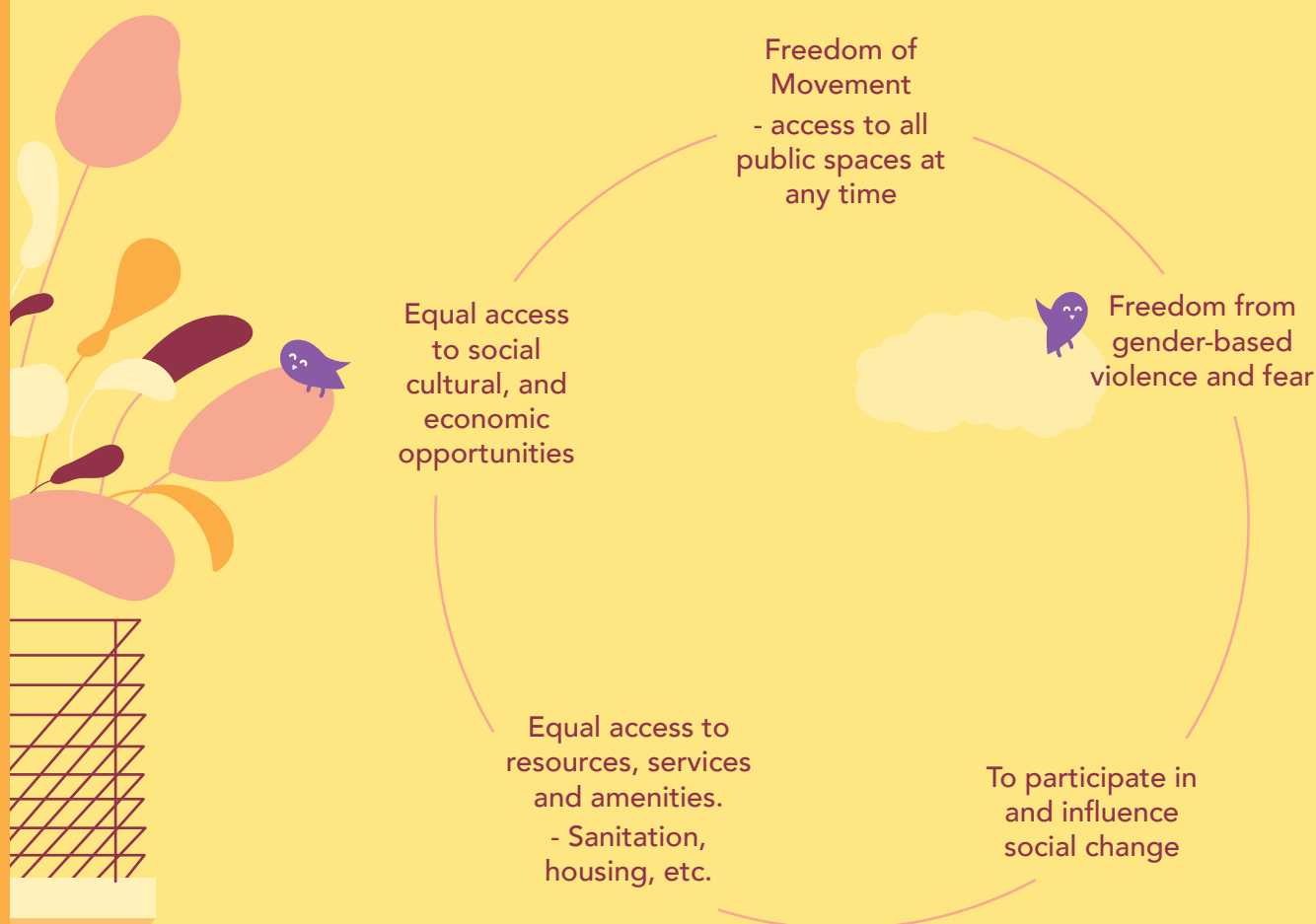
Akshara believes that a city should have safe public spaces and public life for women that enable them to live without fear or restraint. The youth were taught about physical and the social factors that would make an area

Making Mumbai Safe

Introduction

Mumbai has always been perceived as a relatively safe city for women, which gives them freedom of expression, movement and access to opportunities. While this is true to some extent, rising violence against women in private and public spaces is a harsh reality that cannot be ignored. Discrimination and a deep rooted misogynistic attitude often lead to blatant sexual harassment and other forms of violence on women and girls. A 2011 survey conducted by Akshara revealed that 95% women have been sexually harassed in Mumbai public places, which still stays a cause for serious concern.

Akshara has consistently worked to bring the issue of sexual harassment in the mainstream through the Safe City Initiative. This year, we worked with the Central Railways and the BEST Bus Authorities.



Achievements

1. This year Akshara developed and printed 1000 copies of a booklet for Railway Protection Force's women personnel (Streevahini), guiding them about issues related to safety of women commuters in the railways.
2. To communicate the Railway toll-free number to maximum people, 800 stickers were put up across railways in Mumbai.
3. A documentary titled 'Right to Pee' was made on the campaign for free, better and safer toilets for women in Mumbai.
4. Akshara, along with other organizations, has been instrumental in getting the Revised Draft Development Plan, 2013-2034, introduced, which is an exclusive chapter on Gender Inclusiveness. It has taken into consideration new sections and reservations for women.
5. Akshara's gender training module has been incorporated in the training curriculum of BEST bus undertakings.
6. Akshara was invited by UN Women in New Delhi for the 'Safe Cities Global Leaders' Forum' to present the work done for women's safety in Mumbai.
7. Akshara was invited in the Global Civil Society Consultation organised UN Women in Nov., 2015 in New York, USA.
8. Akshara presented "Making Mumbai Safer" a paper at the U N's Commission on Status for Women at New York, USA, which is a global inter governmental body in March, 2016.



