

We are a queerfeminist, socialist nonprofit registered in Bangalore, India. We advocate for marginalized children and women's rights. We work with informal and undocumented labourers like migrant workers, waste workers, domestic workers, cottage industry workers and children engaged in labour. We support their access to healthcare, nutrition and formal education.

Our core work is two fold - community based interventions, and creating awareness on social issues- including child sexual abuse, menstrual-reproductive rights, sexual abuse, gender-sexuality education, and social inequalities based on gender, caste, ethnicity and religion. We believe that systemic problems need simple, scientific, sustainable solutions.

16 DAYS 16 STORIES

OF GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

ಕನ್ನಡ | English



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INTRODUCTION

This booklet is written by our team, based on stories shared by real people with our researchers; each story is a lived reality. They span across spaces, roles and identities with the common theme of silent gender-based violence, microaggressions, denial of rights and choices.

We have moved the focus from the traditional stories of aggravated gender based violence and focused on the various unexplored, unexpressed and subtle forms of violence that we encounter in our lives on a daily basis.

This booklet is designed as a toolkit for social workers, communities and individuals to talk about gender based violence at home, work, school and society at large through the medium of storytelling.

Reminder

Gender based violence can happen at any place, to anyone, despite their gender, caste, class or other identities. If you or anyone you know is suffering from any of the following, please seek help:

- Physical violence, beating, assault
- Forced starvation, denial of comfort and care
- Denial of medical care
- Sexual abuse at home
- Sexual abuse at work
- Sexual abuse at school
- Sexual abuse by husband/ partners
- Online sexual abuse or harassment
- Verbal abuse, use of foul language, public ridicule
- Blackmailing
- Cheating
- Threatening
- Denial to meet family/friends, isolation from society
- Denial to work and seek employment
- Denial to start/continue education
- Control of time, accessibility and mobility

RESOURCES

Organization		Contact Details
Karnataka State Council for Child Welfare		kscwblr@gmail.com +91 80 2333 0846 +91 80 2292 5898
Karnataka State Commission for Women		080 2221 6485
30 DISTRICTS IN KARNATAKA LOCAL COMPLAINTS COMMITTEE DETAILS		30-DISTRICTS-IN-KARNATAKA-LOCAL-COMPLAINTS-COMMITTEE-DETAILS.pdf
Support for LGBTQIA+ Persons	Raahi The Journey - LGBTQ+ Support and Counselling NGO	raahithejourney@gmail.com +91-97397 80319
	Solidarity Foundation	solidarityfoundation2013@gmail.com +91-080-40990154
Violence/ Abuse of Women	North East Women Police Station, Yelahanka	DCP NORTH-EAST 94808 01064 080-23632002 080-22943676
All contact numbers of Police Stations, Officers in charge		https://bcp.karnataka.gov.in/24/law-&-order/-en
SHe-Box Nodal Officers		011 - 23388074 or 011-23073199

RESOURCES

Purpose	Organization	Contact Details
Support for Child Sexual Abuse	Garima Trust- Women and Child Rights and Education NGO	june@garimatrust.in nikita@garimatrust.in 9986124300
	Enfold India- Child Rights and Education NGO	info@enfoldindia.org 9900094251
	Sri. K. Naganna Gowda - Chairperson , Karnataka State Commission for Protection of Child Rights, Bengaluru	9448494414
Support for POSH or Sexual Harassment	Garima Trust- Women and Child Rights and Education NGO	june@garimatrust.in nikita@garimatrust.in 9986124300
	Nirathanka- POSH support NGO	080884 33026
	Parivarthan Counselling Centre for Mental Health care	080 2527 3462
Support for Minorities Rights Protection and Legal Aid	Alternative Law Forum- Legal Advisory NGO	080-2361-0531 contact@altlawforum.org
	Nyaaya - India's Laws Explained	contact@nyaaya.in 081058 00380

AUDIO STORIES

We have a collection of 8 audio stories to Identify, Address and Seek Help From Gender Based Violence.

The stories are available in multiple languages, each around 5 minutes long. They can be used as a training tool, communication or awareness raising activities, case studies or just as a conversation on the rights and entitlements of women. Audio-Stories are available on our YouTube channel www.youtube.com/@GarimaTrust



GRATITUDE

This work is possible because of the dedication and emotional contribution of our team members, volunteers, research participants, community members and storytellers from across the country.

