

RAISING GENDER EQUITABLE BOYS

Action For Equality - Stories From The Ground



RAISING GENDER EQUITABLE BOYS, Action For Equality - Stories From The Ground

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“ NOT EVERY BOY IS PART OF THE PROBLEM, BUT
EVERY BOY CAN BE PART OF THE SOLUTION ”

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Anjana has been a part of the ECF team since 2012. She leads the programme development and implementation of Action for Equality.

WHY WORK WITH BOYS?

Anjana, 36, Senior Programme Manager

If you live in India, especially as a woman, it isn't difficult to see the consequences of the persistent and deeply ingrained social norms around women's roles as caregivers, homemakers and the receptacles of their family's honour; and men's roles as breadwinners, protectors and decision makers. These norms ensure that women continue to be seen largely as property: to be protected, controlled and kept indoors.

Within such a context, empowering women without attempting to address the underlying gender norms that govern the behaviour of both, men and women, can and often does, result in resistance and backlash as women attempt to exercise their autonomy in hostile households, workplaces, and communities. Girls are regularly pulled out of school to "protect them" from street sexual harassment. Those that do make it into the workforce, often have to give up their careers, and their financial independence, due to childbearing and caregiving tasks. And the small fraction that manage the tight-rope-walk between their domestic and work lives, do so at the almost certain risk of discrimination and violence.

Besides the obvious fact that violence and discrimination should not be tolerated, there is also a very good economic case to be made for a more gender equitable society. UN Global estimates indicate that, in India, an annual investment of ₹300 per person in adolescent health programmes and ₹247 per person in programmes to reduce child marriage can yield a 10X and 6X boost to the economy respectively (India Philanthropy Report 2020). Similarly, investments to reduce adolescent pregnancy could boost the GDP by as much as 12%!

The pervasive idea (however false) that human rights and liberties are a zero sum game means that men often see gender justice and full, meaningful gender equality as a threat to their status and privilege conferred by patriarchy. And as such, work towards retaining that privilege. Which is why, in order to effect real change to the status quo, people of all genders, but especially men and boys, need to be involved in the process. And adolescence, as a formative stage, offers a crucial opportunity to engage boys and provide them with the necessary knowledge and tools to move from being mere spectators or perpetrators to being allies.

“When I teased women, I didn’t realise it was sexual harassment. For us, it was harmless fun.”

Shivraj is just one among the innumerable boys raised in environments rife with alcoholism, drug abuse, street sexual harassment and domestic violence. It isn’t a surprise then, that as an adolescent, he too was one of the many taporis seen hanging around the narrow lanes of Prem Nagar: harassing girls and swearing along with his friends. This is what makes his transformation into a young man who frequently intervenes in gender based violence and sexual harassment so remarkable.

The opportunity to participate in the Action for Equality (AfE) programme - which provided him the space and knowledge to reflect on his actions - was key to his growth. Through reflection and safe discussions with his peers, he learnt about the socially constructed norms around gender and masculinity and the violence that results from these norms. He began to see how his idea of fun in fact dehumanised the girls he whistled at. As he became more aware of his own actions, he also became aware of the very real consequences that the girls in his community faced. Instead of scolding him and his friends, most often the girls’ parents simply pulled them out of school or college. “I felt horrible about it and stopped harassing girls immediately.” - he says.

Today, Shivraj is a programme executive with Equal Community Foundation. He engages alumni and other community members by organising street plays on themes ranging from street sexual harassment and domestic violence to dowry and child marriage.



SHIVRAJ, 24, PREM NAGAR

Ramesh and Pranita have been married for ten years. One day, Ramesh finds out that Pranita is having an affair. Ramesh is furious, he feels humiliated and betrayed and he beats Pranita.

Do you agree with Ramesh's actions?

LEADERSHIP SKILLS

Rahul, 36, Programme Associate

An important aspect of working with adolescents is to keep their needs around personal growth and development in mind as we design and implement programmes for them. Developing the skills of leadership, critical thinking, problem solving, time-management, teamwork, planning, organising and execution we believe, will aid them throughout their life.



