



Series: Best Practices in South Asia of Engaging Men and Boys to Transform Gender Discriminatory Practices

## 'AWAAZ DO' (Speak Up)

# Engaging Youth to Address Violence Against Women

Centre for Health and Social Justice  
&  
MenEngage Alliance South Asia

## CASE STUDY : 2

### THE CAMPAIGN

**Awaaz Do**, meaning “Speak Up”, is a campaign to address violence against women (VAW) in the eastern state of Odisha in India. It was launched in 2013 in the state capital Bhubaneswar by the Institute for Social Development (ISD) with support from Oxfam India. It targets youth in 11 districts of Odisha, namely: Sambalpur, Anugul, Dhenkanal, Kandhamal, Kalahandi, Cuttack, Khorda, Puri, Rayagada, Ganjam and Gajapati. The campaign has facilitated the engagement of

youth in the annual global observance of the 16 Days of Activism to stop all forms of VAW, and has supported other initiatives to raise awareness on gender issues and eliminate VAW in the state through the training and engagement of youth 'Change Makers'. It has made college campuses safer, increased attendance of girl students, brought about healthy interaction among male and female students and students involved in the campaign are breaking down gender

stereotypes and restrictions in family and community too

“Honestly, today the campus is completely different. Now we can attend our classes regularly. There are no disturbances from the boys. It is only because of transformation within boys. Now they are more friendly, approachable and sensible enough to understand our point of view. And it is only possible because of their participation in the Awaaz Do campaign”.

— ROSALIN PRADHAN —  
Student, Kunja Bihari College,  
Baranga, Cuttack

resulting in several positive changes. The campaign has created a pool of young change makers at the local level who stand together to mobilise their communities towards gender equality and provide support in dealing with instances of VAW.

## THE CONTEXT

The youth constitute almost 40 per cent of the total population of Odisha, increasing at an annual growth rate of 3.97 per cent in the state. There are generally no adequate opportunities for this group of population in education and employment but, furthermore, there is huge disparity in terms of opportunities available for urban and rural youth particularly those living in tribal districts.

Awareness among the youth on gender issues, including VAW, was lacking when the campaign started. 'Gender' was only used as a term to distinguish between men and women. Events of national significance such as the 2012 Delhi gang-rape incident which elicited massive protests in Delhi and major cities across the country, and occasioned critical changes in the provisions



Ram (Change Maker) motivating youth in collage campus

of India's Penal Code relating to women, were almost unheard of in these districts. Due to lack of electricity and technology infrastructure including internet connectivity, the youth had no exposure to either television or online data via the computer or mobile phone which, thus, limited their access to information.

The campaign has provided a platform for cross-learning on gender issues among the youth from both urban and rural areas of the state. It has helped build a network of 'Change Makers' among the youth to sustain actions to reduce, if not eliminate, VAW.

## THE ORGANIZATION AND ITS ENGAGEMENT WITH MEN AND BOYS

Institute for Social Development (ISD) is a state level civil society organization committed towards empowerment of women in social, economic and political domains. The organization is operating from the state headquarter Bhubaneswar and focuses on networking, capacity building and evidence-based advocacy as leading strategy in its work. At present the organization is reaching out to various groups including youth from rural and urban Odisha and providing appropriate platform to discuss and debate on

## Learning to dismantle unequal privileges and position within the patriarchal system through 'Snake and Ladder' Game



relevant issues affecting the lives of women and children. Post-December 2012 Delhi gang-rape case, ISD decided to address on a priority basis gender issues, especially those related to VAW, and strengthen its engagement with men and boys in Odisha. ISD recognized the need to facilitate an understanding by men of their privileges and position within the patriarchal system as well as to ensure the promotion of gender equality at the level of the individual, community and state.

ISD launched the Awaaz Do campaign to effectively engage college-going youth, particularly the boys, with issues related to violence against women. Girls

have also been included in this campaign, ensuring that the concerns and perspectives of women and girls are central to the campaign.

Considering its experience of working in both tribal and coastal populations, ISD took an innovative step to provide a platform for both rural and urban youth to come together. The campaign has contributed in creating safe spaces free from violence for youth in the state.