If you want a copy of this book in any of our available languages. please drop a message at 9986124300 and let us know your requirement. You can also download the book in e-format as PDF from our website.

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STORY 1: WHO'S RESPONSIBLE FOR OUR SAFETY?

Aarti is from Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh. She recently cleared NEET and secured a seat in a reputed medical college in Kolkata. She has been dreaming of becoming a cardiologist for years! But the moment her parents got to know about her seat in Kolkata, they were vehemently against it. They cited the recent sexual violence and murder case of an on-duty doctor in R G Kar Medical College and Hospital and forbid her from taking the seat or moving to the city. They asked her to either study in Gwalior or to forget about it! When she tried speaking to them, they stated their concern for her life and safety, that she is the honour of their family. Aarti wondered, Abhaya was raped and murdered in her own home town. Then who is responsible for women's safety anyway? Why should she lose such an important opportunity because society is not safe for girls?

Denying women opportunities or access due to “safety concerns” is gender-based violence. Offer solutions, don't limit girls using safety as an excuse.



STORY 2: AM I HAPPY?

Sonali is from an OBC family in Maharashtra. She was allowed just enough education and groomed early on to earn the reputation of a "good housewife and mother". She dreamed of pursuing masters, but the groom her family chose—a software engineer with steady income and upward mobility—didn't agree. Within a year of marriage, she had a daughter, and four years later, a son. At 30, her world revolves around her children and husband, while her ambitions fade over time. Confined to their apartment in Pune, she feels trapped by the monotony of her life. At dinner, she's often the topic of ridicule for her lack of worldliness. Occasionally, she confides in her daughter about her dreams of a different life, to make something of herself. But as the years pass, Sonali watches endless seasons of television shows, and stares out at the crowded street from her balcony, often lost in thought, "Why am I not happy?"

Stripping away a girl's dreams to make her a perfect housewife is gender-based violence. Offer them a fair chance to become independent even if it's late.



STORY 3: WHY DON'T YOU CALL THE POLICE?

Some local boys were harassing Pooja for weeks. She usually came home from work after dark and the walk home had become dangerous. So she wanted to file an FIR. At the local police station, they asked her questions like, "Why do you stay in that area? Why do you have to walk home? Why do you come back so late?", while scanning her up and down. The complaint was lodged but the police van assigned to patrol the area came with a new set of problems. The harassment was considerably reduced, but the police began interrogating all the local girls on their way home. They gossiped and even said that the girls have "questionable character", which provokes the boys to harass them. The goons were gone by the regular patrolling, but the girls were now surveilled for their own safety. At times, policemen stop them and advise them to dress better. They don't feel safe to use the street after 7pm. Earlier, it was the local goons. Now, it's the local cops.

Victim shaming the complainant is gender-based violence. Women feel unsafe going to the police or court because of this patriarchal, victim shaming mindset of our system. Fight back for your safety.



STORY 4: BE A MAN!

13 y/o Mahesh lives in Saharanpur, Uttar Pradesh. His father works as a security guard and his mother is a domestic worker. He walks to his school every day. But in the past few weeks, he has refused to go to school. When his parents demanded an answer, he mentioned that a few older boys from the school have been sexually harassing him. They surround him, mock him and also physically abuse him in broad daylight. For a few days, he ignored them, but now they are getting scarier and bolder. But his father was angry that Mahesh didn't fight back and defend himself. He blamed Mahesh for being effeminate and avoiding conflict. He belittled him and advised him, "Next time fight them like a man!". Mahesh was forced to go to school while the boys continued bullying and harassing him. He felt humiliated, unsafe and alone. But there was no one he could turn to. Why should he have to fight them physically? Why can't his dad complain about the boys and get them formally addressed by the school?

Forcing young boys to behave aggressively and to fight is gender-based violence. The first place where boys get tutored in violence and inequality is home. Patriarchy hurts boys equally. Raise your sons with empathy, respect and safety.



STORY 5: WHAT IS POSH?

Tabassum works in a local factory in Salem, Tamil Nadu. She joined six months ago and earned just enough to help her aging father and younger brothers who are in school. For the last few weeks, she has been getting phone calls at night from a senior manager. When she answered the first time, he said he'd called by mistake. She was surprised that he even has her number. Then the next time, he said he was checking if she was fine at her new job. This continued for a while, so she stopped responding to his calls and messages. But soon after, she got called in by her supervisor to the senior manager's room, blaming her for unproductivity and misconduct. He gave her a stern warning and dismissed her. The senior manager stared at her the whole time with a smirk. Tabassum understood that this was retaliation from him since she didn't accept his advances. Now he will risk her employment out of spite. She wants to file a complaint but she doesn't know about POSH. Her company doesn't even have a POSH cell!