Rahul has been a part of the ECF team since 2012. He splits his time between mentoring young men in communities around Pune and coaching programme mentors from partner organizations to embed the approach of working with men and boys into their own programmes.



First, we focus on enabling them to build a vision for the kind of person they want to be. We ask them to identify their role models and list the qualities and attributes that they would like to imbibe. Participants typically list cricketers, actors, politicians, social reformers, relatives and parents as their role models; and qualities such as leadership, listening, kindness, helpfulness, teamwork and cooperation. We then talk about how we can develop a vision for our lives and ourselves as individuals based on human rights and gender equality.

Second, we use games and sports to develop skills around teamwork. Participants play a game of netball or football and then reflect on how they played: whether they played as individuals or as a team, and how that affected the outcome and their experience of the game. Through these activities we build an awareness of what it takes to work as a team, how we have to take on various roles, how we have to maintain a positive team spirit and how we have to keep our common goal in mind.

Third, we use simple stories to indicate how time-management can be a critical tool in completing a task successfully within a given timeframe. Finally, we focus on problem solving skills and initiation skills (taking action). We conduct an activity and ask participants to list different problems and categorize them as personal, family or community problems. At an individual level participants identify issues with friends, with academics etc. At a familial level participants identify domestic violence, financial problems, etc. At a communal level participants identify street sexual harassment, poor sanitation, etc. We decide which issue we want to focus on and then identify solutions to the issue. For example, participants may choose poor sanitation and then identify steps such as identify key stakeholders, do a signature campaign, write a letter to the corporator, etc. Finally, they execute this plan.

In this way, participants get to learn and practice various skills that they can apply throughout their lives.

“

The programme conducted by ECF is useful for our young generation of boys. This is the age that boys begin experimenting with drugs and alcohol, neglecting their studies and exercising control over the women in their families. Receiving the right information, skills and guidance is crucial. It ensures that they understand the consequences of their actions and learn healthy and responsible behaviours.”

YASHODA PAWAR

COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDER, 39, LOHIYA NAGAR

“Boys need to change their attitudes towards girls and family members. Boys should take the responsibility of informing other boys about human rights, equality, choice and freedom.

”

SAVITA MULIMANI

PARTICIPANT'S MOTHER, 40, PREM NAGAR





AMOL, 21, CHANDAN NAGAR

“It’s due to my time here at ECF that I can speak with confidence about topics like gender equality, menstruation and sexism in movies.”

Amol, at twenty one, is playing a key role as an ally to his female colleagues. Having grown up in a low income community in Pune, where gender norms are deeply entrenched and rarely challenged, he’s come a long way from being “just another boy”.

On graduating from the AfE programme, Amol applied the skills he learnt there at his new job. Amol’s female co-workers often had to travel long distances late at night to get home after work, which made them feel unsafe and worried. He raised this issue at a meeting with management, which encouraged his female colleagues to share their concerns more openly. And, after a brief discussion and brainstorming potential solutions with the employees, management decided to include a late night cab service for women employees as part of their policy. This policy was put into effect almost immediately.

More recently, when the COVID-19 pandemic brought his community to a standstill, Amol coordinated with the local authorities to identify the needs of his community during the lockdown. He then organised an online fundraising drive to raise money for the provision of essential goods in his community and managed to provide crucial support to at least fifty five families in his neighbourhood.

Poonam, who has a keen interest in fashion, likes wearing jeans, short skirts, dresses and t-shirts. The boys in her community tease and whistle at her when she walks down the street. When she brings up the issue of harassment, Poonam's neighbours tell her that she is to blame for the teasing and harassment because of what she is wearing.

Is it Poonam's fault that she is being teased?

HUMAN RIGHTS

Sandip, 30, Programme Mentor

The fundamental basis for equality is that as human beings, we are ALL entitled to our basic human rights. Most of our participants learn about human rights in school. However, they are not able to relate to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights beyond their civics lesson. We set up activities that leverage their existing knowledge and help them reflect on their past experiences. We then lead them through a discussion based on their reflections.



Sandip has been a part of the ECF team since 2019 as a mentor to adolescent boys in our Action for Equality programme, enabling them to become more gender-equitable.