### THE CHANGE PROCESS

Broadly, the campaign has engaged rural and urban youth from educational institutions to create awareness on gender

issues, recognize social attitudes and beliefs that support violence against women, facilitate personal and social change as a result and promote youth participation and leadership in stopping VAW.

Awaaz Do employs a number of approaches for this.

**Residential Camp:** A three-day residential camp is organised every year attended with about 300 youth from 15 rural and urban colleges covering 11 districts. The camp is designed to facilitate among participants a commitment to respect the dignity of women and ensure that they assume responsibility towards the attainment of gender equality. It enables college-going youth to share their views, opinions, experiences and learnings to recognize gender inequalities and their impact on women and men, and to encourage them to adopt changes in everyday life. Primarily, the campaign has been focusing on individual personal development with the intent to bring positive changes among the youth.

The sessions at the camp are participatory and interactive,



### Interaction with 'Change Makers' at the residential camp

every individual is encouraged to engage in the process of dialogue to help each other understand and recognize the problem of violence against women as his/her own, know various ways of dealing with it and feel empowered to make change happen. The sessions are conducted through small group discussions, plenary discussions, interactive film shows, role play, slogan writing and cultural programmes facilitated by experienced youth and gender activists from the state.

A range of issues deemed disturbing and of major concern for society like domestic violence, declining child sex ratio in the state, gender

discrimination in the family setting, adolescent and sexual health, and sexual harassment in the college campus are raised and discussed through role play. Resource persons and facilitators provide the group with theoretical and practical knowledge on violence against women.

**Enabling Change Makers:** The core of this campaign are the 'Change Makers' who are enabled to engage in personal development processes and subsequently, involve others in their efforts for gender equality and preventing violence against women. So far, about 1,100 'Change Makers' have emerged from the residential camps,

pledging to raise their voice against gender-based discrimination in their own lives, to stand against all forms of violence against women and motivate others to do the same.

**Building A Network of Change Makers and Supporters:** ISD has facilitated and strengthened the network of 'Change Makers', and provides constant moral and technical support through other related programmes to sustain the energy, excitement and commitment of these young catalysts in preventing VAW.

Within a relatively short span of four years, the campaign has been able to build credibility and competence at the state-level. It has generated support and creative cooperation from various stakeholders — colleges, teachers, the youth and their families, community members and the funding partner, to keep it going.

**Interaction with Change Makers:** Regular engagement of the 'Change Makers' with students in the college campuses has impacted the mindset of the youth. It has been shared by other students in the campuses

## ISSUES DISCUSSED DURING THE CAMPAIGN

- Sexual harassment at workplace in public and private sector
- Trafficking of women in the name of job and marriage
- Domestic violence and its impact on society
- Rape
- Public forms of violence such as sexual harassment (eve-teasing), stalking, molestation, acid attack
- Witch-hunting and the killing of women in tribal areas
- Child sexual abuse at school/home, other public places
- Property rights especially rights of daughter in parental property
- Declining sex ratio in the context of Odisha



that the 'Change Makers' encourage both boys and girls to come together and participate in gender-awareness activities to understand each other's point of view. College authorities attest to the 'Change Makers' having helped transform college campuses into a no-violence zone.

Whether it is the monthly cultural activities, the weekly debate competition or seminars, the youth groups mandatorily dedicate some portion of their time to gender-related trainings so that the understanding of gender issues can be enhanced among students, faculty members and non-teaching staff. Tools like the 'Snakes and Ladders Game' and 'Power Game' are popular among most of the students because it gives them a chance to understand in a

play-way the challenges that each gender faces, the privileges being enjoyed by each one, and the share of opportunities being provided or curtailed in their midst.

**Gender Time Session:** Early marriage of girls is a major concern in the tribal districts of Odisha. In addition, the absence of information related to sexual health and sexuality in the regular educational curriculum is worrying in a scenario where youth are coping with major physical and psychological occurring changes in their life.

The 'Gender Time Session' organized in different colleges by ISD encourages boys and girls to open up and share their thoughts and dilemmas related to gender and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) issues. Through role-

play, the concept of gender and its linkages to power relations within and outside the family, and how patriarchy affects individual relationships and institutional mechanisms are explored. The youth are able to analyze the ways in which gender affects interactions, behaviour, perceptions, attitudes, roles and relationships at the micro-level, and bring about change in day-to-day practice. The “best performing youth” in the role-play are invited to participate in the state-level campaign and deliberate upon gender issues and violence against women.