Working with the Railways

Akshara sought to improve access of safe public spaces including safer public transport for women commuters. Mumbai's public transport system consists of a suburban rail system and public bus system, as well as private taxis and auto rickshaws. The suburban rail network carries over 7.33 million passengers every day. On an average 22 percent women are accessing railways in the city. Women's travel is characterized by trip chaining – combining multiple destinations within one trip and their experience of this travel is filled with experiences of sexual harassment and fear of violence. Akshara's survey [www.aksharacentre.org/#press] shows that the majority of women [95%] said they were harassed with many stating transport systems, its access points and markets as the sites of harassment. Women's level of security is influenced not only by prevailing unequal mindset but also as importantly by the layout, functionality and organization of urban spaces and urban institutions.

Survey:

A total of 522 women were interviewed in depth regarding their experience of travelling in Mumbai local trains. Following are the figures in percentage of the women who experienced harassment, they reported: Staring (56.13%), commenting (51.34%) and unwanted touch (60.92%) were also listed by the respondents as personal safety risks that they are wary off in the railway premises. Some women also named more serious forms of sexual harassment, like stalking (29.69%), flashing (14.37%), pinching (20.50%) and groping (15.52%) as risks they have to face while travelling.

The number of women who preferred to ignore the harassment stood at 41.15%. It sadly reflects how women have become immune to the harassment meted against them in public places. Many women would also hesitate to take action against the harasser for fear of provoking even more harassment.

Interactions and Focused Group Discussions:

Focused group discussions were conducted with women commuters, railway passenger association and RPF helpline personnel. It shed light on the following aspects:



Achievements

Their perception and experience of safety issues while travelling in the Mumbai Suburban Railways.

The nature and prevalence of sexual harassment women were facing in and around railway stations.

The role of police, security measures and facilities provided with regards to the safety of women.

Safety Walk trainings and Safety Walks:

30 youth leaders from 18 colleges affiliated to Mumbai University underwent trainings on safety walks. They motivated 110 students, who were divided into teams of 18-20. Each team was assigned a particular station/station area to conduct walks on every platform, station approach road and other areas around 18 central stations.

Based on their observations, the students recommended the following infrastructural improvements:

Requirement of enough police personnel policing at local railway stations especially outside women compartments.

There should be enough number of help desks in and around the station with presence of police personnel.

Across the station area (Platforms, foot-over bridges, below the staircases, toilets, on connected sky-walks and subways and below staircase) there should be sufficient number of tube lights to keep the place well lit.

There should be benches reserved for women only outside ladies compartment.

Clear and visible signage boards should be installed across the station area.



Trainings and Workshops for Police

Akshara conducted 3 trainings within a period of a month for GRP constables and officers. Topics covered in the training included prevention of gender and sexual violence in public places and the role of police to prevent and handle any mishaps.

Further, 8 training sessions were conducted for 318 RPF and SRPF security personnel.

An interactive workshop with 'Mahila Vahini' of Railway Protection Force (RPF) was conducted, where around 75 women police personnel along with senior management and authority of RPF took part in the discussion. They shared their experiences of dealing with cases of crime and violence against women passengers, management techniques and special measures that they exercise to protect female and elderly passengers and children.

The Mumbai Suburban Railway Authority requested Akshara to host a workshop for its NGO representatives to enhance the functioning of the Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) in which sexual harassment cases of its women employees are heard. This workshop discussed the role of ICC, its functioning, role of the external member, and rules and regulations governing it.

Trainings and Workshops for Police

The helpline Number 182 is meant for all passengers accessing Mumbai Suburban Railway. However, very few calls related to women passengers and their issues were received on the helpline. On probing the issue, it was found that the helpline number was not communicated effectively, thus it did not reach most of the people it is intended for. Secondly, there was no categorization system that they could follow for reporting crimes against women. So, a categorization format was developed and 800 publicity stickers were printed with a by-line specifying 'Call to report crime on women'.



The safety audit recommendations made by the youth were presented to the Inspector General, (Railways) with the hope that they would be accepted and changes would be initiated. The Bombay High Court has passed an interim order which puts a special emphasis on improved lighting on all the local platforms and station areas and clean and safe toilet facilities for women commuters. This is the result of the written submission in a criminal application [No. 874 of 2011] filed in Bombay High Court by The Special Cell for Women and Children, TISS. Akshara's Report, Safety Audit - Finding and Recommendations of Mumbai Suburban Central Railway Line [CST to Thane] contributed substantially towards a more positive Bombay High Court's discussions.