मानवाधिकार

समानता का अधिकार

भेदभाव से स्वतंत्रता का अधिकार

स्वतंत्रता का अधिकार

सुरक्षा का अधिकार

स्वास्थ्य का अधिकार

शिक्षा का अधिकार

कौशल विकास का अधिकार

First, we involve them in a thought experiment where they're transported to an uninhabited island with their friends. The island offers them a fresh start to settle and build their lives on their own terms. They are asked to think about the amenities and services that they would need to make the island inhabitable and the values that their newly established colony will uphold.

Second, we lead them into a discussion on the choices they made and how these basic necessities are important for people to lead happy and fulfilling lives. We then link these needs with rights by explaining how these basic needs are in fact the needs enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights! It's not an esoteric, inaccessible document - it's just an international endorsement of what 'you' think 'you' need as a person to lead a happy and fulfilling life. This is the first eureka moment for our participants.

Third, we display a list of human rights and ask them to reflect on which of these rights they as individuals have been able to access easily, which they have had to struggle to access and which rights they have been denied.

Fourth, we ask them to think about their communities and question who tends to be able to access their human rights more easily than others? Participants reflect on the discrimination they may have faced or witnessed in their locality on the basis of caste, religion, region and gender.

Fifth, we ask them to think about their own homes and ask if every member in their family is able to access their human rights? Participants reflect on the inherent gender based inequity at home that allows them access to better education and freedom of movement as compared to their sisters.

Through this activity they understand the concept of human rights, they are able to relate to human rights as those rights that are required for individuals to lead happy and fulfilling lives and they are able to identify discrimination based on caste, class, religion and gender. Specifically, they are able to identify discrimination within their communities, peer groups and families.