## THEORY OF CHANGE

- The campaign has established a process that ensures that the personal development of the youth in a formal setup like educational institutions will create a ripple effect in other institutions like family and society.
- The teams of 'Change Makers' emerging out of the campaign have taken ownership of a share of the responsibility for bringing social change among



various people they are associated with to transform their thinking by addressing myths and misconceptions on

gender-related issues. Further, they promote the values of equality and justice in all walks of life, and make themselves and others prepared for challenges in eradicating existing negative gender-based social norms, and together stop violence against women in institutions like family, their neighborhood, society and educational institutions.

## THE GAINS

The Awaaz Do campaign has gained enormous popularity among college-going youth and their institutions. Initially, ISD approached colleges to send their students for this campaign but now colleges are the ones requesting ISD to involve more youth from their institutions. Participating colleges have recognized the need for more such types of regular engagement with the youth in campuses and are proposing to their universities to include short-term studies on gender equality in the college curriculum.

Every year, more than a thousand students apply for participation in the residential camp but only 300 are selected. So far 1,100 youth have participated in this campaign out of which 759 are boys and 341 are girls. These 1,100 'Change Makers' are being promoted to engage with their peers, family members and members of their communities. Most of the colleges have requested ISD to organize regular monthly gender training sessions separately for teachers and for students.

In some of the tribal districts like Rayagara, Kalahandi and Kandhamal, the campaign has

generated many change agents who have effectively engaged in the process of rehabilitation of women who are survivors of violence. They are also mobilizing local Sarpanches (elected leaders) to provide financial support for rehabilitation of these survivors from their government fund.

In the last four years, the campaign has brought about a strong transformation on the ground. Incidents of sexual harassment have drastically come down on college campuses where students participate in the Awaaz Do campaign. The attendance of girls in these

## VAW IN ODISHA

Records indicate that between 2011 to 2015, the number of cases registered for various crimes against women in the state has gone up as shown below:

### Cases registered for various crimes against women in Odisha (2011-2015)

Year	VAW Incidents
2011	9433
2012	11988
2013	14173
2014	14606
2015	17144

While it cannot be conclusively said that the incidence of violence against women per se has increased but notably, there has been an increase in reporting of crimes against women over the years as per the records of the National Crime Record Bureau.

Source: National Crime Records Bureau

colleges has also increased in these years. Engagement between the students and teachers has improved a lot. Deviating from traditional teaching techniques, the teachers are creating active and collaborative learning opportunities for students and thus helping them improve both

educational and social skills. It has been observed that there has been a sea change in the mindset of people in Barang block from where students have been participating in Awaaz Do. The mobility of women and girls has increased in these clusters; they are allowed to go to the bank for withdrawal and deposit

of money. Also the girls are being allowed to participate in family matters like resolving property disputes. Besides, boys are involved in household activities and doing a range of supportive work at home like fetching water, taking care of domestic animals and cleaning utensils.

## TESTIMONIES OF CHANGE AMONG THOSE INVOLVED IN THE CAMPAIGN

“Earlier my knowledge about violence was very limited. I thought if one individual kills another individual that is called violence. After spending three days in the campaign, I understood that there are other forms of violence also. And we have been experiencing this in everyday life. Now I realize that women should not tolerate this violence and must share their grievances with family members and if required can take the assistance of the police to resolve it. I want to go back and talk about what I have learnt with my family members, neighbours and friends. I am sure they will listen and this will help reduce violence to some extent in our area”.

— BASUDHA KHOSLA —  
Student, Women's College, Rayagada

“We are really happy after observing the transformation in our students. The environment of the campus has completely changed. You can see both boys and girls are now engaged positively in all college activities. The attendance of students particularly girls has increased and it will be very helpful for the coming generation”.

— SUKANTA KUMAR ROUT —

Lecturer, Kunja Bihari College, Baranga, Cuttack

Participation of girls from the tribal belt like Rayagada, Kandhamal and Kalahandi districts in Awaaz Do has contributed to instilling confidence in them and, likewise, in changing the mindset of their family members. As a result, girls are allowed to continue their

higher education which has helped delay early marriages too. The campaign has triggered gradual personal development processes across different social layers in rural and urban Odisha. The hundreds of 'Change Makers' of the campaign have pledged to bring positive

changes in their lives and do not want to be mere bystander anymore in the face of VAW and all forms of discrimination. They engage others in different settings like family, campus and society.