Working With the Public Bus Authorities



BEST bus service ferries millions of commuters across the city daily and comes a close second as Mumbai's lifelines after local trains. However, packed buses mean that women are at the receiving end of touching and groping. The HT-Akshara survey 2011 also revealed that sexual harassment is most common in buses. In such

a scenario, bus drivers and conductors can play an female commuters. These findings prompted Akshara to partner with BEST Undertaking's Transport Division to conduct 'Gender Awareness' workshops for drivers, conductors and inspectors. In the course of six months starting July 2013, the team conducted workshops for 750 employees of the BEST Undertaking, including conductors, drivers and senior inspectors. This was followed up by a post training evaluation/feedback from 574 conductors. The majority said that they had come across sexual harassment in their own buses and that they had intervened with the help of drivers and other commuters. However only 10% had occasion to stop the bus and ask the harasser to disembark. In a bid to reach other bus personnel, the Twarita Mohim or an awareness campaign was launched with posters, distribution of Rule Cards and speeches at all major bus depots.

This year the campaign was continued so as to deepen and consolidate Akshara's interventions.

Consolidating the work with the buses

Since March 2015 workshops were conducted by the team for 230 bus conductors, drivers and senior inspectors of the BEST Undertaking. The training sessions focused largely on the issue of sexual harassment, linking it with gender discrimination that commonly exists in our society along with the definition, types of sexual harassment, its magnitude and legal remedies. A combination of film screenings, group discussions, presentations, and role-play were used to facilitate the training. Bus employees also participated by raising questions. Preventive steps and interventions to prevent sexual harassment faced by women commuters were discussed.

Twarita Mohim – Phase 2


Akshara and BEST re-launched the 'Twarita Mohim' campaign (phase II). As part of the earlier campaign, posters explaining sexual harassment were put up at 26 bus depots, 4000 Rule Cards in the form of stickers were distributed, and hoardings on the back of bus displayed the Mumbai police helpline number 103. Its second phase in August, 2015 also saw a consciousness raising campaign with the public.

Working with BMC


Akshara and other gender activists were instrumental in studying the draft Development Plan [DP] 2014-34 and give suggestions to the Mumbai Municipality. The Development Plan review committee had agreed to take in suggestions given by women's groups in the Development. This is a great achievement as 29 plots have been reserved for multi purpose women's centres and 127 care centres have been allocated. This is the first time that a Development Plan has included a chapter on women's issues and new legends [categories] have been created.




Other Activities: Networking and Partnership



During the year, Akshara has actively networked with reputed institutes like Tata Institute of Social Sciences, IIT-Bombay and the Bombay High Court. The Twarita Mohim Campaign conducted with the Railway Protection Force was very well received by the Railway Authorities. An improved roaster system of police personnel deployment at stations with IIT-Bombay's operational research team was discussed.



Networking and playing an active role in the larger campaign of 'Right to Pee' in partnership with 30 other organization. Akshara prepared a documentary on the issue of women's access to free public toilets. The video was nominated in the final round of Yes Foundation competition for 'Yes! I am the Change Popular Choice Awards, 2015.



For reference, please check the links below.
<http://indianexpress.com/article/cities/mumbai/gender-based-employment-disparity-new-development-goal-more-women-in-workforce-2778486/>
<http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/mumbai/news/mumbai-development-plan-silent-on-slum-population/article8563763.ece>

Campaigns in Public Spaces

Introduction

Campaigns, in the societal context, are democratic expressions which are used by civil society organisations to bring a particular issue to the attention of people and/or the State. Akshara believes in campaigning with a group of people for another group or society in general as a method of influencing a large number. Each of the programs is designed to connect with campaigns organized by Akshara or along with other like-minded partners.

Twarita III- Campaign for Safety in Railways

The Twarita Mohim III as the number signifies is in its third phase and is a campaign for the safety of women in the transport systems of Mumbai. This year, 4th December 2015, Akshara in collaboration with 230 NSS volunteers of Mumbai University and the Railway authorities organized a campaign to raise awareness of sexual harassment in trains. Students wore placards with anti-sexual harassment slogans written on them and interacted with commuters about their experiences. There was also a 'selfie booth' which had many creative frames and fun props made by the students.



Commuters wrote their suggestions for making railways safe on a huge 'Wish Tree'. Many important suggestions came out, which were then analyzed by Akshara and a report was made. On the following days almost 200 volunteer students participated at the Dadar and Thane railway stations.

Activities of the campaign:

The students promoted the Railway helpline number '182' which women commuters can use to call for help. They also interacted with commuters and asked about their experience of sexual harassment while travelling and also what did they do or 'Apne Kya Kiya?' when they witnessed an incident of harassment. People were asked to write suggestions on the Wish Tree. The students performed a Street Play encouraging people to intervene if they see a case of sexual harassment. Students also interacted with vendors and hawkers convincing them to support women who are being harassed, whenever they come across any such incident.

In a follow up, students from three colleges, L. S. Raheja, Dr. Ambedkar and R.A.D.AV, replicated the campaign ideas of Wish Tree and Selfie booth in their own colleges. They received an overwhelming response from their peers and a special mention for their efforts by their teachers.

The campaign resulted in wide press coverage which prompted a meeting between the Inspector General of the Central Railways and students.

Akshara presented the safety audit recommendations to the IG This meeting had members from Akshara along with three active students, who represented the WE Clubs.

The IG accepted the recommendations and commended the youth for their work. He assured that these recommendations will be implemented and that he will adopt three stations to test and make changes as per the suggestions made.



Follow up audits of railway and relentless pressure for change has had a positive impact. There is considerable improvement in the condition of some of the more problematic stations like, Sion, Matunga and Kurla where new toilets have been made, signage has been changed and wall paintings adorn the station enhancing the aesthetic appeal. This successful makeover of the stations is now being replicated at other railway stations as well.