>75% women face sexual harassment and gender based violence at work. Not having a POSH cell in an organization is a criminal offence. Always check the POSH policy of any organization before joining. Know your rights.



STORY 6: MAKING A HOME

They live in Bengaluru in an upper-class apartment. They both leave for work in the morning. Shruthi would come back home, clean up the house and start cooking. Amaya usually came home, watched TV and they had dinner together. This is what their day looked like before they became parents. Six years later, Shruthi now wakes up, prepares breakfast and watches Amaya and their child leave for the day. Amaya drops the kid off at playschool on her way to work. Shruthi has been home since the baby came. It initially looked temporary, but as time went by, she got so confined in childcare and house chores that she lost confidence to step out. Meanwhile, Amaya's career flourished and she entirely took upon the financial responsibility of the family. "You're living the dream life of lesbians!" their friends would often comment happily. Every morning when Amaya leaves, Shruthi is lost thinking how her mother's routine looked exactly the same. She has finally understood what her mother did at home, alone.

Not sharing childcare and household responsibilities with our partner is gender based violence. Even educated, working women are often reduced to a "housewife" after marriage and children. Demand equal sharing of labour in the household from all genders.



STORY 7: WHO CAN JOIN DIGITAL INDIA?

Radha has been a vegetable vendor for the last 10 years in Hasaan, Karnataka. She is the sole breadwinner of the family after her husband abandoned her with three little girls. After a tough Covid-19 lockdown period, when she returned to the market, customers had all gone “cashless”. Radha didn’t have a smartphone, mobile, internet or a bank account. She started losing sales as she didn’t have a UPI scanner. So she approached her brother to provide a Phone Pay scanner attached to his bank account. As more and more customers began using UPI for payment, the control of Radha's finances went into her brother’s hands. He would often cheat Radha saying some of the payments had failed. But Radha had no other option other than to depend on her brother, despite knowing that he’s stealing her hard earned money. She cursed her own illiteracy and fate for this loss.

Less than 50% Indian women have bank accounts and mobile phone ownership. Non-inclusion of women informal workers/vendors in “Digital India” is gender-based violence at a policy-making level. Do we as customers have any role to play in it?



STORY 8: WHAT IS REVENGE PORN?

Sumriti is a trans woman who recently secured a good job with an NGO’s support. Earlier she made her living through alms seeking and sex work and also supported her partner. Finally, she asked to break up with him because he tightly controlled her life and finances. He was also physically and mentally abusive towards her. A few weeks after the breakup, he started messaging and threatening her to leak her morphed pictures online unless she continued the relationship. She asked him to delete all her media content from his phone. He refused, saying it was his property. Sumriti ignored these threats for some time. But then he threatened to send it to her new workplace if she ignored him. This sent chills down her spine. She didn’t want to lose her new career and life. Being a trans woman, it was almost impossible to secure a stable, respectable job. So, reluctantly, she said yes to continuing the relationship.

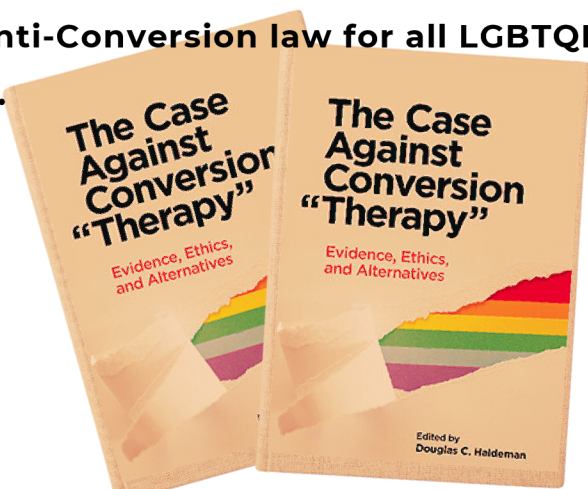
Using/ sharing sexual photos/media of another person is a crime and digital gender based violence. It is punishable by law. Please seek legal support if blackmailed with digital violence.