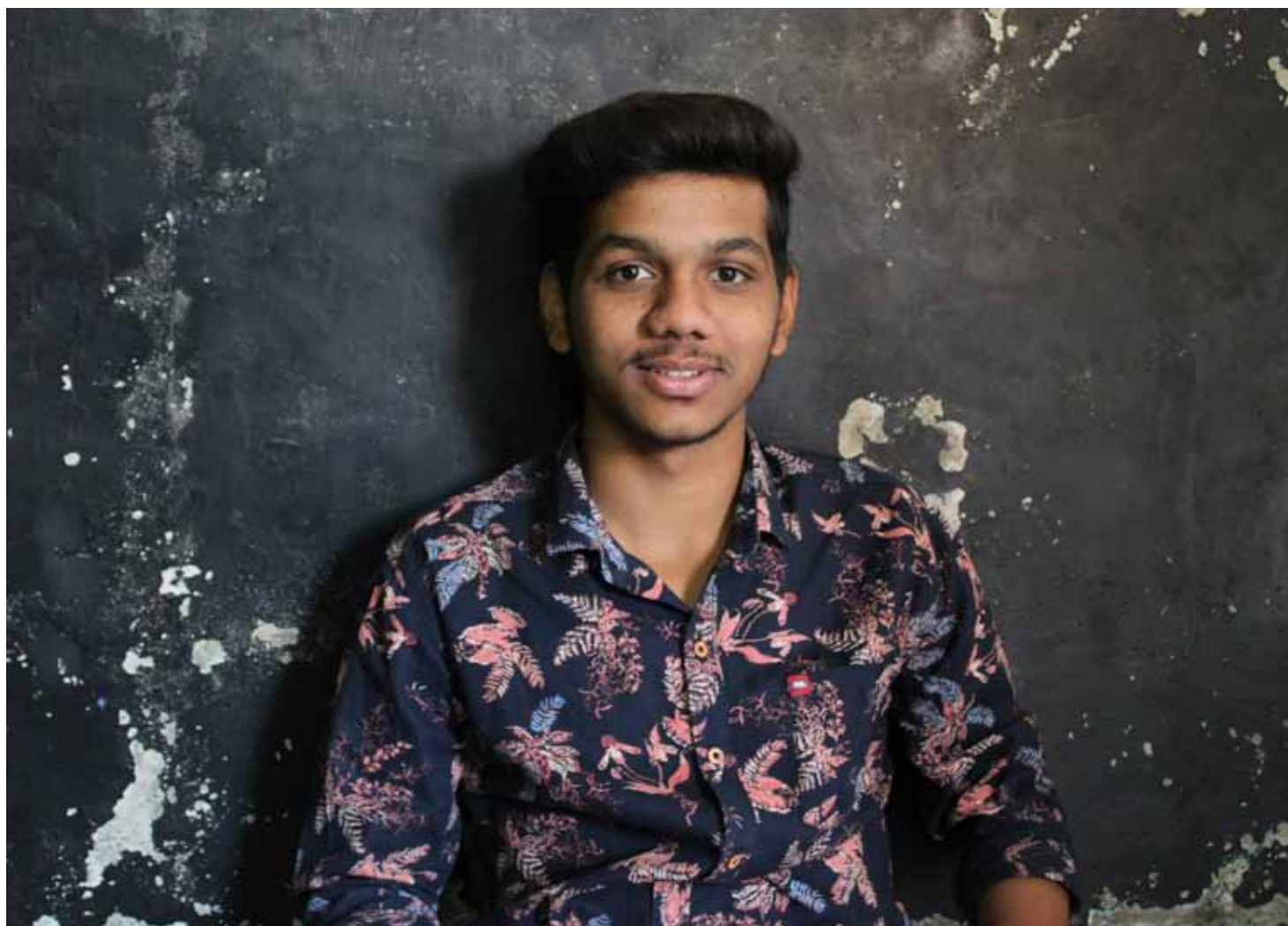
“

I have always wanted to be able to earn a living and contribute towards my family's financial needs. But when my family found out about the street harassment I faced when I went to work, they asked me to stay at home instead. My dream of going out and working for my family was not met because of the behaviour of some boys in my community. Like me, there are many other girls whose dreams are unmet due to these boys' attitudes. I feel it is very important to engage boys constructively as ECF is doing with my brother.”

SHAHEEN JAMADAR (NAME CHANGED)

PARTICIPANT'S SISTER, 19, PUNE





ASHUTOSH, 18, PREM NAGAR

“I first heard about ECF’s programme when I was thirteen years old. I knew, from speaking to other boys in the community, that there would be games and activities. This is where I learnt about human rights.”

Around the time that Ashutosh was first introduced to the concepts of human rights, gender norms and masculinity through fun activities and discussions in ECF’s programme, his family began planning his sister’s marriage in their village. His sister, Anisha, was only fourteen at the time and the man chosen to be her life partner was twenty four. This was by no means unusual in his community. The thirteen year old Ashutosh, however, knew something was amiss: they were barely a year apart, and no one was planning to get him married! And, like most teenagers, Anisha also did not want to get married.

The key for Ashutosh was learning that besides being “wrong”, child marriage is also a crime. With the support of his programme mentor, Ashutosh had the courage to speak up in support of his sister’s rights. Together, they convinced not only his parents, but also his elderly grandmother, to delay Anisha’s wedding and supported her to continue with her education.

Anisha recalls, “It is because of Ashutosh that I have the opportunity to study today. If he had not supported me at that time, I would probably be married. Ashutosh continues to support me in many ways.”

Chetu is ten years old and likes to play with dolls with his two sisters. He dresses them, makes up their hair and takes care of them. His parents are very concerned about this behaviour. They decide to stop him from playing with dolls.

Do you agree with Chetu's parents' decision?

GENDER

Sunil, 33, Senior Programme Mentor

Gender is a social construct that leads to discrimination. Our participants imbibe gender norms from a young age, but are not always aware of where these norms originate and how they can be discriminatory. In order to create an understanding of gender and gender norms we take them through a set of games and activities.



Sunil has been a part of the ECF team since 2010. With over ten years of experience working on gender issues, his belief in the importance of the struggle for gender equality is what brought him to ECF.

અધ્યક્ષશ્રી
Teacher.

द्वारेण काय



1/2 रिड १५/१२

The boys then discuss how the advantages of men are always disadvantageous for women and vice versa. For example, a man can go out and work, but a woman cannot; women can spend time with and show affection towards their children, but a man cannot. We then talk about what can be done to reduce this gap. They often answer that they, as boys, can participate and share in the household chores, and men in general can help out with childcare and domestic work. This is one of the key lessons that leads to initial changes in the behaviour of our participants.