The Vachan Hakk [Right to Read] Campaign

For the message of gender equality to reach the community, young women from Akshara and the Learning Community were involved in taking up social actions within their communities. This helped them share their learnings from the gender and leadership sessions in their local communities. The message on issues relating to gender inclusivity and rights of women was spread across the community, local youth and children and also members of their family.

It was observed that women and girls were not using the street libraries that were built for the local community. Taking up this issue more seriously, Akshara studied the street libraries around the areas of Elphinstone, Prabhadevi and Worli and also interviewed 103 men and women.

The survey revealed that:

1. Girls feared sexual harassment
2. They felt unsafe to access the libraries
3. There were no facilities to enable comfortable reading for women and girls

The survey prompted Akshara to take up the campaign for the Right to Read or 'Vachan Hakk Abhiyan'. The aim of the campaign was to encourage women to read and also make public places safe and congenial for them to access. A press conference was called which was attended by the representatives from many leading newspapers and digital media. The findings of the survey along with the demands of the women, who took part in the survey was presented in the press conference. It was covered extensively in newspapers. The next day, 400 girls and women came forward at the same time to occupy and read at 12 street libraries and placed demands of more magazines, benches, and women only seats, before local leaders. Two of the libraries donated books and chairs to help girls and women have space to sit and read.



In March, as a second phase of the campaign, Akshara collaborated with the 'New Golden Krida Mandal' library in Worli to organise a 'Vachan Hakka' event, where the Mayor of Mumbai city was invited to hear the demands made by the girls. The girls emphasized the need for space in street libraries and also pointed out the lack of public spaces for women in the city. The event was attended by 309 participants.

International Women's Day

The IWD emerged from the activities of labour movements at the turn of the twentieth century in North America and across Europe. Since those early years, it has assumed a global dimension for women. The Day was strengthened by four global United Nations women's conferences and has become a rallying point to build support for women's rights and participation in the political and economic arenas. Akshara along with various women's organisations in Mumbai joined hands to hold a rally and a gathering. A group of 10 young women leaders participated in the celebratory. They interacted with women activists from other organizations. They also took an active interest in understanding the message of social change-makers such as Savitribai Phule and other women leaders in the Reform and Nationalist Movements.

One Billion Rising is a global movement involving 207 countries, founded by Eve Ensler, to end rape and sexual violence against women. It was started in 2012 as part of the V-Day Movement. The "**billion**" refers to the UN statistic that one in three women will be raped or beaten in her lifetime, or about **one billion**. Akshara organised a large event on 8th February at St. Xavier's College on this occasion. This year Akshara invited well-known theatre personality, Delhi based Maya Rao to perform her one act play on violence against women. The event was attended by over 300 students and theatre persons.

The Kala Ghoda Arts Festival is an annual festival, nine days long, commencing in February, in the Kala Ghoda area of South Mumbai, India. It is visited by over 1,50,000 people who enjoy the performances, crafts, food stalls, lectures and events.



Akshara was invited by the organisers of Kala Ghoda festival to present two of its films 'Jor Se Bol' on sexual harassment in public areas and 'Right to Pee' on safe public toilets for women to the general public and raise the issues of gender exclusion in the city. 12 of our leaders from the EDP program participated in a discussion on how society can change mindsets of men and institutions as well as demand for better policies from the State. More than 120 people attended the event.

Demonstration:

In April Kerala was shaken by the brutal rape and murder of a young law student who was being stalked by a man. The crime took place just before the Kerala Legislative elections and gained momentum and as several women's groups demanded justice for the murdered Dalit woman. Justice for Jisha was the hashtag (#JusticeForJisha) used in the social media to quicken efforts for justice. In solidarity, Akshara had organised a city-wide demonstration of 150 people which was attended by 15 leaders from EDP and YCP.

Project: En-Gendering Games for Equality

Introduction

'Yuvak Yuvati' and 'Kishore Kishori Mela' games were created to address different aspects of gender discrimination; gender based violence, masculinity and male privileges which to a great extent disadvantage young women. These Melas are a space for fun learning through lively interactive discussion and thus have a potential to draw huge number of young people. The games in the Yuvak-Yuvati Mela (meant for young men and women), introduces the concepts of gender and masculinity and through it encourages discussion on the issues of friendship and dating, the sexual division of labour, reproductive health and sexual harassment. On the other hand, Kishore-Kishori Mela reaches out to adolescent boys and girls, and takes them on a self-reflective journey to break gender norms and supports to create equal opportunities for boys and girls.



I. Kishore-Kishori Mela

In these Melas children as well as teachers learnt gender equality through games and discussions. Young women, part of Akshara were active organizers and facilitated the entire Kishore-Kishori Melas. These Melas were held in nearby schools. A total of 1548 students in the age group of 10-14 years participated along with 30 teachers in three Melas. The feedback given by some of the school teachers was as follows:

"The efforts taken in the Mela to spread awareness among the students through fun activities is very interesting and worth repeating. It goes a long way towards shaping a generation of students who are sensitive and capable."

Meghana Bhadsawale, Asst. Teacher, Hindi Medium School, Prabhadevi

"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

The SPGRC-MCGM who has partnered with Akshara, promoted Mela in 11 schools with help of other organisations and with the financial support of the Mumbai Municipal Corporation. In all, they managed to reach out to more than 5500 students.