STORY 9: I AM WHO I AM

Kiran always preferred keeping his hair short. But after puberty, his parents began pressuring him to grow his hair and “dress like a girl”. When he resisted, they physically abused him. After he came out as a transman, they took him to a psychiatrist, who mistreated him for psychological disorders and prescribed heavy, numbing medication. Despite this, Kiran remained steadfast in his identity. Finally, his parents turned to a religious leader reputed for “curing” trans and gay people. Left with no other option, Kiran escaped from the house at the age of 16 to find refuge in a shelter home. He now balances education and a part-time call center job, aspires to become an artist and is preparing to transition medically. Though he’s building a life aligned with his true self, he faces many challenges, including depression, addiction and PTSD caused by misdiagnosis and conversion attempts, and struggles to find employment in his preferred field.

Medical and religious conversion attempts is gender-based violence that devastates countless lives of trans kids in India and worldwide. Often parents are the worst offenders of trans children. We need to fight for Anti-Conversion law for all LGBTQIA+ youth’s protection.



STORY 10: A LITTLE PAIN WON'T KILL YOU!

Minu, a 26-year-old junior lawyer in Chennai, has been dealing with constant period pain and headaches from a young age, which made it very hard for her to focus in school. When she went to the doctor, her concerns were brushed off. “Every woman goes through this; this pain is normal,” the doctor had said, dismissing her without much care. When Minu tried to ask about birth control to manage her symptoms, the doctor told her, “You will only need that after marriage. You don’t need it now.” Minu left the appointment feeling embarrassed and unheard, but she didn’t know where else to turn. The pain didn’t stop, though, and every doctor she saw after that seemed to dismiss her. When she was younger, her mother told her she was “too sensitive” when she complained about the pain. By the time Minu reached her twenties, the pain had become a part of her daily life. She started to feel like maybe they were right. Maybe she was just too sensitive. Maybe she was imagining it.

Denying women pain management is gender based violence. There’s no shame in taking painkillers and demanding medical care for sexual and reproductive health.



STORY 11: LABOUR LAWS FOR DOMESTIC WORK?

Supriya is a domestic worker in Bangalore, employed by the Iyer family from 8 am to 2 pm for the last 3 years. Supriya also shoulders responsibilities at home—caring for her children, managing chores, attending to her in-laws. Despite the hardship, she continues to push herself, determined to provide a better future for her family. As Diwali approaches, Supriya's anxiety grows. For the past two weeks, Supriya has worked two hours beyond her usual schedule each day to deep clean the house in exchange for a bonus. On payday, Mrs. Iyer handed her ₹500, along with a box of sweets and some old clothes in the name of a bonus. Exploitation of domestic workers for a tiny bonus sadly repeats every year in most houses. Sometimes, they are fired right before the festival to avoid paying a bonus. Exhausted by this seasonal cycle of exploitation, Supriya suppresses her anger, letting it trickle down as tears on her way home. Under labor law, all employers are required to pay an 8.3% annual bonus or equivalent to a month's salary. Yet Supriya is unable to exercise this right due to the inefficient Domestic workers law.

Domestic workers are financially exploited by employers and the government by not ensuring their labor rights.



STORY 12: IN THE NAME OF CULTURE

Amina is an 8th-grade student at an English-medium school in Mangalore. She is the only Muslim girl in her class. One day, the school decided to celebrate Raksha Bandhan, requiring all the girls to tie rakhis on the boys as a way to discourage school romances. While all the girls arrived with rakhis as instructed, Amina chose not to participate. When her teachers learned of her decision, they humiliated her in front of the entire class, accusing her of disrespecting Indian festivals. By the end of the day, students began spreading rumors that Amina was refusing to tie rakhis because she was romantically involved with multiple boys. When she sought help from the principal, instead of support, she was sternly ordered to participate in the ceremony to put an end to the rumors. Ultimately, Amina was made to stand on stage and tie rakhis in front of the entire school, pressured to prove her “character” and refute the unfounded accusations. Despite being a brilliant student, Amina started performing poorly in school and soon lost all interest in education.

Forcing a girl to conform to cultural practices against her will is a form of gender-based violence. India is a secular country and schools are meant to be democratic and scientific, not carriers of religious baggage and humiliation.



STORY 13: DO YOU LOOK INDIAN ?