“

Due to the burden of household chores, my dream of getting an education was unmet. I loved to go to school and learn and I was very keen to go for higher studies and be independent. But my mother is a daily wage worker and so all household responsibilities are with me. I had to drop out of school after 7th grade to manage the household. Now my brother has started sharing in these responsibilities, so I have time to do things that actually interest me. I feel good that he encourages and supports me.”

JAYA RATHOD (NAME CHANGED)

PARTICIPANT'S SISTER, 18, PUNE





RUSHIKESH, 22, LOHIYA NAGAR

“As men, we never question the tremendous workload that women take up in their day to day lives.”

As a young boy, Rushikesh was often disrespectful towards his mother and sister. He never helped out with household chores; believing that it wasn't his responsibility.

The turning point for Rushikesh came when, as part of an assignment in ECF's programme, he spent a day observing all the work that his mother did - she was always the first one to wake up and often the last to sleep; and besides working as cleaning staff with the PMC, she also did all the housework. This was the first time that he realized just how exhausted she must be at the end of each day. Rushikesh, like many AfE participants, took his first steps in being an ally to women by sharing domestic responsibilities.

Today, he's happy that his contributions towards housework - be it cutting vegetables, buying groceries or sweeping the floor - give his mother a chance to relax after a long day's work. And his actions extend beyond his own family. Within the larger community, he set his sights on another problem: that of women fasting multiple days a week. Along with other alumni, he staged street plays and engaged the women in his community in discussions around their health and nutritional needs. Not easily disheartened by the resistance they faced initially, they continued this dialogue for over a year! And today, though the practice of fasting hasn't completely disappeared, most women in his community only fast one day a week.

Shruti is 16, Navnath is 15, and they have two sisters who are 2 and 4. Their mother used to take care of the house and the children by herself. Now she is sick and is no longer able to get out of bed. She tells Shruti to stay at home to cook, take care of her sisters and the house. She doesn't ask Navnath because she wants him to concentrate on his studies.

Do you agree with Shruti and Navnath's mother?