**SARASWATI**  
(Name Changed)

Age 50,  
Resident: Baranga  
Cuttack District

“Being a single woman I mostly depend on dairy business. I have a small cowshed adjacent to my home. Due to some property dispute, my neighbor damaged our cowshed and put pressure from their relatives to discontinue this business in our locality. I could not figure out what to do? Then, my daughter suggested that I approach the youth group in our village because she personally knows the group members. Earlier, Rama, a Change Maker, and his group encouraged my daughter to participate in a camp in Bhubaneswar.

Thereafter, I asked my daughter to visit Rama's house and request him to help us in this matter. When she visited Rama's house, I saw that he was having his lunch but upon learning what happened he wasted no time, put aside his lunch and rushed off to the police station. In the meantime, Rama asked other group members to join them in the police station and all of them assembled till 9 'O' clock in the evening and convinced the station-in-charge to register the FIR. It gave us immense confidence that at least a group is there in our village to support us during any sort of crisis. Now, the group has mobilised other boys and girls of our village to contribute some time to tribal children in a nearby village to raise awareness on gender issues.”.





— RAMA CHANDRA DAS (19) —

Former Student, Kunja Bihari College,  
Baranga, Cuttack

## FROM COLLEGE TROUBLEMAKER TO A GENDER SENSITISED YOUNG MAN

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“I belong to a traditional male-dominated, patriarchal joint family. I live with my siblings and other relatives. Traditionally in my family the head of the house takes all decisions related to family matters. In such an environment, my mother and aunts were never allowed to share their opinion on any matter. We, boys and men, generally have fun either in our college campus or in meeting places outside the village, but due to the strict environment in the family the girls and the women are not allowed to do the same. I too followed the patriarchal tradition and

became the leader of one of these types of groups in college. My daily routine used to involve bunking classes and indulging in mischievous activities. I did not have respect for anyone. We used to create nuisance inside our classroom because of which girls were discouraged to attend regular classes.

In 2012, representatives of ISD came to our college and took a session on gender. Subsequently, as a youth leader I was selected to participate in the Awaaz Do campaign in 2013. The campaign was a unique experience for me because I was till then shy in nature and hesitated to mingle with others

apart from my immediate friends circle. Fortunately, I got an opportunity to participate in the role play. I played the role of a woman and that role gave me the confidence to open my mind. Thereafter, ISD selected me as a volunteer to support the campaign held the following year. Honestly, that campaign has changed the vision of my life and I found complete transformation in my attitude, behaviour and perception about others. After that I never looked back and I have been engaged in transforming

others. My relationship with my mother and sister TOO has changed a lot for the better. Now, I care a lot about them. I am also able to convince my father on many family-related issues. Because of my confidence, I could speak out to help stop the early marriage of my sister and could persuade my family members to let her continue her higher education.

I have witnessed a lot of changes within me as a person. Now I am more calm, approachable and stable in mind. Relatives and friends in my neighborhood who have been observing me for long are happier with my attitude now and that has helped me engage and help others on social matters. We have formed a youth group that is



“I have seen a sea change in the behaviour of my brother. Now he is more sober in nature. He was the first person of my family who opposed my marriage and stood with me to complete my higher education. He even succeeded in persuading my friend's parents to allow their daughters to continue their education .”

— KUMUDINI (19) —  
Sister of Ram Chandra Das,  
Student of Kunja Bihari College,  
Baranga, Cuttack

very active both in our college and locality. We are regularly engaging the youth in different types of activities and helping them grow. As a result, our college now is full of a positive environment and girls have become more energetic and free due to the change in the campus environment. The biggest change I have seen in our group is that all of us are now involved in household activities and are supporting our family members in it. Early marriage, dowry and caste systems are major concerns for our village. Now our group has taken this issue to the local Sarpanch and is planning to start a campaign with the help of the village youth to address these issues.