Our Chief Guests for the Yuvak Yuvati Mela:

Mr. Vinod Lavekar - director of the famous Marathi TV show Dil, Dosti, Duniyadaari

Mr. Pankaj Khamkar, - actor Dil, Dosti, Duniyadaari

Mr. B.S Bidve, NSS co-ordinator

Ms. Kavita Rege, Principal Sathaye College

Nandita Shah, Co founder Akshara

II. Yuvak-Yuvati Mela

Akshara conducted the Yuvak Yuvati Mela on a grand scale in collaboration with NSS and Sathaye College. It was attended by almost 1000 students from 20 different colleges all around Mumbai.

This Mela or fair is targeted at college students where topics like gender equality, patriarchy, masculinity and sexual harassment are addressed through fun and interactive games.

The chief guest of the event were the very famous and inspirational Mr. Vinod Lavekar, director of the popular Marathi Youth oriented program Dil, Dosti, Duniyadaari and Pankaj Khamkar, a youth sensation who is an actor on the same show. Both the artists highlighted how the serial has attempted to highlight gender equality by portraying mature interpersonal relationships amongst young men and women. It has inspired many people to view relationships among the youth with a different, liberal lens.

There were seven game stalls specifically dedicated to the Yuvaks (boys) and nine for the Yuvatis (girls).

The students participated in the games with gusto after which the facilitator at the stall would initiate a discussion based on the game. Games like 'Roadside Romeo' which allowed girls to vent out their frustrations of being harassed, was a cathartic experience for them.

Some experiences -

The one minute games questioned gender roles and inverted them allowing men to do what is considered 'women's job' and vice versa so that the youth realize that gender based division of labour is nothing but a hollow social construct which needs to be broken to build an equal society. There was a special stall called 'Andar Ki Baat' one for Yuvaks and one for Yuvatis where doctors explained and answered questions about the body, reproductive system, sexual health, and puberty to the young visitors. This was helpful in enabling a dialogue regarding sexuality and sexual health which is very important to the youth but brushed under the carpet because of its taboo nature.



Taking the Mela across India

This year Akshara with the support of AJWS conducted four 'Yuvak Yuvati Melas' in different states of India namely West Bengal, Lucknow, Nagpur and Hyderabad. AJWS and local organizations partnered with Akshara for conducting this Mela in their respective states.

In West Bengal – Nistha; Hyderabad – Shaheen; Lucknow – Humsafar; Nagpur – Ruby social welfare society were Akshara's partners for organizing the Mela. These organizations have been working locally on the issue of violence against women. Some of these organizations conducted Mela to start the work specifically with young men in colleges.

Nistha, West Bengal: The first Mela was held in May 2016 in West Bengal. Our partner organization was Nistha, located at Subuddhipur, West Bengal, India. The Mela took place at Dum Duma High school ground, Dam Duma village. More than 700 girls and boys attended the Mela.

Shaheen, Hyderabad: The second Mela was held in July 2016 at Government City College, Hyderabad. Shaheen arranged to get their community's children and young women to attend the Mela. The Youth and children enjoyed playing games. Interestingly, some young men reacted more aggressively and were not ready to listen or speak beyond the existing societal structure. But majority students positively participated in discussion, and asked many questions to the facilitators for better understanding.

Ruby Social Welfare Society, Nagpur: The third Mela was in August 2016 at Nagpur, with Ruby social welfare society. Ruby organization works with Muslim girls and women at 'Bada Tajbag' area at Nagpur. They wanted to start working with young men and women in Nagpur and so they decided to conduct 'Yuvak Yuvati Mela.' This Mela was hosted by Seva Dal Mahila Mahavidyalaya at their college ground in Nagpur. The total number of participants' was around 750, which included more girls and fewer boys.

Humsafar Support Centre, Lucknow: The fourth Mela was with Humsafar Support Centre for Women which is located at Lucknow. Humsafar decided to conduct 'Yuvati Mela', which was attended by more than 700 girls.

These four Melas enabled deeper understanding of issues faced by women in urban and rural areas. Even in more evolved social scenario, the patriarchies still exist and continue to impact women.

Project: Mapping Change in Girls

Introduction

Mapping Changes Programme (MCP) seeks to understand the impact of Akshara's interventions over the past 10 years, especially on furthering gender equality and girls' leadership skills. The project is designed to capture the dynamic process of change in the lives of young women with whom the Empowering Dreams Program engages.

The young women are partners in this research. They self-assess the impact of Akshara's program on them rather than be assessed by the organization.

The criteria for selection was based on diversity in terms of caste, age, religion, and appearances like too thin or fat as it impacts self-image in young people. Young women who had been through Akshara's program over the past 10 years and the ones who have been with Akshara for a minimum of one year were included in the sample.

The MCP captured the changes in the lives of the young women through a variety of creative methods:

Photography and Journal Writing

A check list was prepared to understand the profile of girls and they were trained to use their mobile cameras to photograph their family and neighbourhood. Creativity was encouraged and the girls asked to take candid photographs as far as possible.

For journal writing, young women were provided a check list divided into 'My People', 'My Neighbourhood', 'My Space' and the girls were asked to share the role played by Akshara in their lives.