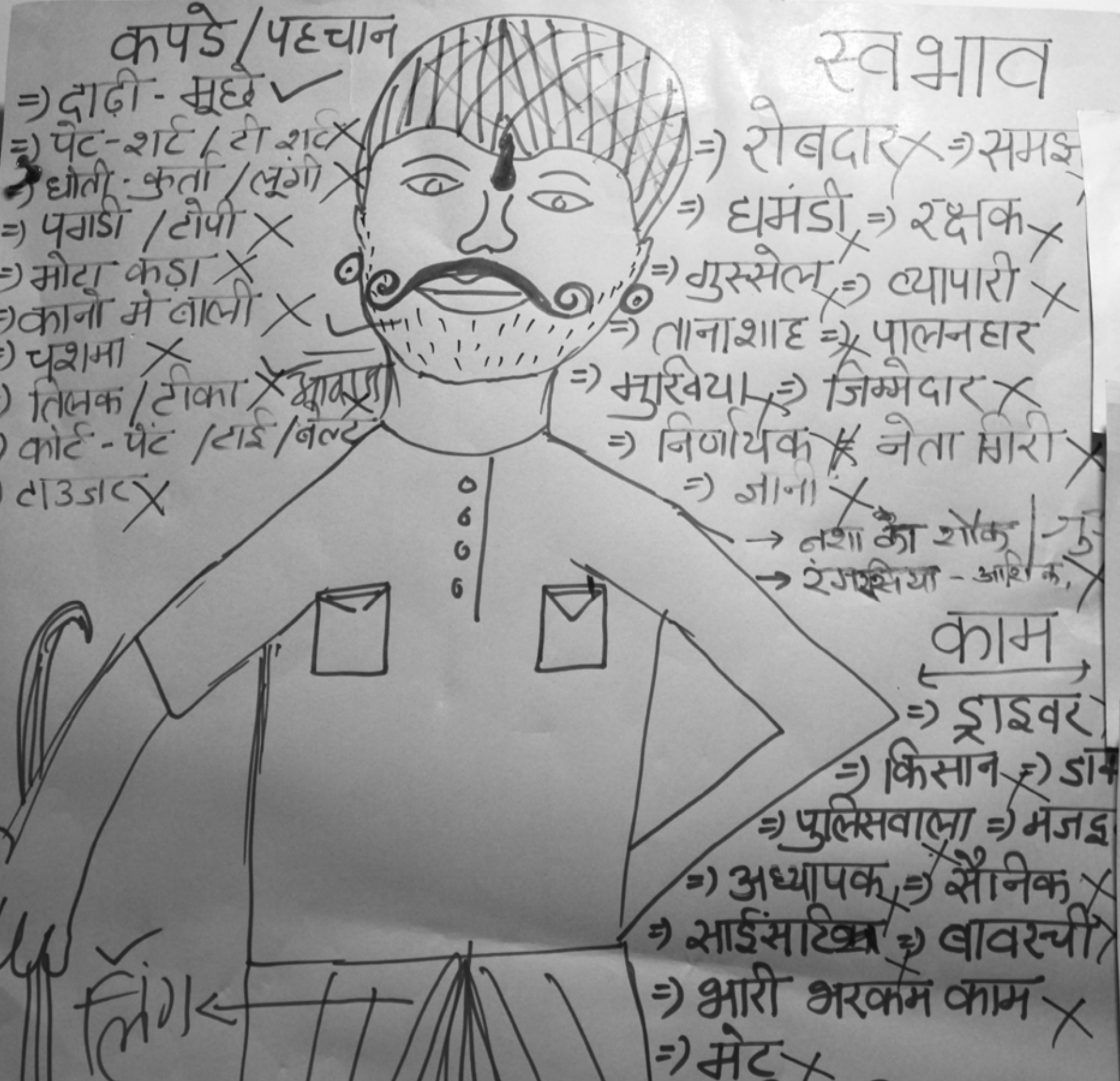
MASCULINITY

Mahesh, 26, Programme Mentor

Through our programme we try to create a safe space for boys to reflect on the impact of gender norms on themselves as individuals. Specifically, through a range of activities we explore how societal norms on masculinity affect them. The three main areas that we explore are the process of socialisation - how family and media transmit norms of masculinity, process of reinforcement - role of peer pressure, and the impact of these norms on our health and well-being.



Mahesh has been a part of the ECF team since 2019 as a mentor to adolescent boys in our Action for Equality programme. He believes that social norms can be unlearned and it is up to us to continually reflect on our own attitudes and make space for growth.



First, we talk about their conception of what it means to be a man (tough, physically strong, muscles, moustache, many girlfriends, brave, daring) and how they have learnt this. We explore the role that family, friends, institutions and media play in this process of socialisation. We use an activity to delve deeper into how the media influences our conception of masculinity. We present two sets of pictures of famous Bollywood heroes from twenty years ago and the present and ask boys to describe what is being portrayed in those pictures and how it influences them. They are able to identify that current portrayals focus on physical image and also portray attributes such as physical strength, dominance, ability to protect women, etc. Then we delve deeper into a discussion on this association between masculinity and physical strength and their experience of it. They share that they are expected to do tasks that involve heavy lifting and they are laughed at if they are seen performing household chores or taking care of children. They are chided for showing their emotions and are expected to be 'tough'.

Next, we conduct an activity to explore how these norms are reinforced through peer pressure and societal pressures. We list a few questions such as: Do more men or women die in road accidents? Do more men or women die due to heart attacks? We ask them to tell

us what they think and why. The discussion focuses on the connection between masculine norms and risk-taking behaviours or our ability to deal with stress in constructive ways.

Then, we focus on the question: What kind of pressures related to masculinity do you face and from where do you face these pressures? Often participants cite the role of peer pressure and talk about how boys challenge each other to prove how daring they are, they tease boys about their physical appearance and dominate boys who they consider to be 'weak'. They talk about how they feel scared and lonely when exposed to these pressures but cannot express this because it will be seen as a sign of weakness. Through these discussions we explore how the pressures of masculinity can affect their mental wellbeing and how by reinforcing these norms, they might in turn affect their friends' wellbeing. This becomes a crucial link for boys to understand how their 'masculine' behaviour is not just detrimental to the women and girls around them but to themselves as well.