## THE CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNT

ISD was cautioned against shifting focus and starting a campaign focusing on youth, particularly men and boys. There was a perception among civil society organizations in the state that the youth may not be the appropriate target group for this

kind of campaign, noting that they have not been seriously engaged with social issues earlier. The idea itself of engaging men and boys in a campaign to stop VAW and the differing opinions on the matter generated discussions around violence against women among different stakeholders which helped the campaign.

Despite criticism from various institutions, the campaign delivered encouraging results. The 'Awaaz Do' experience has shown that the youth can be trained and mobilized as change agents. Factors such as the relevance of issues, appropriateness of the forum and activities that could enable participation and leadership have

made the campaign effective.

'Awaaz Do' has demonstrably contributed in transforming attitudes and behavior of youth and it has also been creating a ripple effect on those they interact with. The campaign has broken barriers with boys and men alongside girls and women dealing with gender issues and VAW in partnership. The campaign further mainstreamed the issue of violence against women in educational institutions and local governance.

While follow-up activities of the campaign have not been organized, other initiatives by ISD provide enormous opportunity to assess its impact at the community level. Today, Odisha is no longer a stranger to discussing and acting on gender



issues and VAW. Meantime, generating fund for a mega residential campaign remains to be a major challenge for a state

level organization like ISD, but windows of opportunity have opened with colleges proposing to include the discussion of gender issues in the curriculum.

Written by **Sambit Kumar Mohanty**

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# ABOUT THE CASE STUDIES

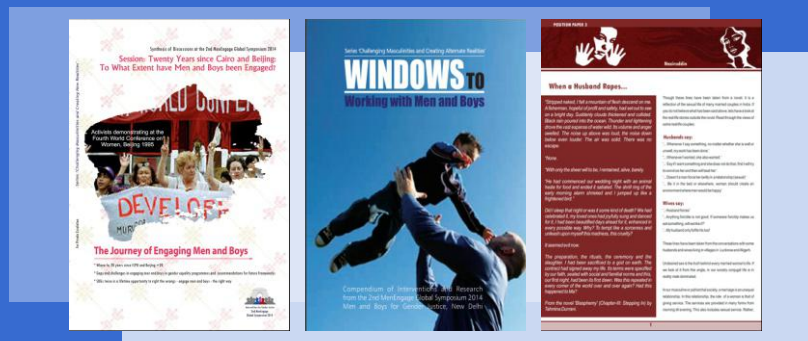
Five case studies have been put together by the Centre for Health and Social Justice (CHSJ) in *the series Best Practices in South Asia of Engaging Men and Boys To Transform Gender Discriminatory Practices.*

These are practices developed by MenEngage South Asia network's member organisations in Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh and India. The purpose of developing these case studies is to provide increased visibility to organisations and issues related to work with men on masculinity, gender based violence, sexual and reproductive health rights and gender equality. The five case studies are:

- 1 Engaging Men and Boys Against the Practice of Chhaupadi in Nepal
- 2 'Awaaz Do' (Speak Up)- Engaging Youth to Address Violence Against Women in Odisha, India
- 3 Engaging Men and Boys for Gender Equality in Sri Lanka - Resisting 'Karumaya' (The Fate Of Women)
- 4 Using Communications For Exploring Masculinities - Work With Young Men In Urban India
- 5 Engaging Boys And Men To Stop Acid Violence In Bangladesh

## About CHSJ

CHSJ ([chsj.org](http://chsj.org)) is an Indian civil society resource organisation working on issues of masculinities and gender justice. It focuses on networking, capacity building, research and implementing strategies it has developed on working with men and boys for gender justice through field based interventions. Its work is grounded in 10 states. Some of the material brought out by its Resource Centre on gender and masculinities can be seen here:



- <http://www.menengagedilli2014.net/knowledge-products-link-page.html>
- <http://www.chsj.org/positions-papers.html>
- <http://www.chsj.org/resource-centre-on-masculinity.html>
- <http://www.femindia.net/>

## About MenEngage South Asia

The global MenEngage Alliance ([menengage.org](http://menengage.org)) has a strong presence in South Asia since 2007, where it is known as MenEngage South Asia (MESA). Through country-level and regional alliances, MESA seeks to provide a collective voice on the need to engage men and boys in gender equality and addressing masculinities, to build and improve the field of practice around engaging men and boys in gender justice, and advocating before policymakers at the local, national and regional levels.