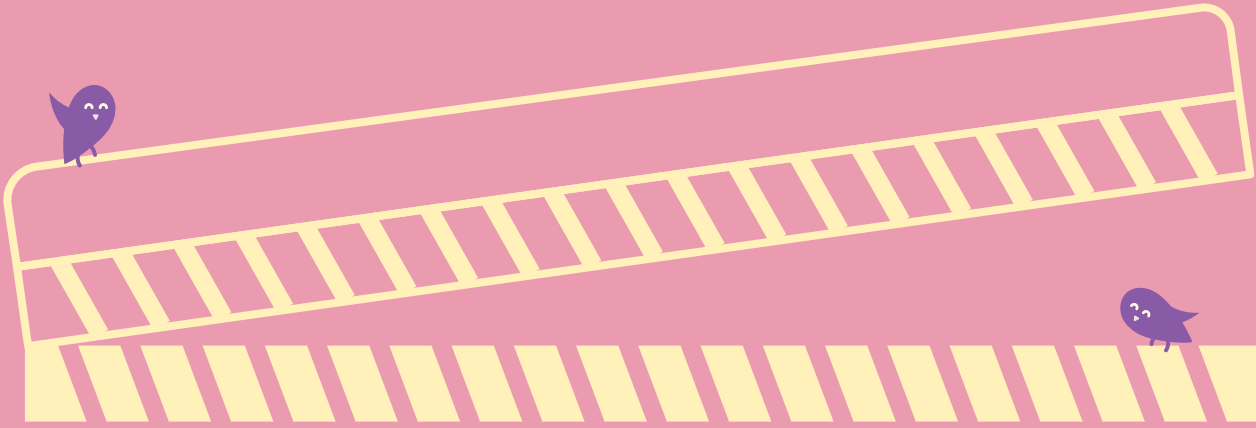
Negotiation

Constraints of having an own space while living with many family members in a small house, petty quarrels with neighbours over limited resources like water, toilets were captured. The girls were asked to respond to questions on the theme of negotiation within families on the topics such as relationships vis-a-vis personal choice, education, livelihood, financial independence and marriage. Issues covered included cultural taboos around menstruation and gender division of labor as well as sexual harassment.

Young women shared the non-violent strategies they deploy to nudge their boundaries and bypass parental writ, like defraying the cost, selecting the parent with whom they are emotionally close to and obtaining their support.

Akshara helped them successfully navigate resistance to fulfil their dreams by,

- Providing a platform to display their skills like singing, dancing, photography at Akshara's events
- Providing financial aid for courses
- Supporting the girls to foster a bond with their parents
- Conducting workshops to enable them to gain confidence



"I would invite my father to every event of mine. Like my plays. But he'd refuse. Then one day my mother practically forced him and I took my father to see my play, 'Samtechi Vaatchal.' It made him feel good. Since then, he doesn't say much, except,.. "hanh, my daughter is into acting."

Sunili

Story Writing Workshop

As part of the story telling workshop, young women were divided into groups and one line was provided to each group around which they had to weave a story. A resource person trained young women on story writing and storytelling in the initial session. After the group story telling the girls wrote individual stories based on their lives.

Mobility

A focus group discussion was conducted to get the girls to talk about the various types of discriminations they faced at home as well as in public places. Restrictions on mobility and time, permission-seeking, decision making at home, late nights, and the negotiations and compromises they had to make at home were discussed in depth.

Young women credit Akshara and the workshops on Gender and Self Defence for helping them curtail restrictions on their mobility; imposed by their family and their own restrictive mindset.

“Earlier, it was a no from my family for anything. Now, I don’t have to seek permission when coming for anything concerned with Akshara. They just tell me to go. I don’t have to convince them as much as before. I have to let them know about it and they’re okay. That’s the kind of support I have from them because of Akshara.” - Pranali

We’re girls and can do so much more and boys can’t hold a candle to us. Now not only can we play sports, we roam about at will, because our family trusts us to take care of ourselves. We learned what to do if someone puts their hand over our shoulder, etc, we can defend ourselves. - Monali

Young women also credit Akshara with them becoming more comfortable around boys and for dispelling their prejudice against girls who had boyfriends. Akshara as an institution serves as a safe space for congregation and hanging out. Hence, the centre is fondly referred to as katta, a hangout place. It is also a point of getting together to out on group outings.

Personal vision workshop

The girls were introduced to the concept of Personal Vision as being the pathway to attain their dreams. They shared their dreams in a group discussion. After the group discussion, the girls were asked to individually note down their dreams during three phases of their lives: childhood, teenage, and current adulthood. Each girl had to end the presentation of her Personal Vision with the strategy she hoped to use to fulfil this vision.

In an exercise at the beginning of the MCP, young women personified the change in them since school days till now. Akshara provides young women an avenue to share their internal struggles and given the acute lack of communication within families, it enables them to come to terms with themselves.



Library and Reference Facility

The **Reference Facility** [or library as it's popularly called] was established for students to access gender based information and read on gender issues and strategies. It is located in the MCGM's Gender Resource Centre. The classification system has been customized and marketed to other organizations under the name of '**The Akshara Feminist Classification System**'. The resources focus on issues related to gender such as domestic violence, sex selection, sexual abuse and myths about masculinity.





Utilization:



Akshara's library is utilized in a variety of ways.

i. Several organizations, from NGOs to colleges, borrow resources, such as DVDs, placards and banners for the events they organize.

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.

Footfalls:

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. Within a span of one year, i.e. June 2015 to July 2016, 955 students availed the library space for reading and studying.



Online Outreach and Forums



The new initiative of online outreach is called "youth katta" (which is a closed group on Aksharacentre Facebook page). It is being used by 291 youth members to share and discuss topics revolving around gender justice.