Finally, we discuss solutions to dealing with peer pressure - saying no firmly, using firm body language, maintaining eye contact, knowing when to walk away or confiding in a trusted person. We then practise these strategies through role plays.

“

ECF's work is important because it can help stop street sexual harassment and violence against women. It has the potential to change the behaviour of some boys and these boys can spread this learning to their peers and families which will help change society. I feel happy that my brother is a part of this programme. He behaves respectfully with me and he shares all household chores."

JYOTI SHINDE

PARTICIPANT'S SISTER, 21, BHIMTOLA





NIKHIL, 15, BHIMTOLA

“If a girl doesn’t need my support, why should I feel the need to protect her?”

Nikhil, an alumnus of Equal Community Foundation is in the 10th grade. He lives with his parents and a younger sister.

During the lockdown, Nikhil attended the leadership sessions and webinars conducted by ECF. He learnt about how normalised ideas of masculinity and violence lead to the harassment of women and girls. He also learnt the value of good communication: how to speak calmly and clearly, giving the listener an opportunity to understand what is being said. Equipped with his understanding of social norms and his newly acquired communication skills, he chose to intervene when he noticed some of his friends harassing girls in the community. He calmly spoke to them about their behaviour. He explained to them how their actions hurt the girls: not only did they have to live in fear, they also often got blamed or punished through no fault of their own.

Like most others in his community, his family suffered considerably due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown. But the financial blow and disruption in his life did not stop the fifteen year old from taking community actions. Amidst the panic and confusion, he went ahead and spread awareness about the virus from door to door in his community, especially during the Ganesh Utsav. He also urged people to take precautions by following simple rules like washing hands, wearing masks and gloves and using sanitizers from time to time.

Ganesh takes the bus to school with his friends every day. His friends always stare and make loud comments at girls on the bus; sometimes touching them. Ganesh does not like this but he doesn't want to lose his friends and so he stays quiet.

Do you agree that Ganesh stays quiet?

VIOLENCE

Pravin, 33, Programme Coordinator

Violence is normalised to such a great extent in our societies that often we don't even recognize it as violence. Throwing punches, being verbally abusive and roughing each other up are considered to be very normal behaviors for adolescent boys. In order to prevent violence one has to first recognize it in all its forms - in our own lives and in the world around us. The discussion that follows helps the boys understand how the root causes of power and patriarchy play a role in who perpetrates violence and who has to endure it. We discuss how violence is used as a means to sustain patriarchy and a way for those in power to retain it.



Pravin has been a part of the ECF team since 2010. There are three things that motivate him to continue his work: he resonates with ECF's vision, he feels energized by his work with adolescent boys and he gets to explore his creativity while designing sessions and workshops.

“

In our community there are many organisations working on different issues but ECF's work is important as they work to address root causes. They help our boys learn how to talk and behave in society. Boys learn to respect girls and women. They also learn about how women face different types of violence. If ECF continues its work, then violence and discrimination in our society will be greatly reduced."

SUPRIYA LAXMAN DHADE

PARTICIPANT'S MOTHER, 36, AMBEDKAR NAGAR

"Ideally, every woman in society should feel safe. Unfortunately this is not the case. Boys should respect each and every woman, like ECF's boys do. But there are many more boys who should be a part of this journey. If every boy gets this opportunity, our society will be safer."

”

SUNANDA SHINDE

COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDER, 40, KASHEWADI





RAHUL, 17, SUPER INDIRA NAGAR

“There is nothing wrong in showing our emotions. We are all human beings and we should behave with each other with the same human touch”.

Rahul, an alumnus of Equal Community Foundation, is currently studying in the 11th grade. The seventeen year old lives with his parents and an elder brother. He dreams of becoming an IPS officer one day.