Tara moved to Hyderabad from Shillong to pursue masters in Communications. She dreamt of finding new friends in the city, living independently. As Tara settled in, she noticed how many of her classmates don't engage with her, or other Northeastern students. So she slowly made friends and acquaintances with other Northeastern students. A few weeks later she found out how the boys in her class were playing a game of "rating the girls by how sexy they are". While talking about this with her group, she was reminded of the mainlanders' gaze towards northeastern women. She felt disgusted and fetishised into some weird fantasy. Eventually, Tara finished her degree, got a job at a reputed agency, found a place of her own, and had a group of close friends coming from different states of India. But somewhere the mainlanders' gaze never fully left her. While on some days, she did toughen up; chin up, and yelled back or returned the gaze with a witty one-liner, there were days Tara just felt like she was back to the first year of college, just closing in with a shell around her.

Women from north-east India are often fetishised, sexualised and demonized by the mainland society. This is gender based and ethnic violence.



STORY 14: TOKEN

Shital was the only 12th-pass girl from her tribal community in Bihar. She was chosen by the NGO Samanata as a field worker for their Girl-child Empowerment project. Her salary allowed her to complete her master's degree in sociology. Shital is now seen as a strong, independent woman—a role model for many girls in her village who aspire to study further. She has been working with Samanata for 5 years now, and was initially thrilled to represent the organisation at international conferences as an "impact story". But she now wants a promotion to Project Manager. Year after year, the organisation relied on Shital's grip on the topic and rapport with the community to keep the project running, hired and promoted project managers, while Shital remained as a fieldworker with a little mandatory raise in salary. Eloquent, tech savvy and competent, Shital knows the ins and outs of the project like no one else. But till date, she remains trapped as a token representative of her community and a successful case study for the potential funders while struggling to educate her sister, relieve her parents of daily wages, and far from addressing the "glass ceiling" of the "development" sector.

Exploitation of minorities by reducing identities to token representations and case stories is a form of Gender-based violence, commonly practiced in the name of inclusion.



STORY 15: MANY FACES OF CASTEISM

Chiru has been living with her spouse Preman for 2 years now. She belongs to an oppressed caste, while Preman is from a dominant caste, both from a small town in North Kerala. Because their families were against their union, they eloped and got married in the city of Kozhikode. Chiru was later accepted into Preman's family after a son was born to them. After Chiru and Preman moved in with Preman's family, Chiru was forced into adopting their cultural practices like vegetarianism and vedic rituals. Preman and his family, who initially made small jokes about Chiru's caste, began abusing her using casteist slurs. Her sister was trying to get in touch with her, but she knew that Preman's family did not want any association with her past. Chiru, who was living the life of an independent woman earlier, was made to leave her job, as a working woman was considered disgraceful in Preman's community. While she had been in the city for 2 years, she did not have any friends other than a few people she met through Preman. She felt alone and depressed. Preman and the in-laws' attempt to erase her past is a caste atrocity in the form of Gender-based violence.

Erasing identities of women from oppressed castes is gender and caste based violence. It is practiced frequently in our society.



STORY 16: COST OF LABOUR

Savita is a domestic worker in Bengaluru. She migrated from West Bengal to find better employment opportunities with her family. She works in the "madam's house" from 6am to 5pm everyday and gets a handsome salary of Rs.10,000. However, her health has significantly deteriorated ever since she moved to the city. Her "Madam" doesn't allow Savita to use the toilet in the house, nor does she offer her any food or water. If she brings tiffin from home, she is asked to take it downstairs and eat in the servant's waiting room. She is also directed to not use the main elevator in the building and to use the servant's toilet in the basement. The service lift is often out of order and the servant's toilet is usually locked. It takes a long time to go down, request for the key, use the toilet or to sit and eat. Meanwhile Madam starts calling her mobile asking her where she vanished. Due to all these reasons, Savita stopped drinking water, eating and using the toilet for the duration of her 11 hour shift. This helped her save time, but she developed chronic UTI. She was not provided a paid leave to visit the doctor for 3 months and then she finally collapsed. The hospital said she has Pelvic Inflammatory Disease and is bordering on sepsis. Savita has been advised to take bed-rest for 3 months, which is a huge financial blow to her family. This is an example of unsafe working conditions leading to occupational health risk.

Gender and caste based violence has an economic and health cost along with psychosocial harm. Employers of domestic workers have unchecked power to abuse them as we don't have appropriate laws for them.

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