Has 25 videos and has 1,292 subscribers and was visited by 648611 people.

'Standupagainstviolence' website has received 9,88,282 hits.

Akshara Centre, was visited by 25,80,512 people

Our Facebook page was liked by 2316

There are also various Whats App groups which are functional so that the WE club members across colleges can communicate better and messages can be disseminated quickly. These groups are forums for discussions and debates on gender equality and justice, where people share their opinions and thoughts with the group.

kshara Centre Hites 25,80,512

Standup Hits - 9,88,282

Facebook: 2316 likes till March end 2016. (specific not showing)

For YouTube which specific video you want, we have more than 25 video from 10th June 2011, 1292 subscribers and 648611 views till days.





Youtube:

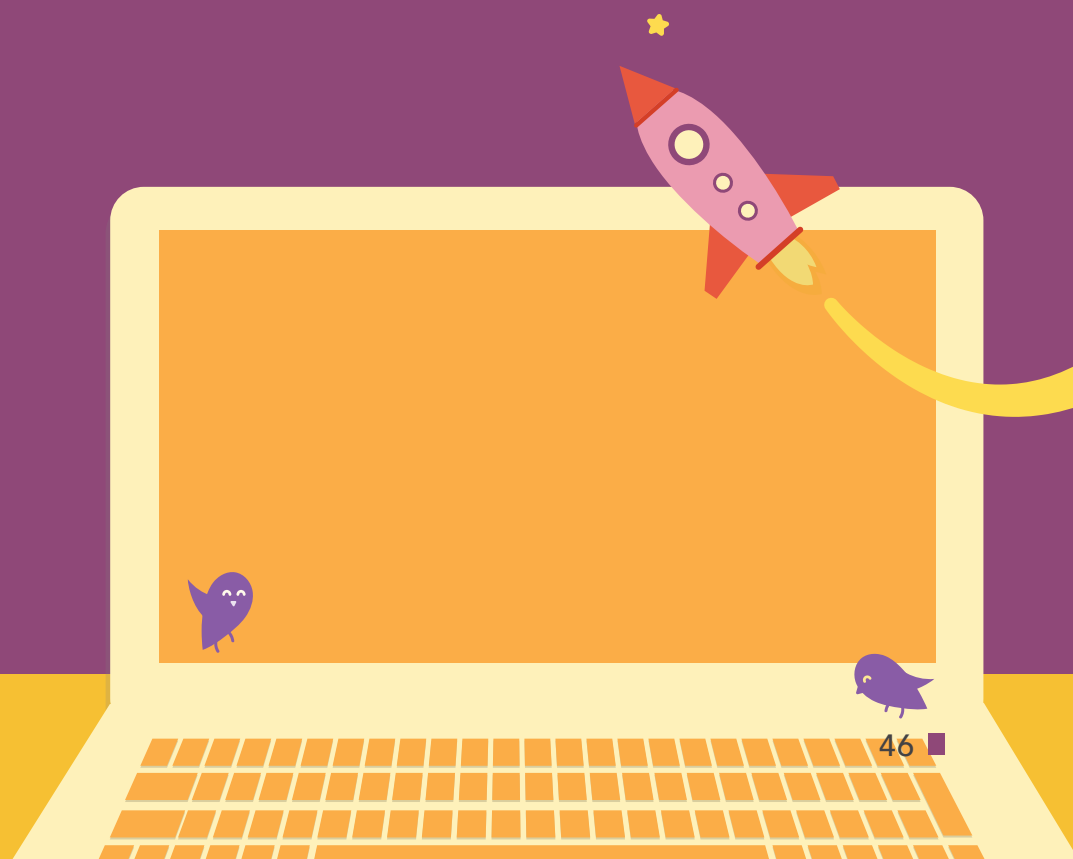
We have created our Youtube Channel called 'Aksharavideos' which houses films and videos made by our team to showcase the need and fight for a gender just society.

Our Website:

www.standupagainstviolence.org provides information that a woman requires for understanding and taking actions on specific forms of violence against her, as well provides details about support resources and existing laws.

Our Website:

www.aksharacentre.org gives info on our Vision, Mission and all our Programs. It was accessed by 25,80,512 visitors.



Our Team



Nandita Gandhi
Co-Director



Nandita Shah
Co-Director



Sakina
Financial Consultant





Snehal Velkar
Co-ordinator- Safe City & YCP



Urmila Salunkhe
Training Officer

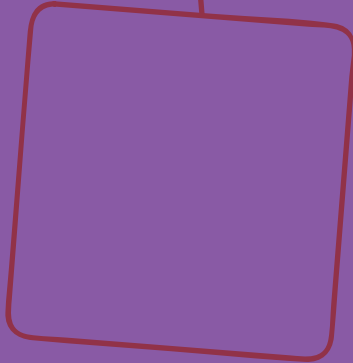


Samata Jhadav
Media Officer





Deepali Jangam
Community Organiser, EDP



Anshla Benny
P O, YCP



Roshni Kadam
P O-EDP

Poornima Mandpe
P O-YCP





Savita Shinde
Accountant



Kimaya Vartak
Secretary and Admin



Vithal Aghawe
Office Support



Our Supporters

Board 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 and is also
an activist of the women's movement, gender trainer
and consultant.

Mr. A K Roy was one of the first secretaries of FREA India, is founder of the Hazards Centre, Delhi and works on issues of technology and environment.

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.



Funding Partners

Empower, USA

Vaacha, India

American Jewish World Service, USA

Jagori Grameen, India

Studios Foundation, Germany

Misereor, Germany

National Foundation For India (NFI), India

Give India Foundation, India

Alkyl Amines Chemicals Ltd., India

Donations from Individuals and Organizations

Ravji Ramji Charitable Trust

Nishith Shah

Hemant P. Pathak

Vishal Printers

Harish R Salot

Natalie Sharma

Partners and Collaborators

Rachana Sansad

TISS

Mumbai University

Hamara Shaher Vikas Abhiyan

Aman Network

Right to Pee

OBR partners

Central Railways

BEST Bus

SPGRC [MCGM]

Hinsa Virodhi Kirti Samiti



Financial Statements

FRONT FOR RAPID ECONOMIC ADVANCEMENT - INDIA (AKSHARA)

Abridge Financial Statements For the Year
1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016

BALANCE -SHEET AS ON 31ST MARCH , 2016

FUNDS & LIABILITIES	AMOUNT (Rs.)	ASSETS	AMOUNT (Rs.)
Trust Fund/Corpus FUND	1,376,000	Immovable Properties	1,155,285
Other Earmarked Funds	21,867,162	Investments	31,026,868
Liabilities and Provisions	232,140	Furniture & Fixtures	275,563
Income & Expenditure Account	11,416,813	Income Outstanding	738,655
		Deposit & Advances	724,766
		Cash & Balance With Banks	970,977
TOTAL AMOUNT	34,892,115	TOTAL AMOUNT	34,892,115



**FRONT FOR RAPID ECONOMIC ADVANCEMENT - INDIA
(AKSHARA)**

**Income and Expenditure Statement For the Year
1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016**

EXPENDITURE	AMOUNT (Rs.)	INCOME	AMOUNT (Rs.)
To Public Trust Administration Fund	53,260	By Interest	2,308,561
To Depreciation	102,489	By Donation	188,721
To Audit Fees	26,250	By Income from other sources	165,706
To Amount written off	466		
To Interest allocated to Earmarked Fund	709,489		
To surplus of Income over Expenditure			
Carried to Balance Sheet	1,771,034		
TOTAL AMOUNT	2,662,988	TOTAL AMOUNT	2,662,988



Financial Statements

FRONT FOR RAPID ECONOMIC ADVANCEMENT - INDIA (AKSHARA)

Receipt and Payment For the Year
1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016

BALANCE -SHEET AS ON 31ST MARCH , 2016

RECEIPTS	AMOUNT (Rs.)	PAYMENTS	AMOUNT (Rs.)
Opening cash and Bank Balances	687,070	Project Expenses	9,178,785
Grants-Indian	1,477,500	General Fund	2,145
Grants-Foreign	11,527,853	FDR Investments	6,573,223
Donations	188,721	TDS on FD Interest	89,344
Interest and Dividend	2,029,177	Other Expenses	1,175
Other Funds	748,017	Closing Balances of Cash and Banck	970,977
Contribution towards Educational Material	28,471		
General Contribution	15,375		
Current Liabilities, Loans & Advances	113,165		
Membership Fees	300		
TOTAL AMOUNT	16,815,649	TOTAL AMOUNT	16,815,649

Press Coverage

April 2015 to March 2016

Sr. No	Newspaper Name	Date	Article Heading
1	Hindustan Times	11-Apr-15	To salvage it or scrap it: CM's DP dilemma
2	The Times of India	14-Apr-15	Govt is under-reporting child marriages in Maharashtra
3	Hindustan Times	14-Apr-15	State's Neglect derails girls welfare schemes
4	Corporate dossier	24-Apr-15	We are the World 
5	The Asian Age	24-Aug-15	Man held for molesting commuter

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Sr. No	Newspaper Name	Date	Article Heading
6	Hindustan Times	4-Dec-15	Sexual Harassment Rampant at Train Stations'
7	The Times of India	4-Dec-15	Women commuters on CR face most harassment at Dadar, Kurla
8	Mumbai Mirror	4-Dec-15	Make a pledge, earn a selfie: Rly's new formula to safeguard women
9	Hindustan Times	4-Dec-15	Campaign urges more women to approach police
10	Lokmat	4-Dec-15	Security Helpline 182
11	Gujrat Samachar	4-Dec-15	Striyani Salamati (RPF Helpline 182)
12	Janmabhumi	4-Dec-15	Rail Yatri Jagrukta Abhiyan (RPF Helpline 182)
13	Pudhari	4-Dec-15	Mahila Anyacharavirodhi Janjaaruti



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Sr. No	Newspaper Name	Date	Article Heading 
14	Sakal	4-Dec-15	Mahilancya Surkshetesathi Railwaychi MohimSuru
15	Pudhari	5-Dec-15	Mahilancya Surkshe Babat Janjagruti
16	Sakal	7-Dec-15	Railway Parisar Striyansathi Surkshit Karnyacha Nirdhar
17	Maharashtra Times	30-Jan-16	Spardha Charchechya Madhyamatun Ling bhedavirudha Prabhodan
17	Hindustan Times	7-Feb-16	BMC takes a step towards a more woman-friendly DP
18	Hindustan Times	9-Feb-16	Need to improve quality of life for women under gender budget
19	Dainik	9-Mar-16	Tichyasathi Vasti Vachnalayacha Abhinav Prayog
20	Hindustan Times	9-Mar-16	Why more women in Mumbai are not working