Through ECF’s sessions on leadership skills, the aspiring police officer understood the importance of taking action against any kind of violence. He heard some women in his community gossiping about another woman who they believed to be having an extramarital affair. When he overheard their plans to beat her, Rahul intervened. He explained to them that violence was never a solution. Whatever issues they may have had with someone, differences could always be resolved through discussion. Nobody needed to fight, use abusive language or hit anyone else. His calm and assertive communication meant that he was heard: the women did decide to have a conversation.

Besides being an ally to women, he also contributes to the community as a whole. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, he actively spread awareness in his community: talking to people about the importance of wearing masks, using sanitizer and washing their hands regularly. He also tutors around fifteen children in the community and supports them with their academics.

Samir's father has a short temper. During dinner, he often complains, insults and sometimes slaps Samir's mother. Samir is worried about his mother and tells her that they should go to the village where they will be safe. Samir's mother refuses: she tells Samir that his father loves her and that their family should stay together and that she is willing to tolerate her husband's behaviour.

Do you agree with Samir?

RELATIONSHIPS

Ramesh, 35, Senior Programme Mentor

Adolescence, with its significant physical and emotional changes, is often a time of upheaval and turmoil for our participants. Many of them report their struggles to maintain cordial relationships with those close to them. Through our sessions on healthy relationships and communication we explore the nature of our relationships with family and friends and communication techniques that can help us build positive and fulfilling relationships.



Ramesh has been a part of the ECF team since 2010. He joined ECF to fulfil his dream to work towards creating an equal community. ECF's fresh approach on women's issues appeals to him.

“

“ECF’s work is important to me because, as a mother, I have always had the fear of my son forming bad habits. I used to feel that I might not be able to guide him. But since he’s been enrolled in ECF’s programme, I have seen lots of positive change in my son. It makes me particularly happy that he has developed a good relationship with me: he helps out at home and speaks to me more freely and respectfully.”

SHUBHANGI WAGHMARE

PARTICIPANT’S MOTHER, 35, PUNE





ARYAN, 15, BHIMTOLA

“It is important to first ask a girl whether she needs me to go along when she is travelling alone. I will certainly go if she asks, but if she says no, I must respect her decision and trust her.”

Aryan, a fifteen year old, lives with his parents in Pune’s Bhimtola locality. Currently studying in the 10th grade, he hopes to be a good role model for younger boys in his community.

The leadership sessions conducted by ECF - focussed on skill development gave Aryan the opportunity to engage in positive dialogue with others. This, along with his understanding of human rights, gender, and the consequences of toxic masculinity helped him take action against sexual harassment when he came across a man commenting on women’s clothes and passing lewd remarks at Mumbai’s famous Gateway of India. Despite being on vacation, and unlike most other fifteen year olds, Aryan couldn’t help but notice that something was wrong. Even in such a crowded place, not one person questioned this man’s behaviour; and some were even laughing or encouraging the perpetrator. Being new to the place did not stop Aryan from raising his voice against what he knew was wrong. He went ahead and explained to the man that it is wrong and illegal to harass women, whatever they may be wearing. His understanding that everyone has the right to dress as they like and nobody has the right to harass another person, and his confidence in his communication skills enabled him to take action in this incident.

Alka is a 19 year old college student. Her college has organised a social event at the school on Saturday evening. When she tells her mother about this, her brother Ravi says she should not be allowed to go because girls often get harassed or molested in the evening and he wants to protect her.

Do you agree that Alka should stay at home?

LESSONS LEARNT

Yogesh, 32, Programme Associate

Some key lessons we have learnt along the way have come to form the pillars of our programming with adolescent boys. These pillars form the basis of our programme structure, design and delivery.

First, it is important to believe that men and boys can change and want to change. They are not naturally inclined to violent and discriminatory behaviours.



Yogesh has been a part of the ECF team since 2012. Drawing from his experience of working at the grassroots; he coaches Programme Mentors in the AfE Programme as well as Project Raise partners working with men and boys to combat Gender Based Violence.



Second, not all men are a part of the problem, but all men can be a part of the solution. Socialisation into patriarchal gender norms leads some boys to grow up to be violent and discriminatory. By promoting socialisation into equitable norms and behaviour from a young age, we can ensure that every boy has the opportunity to grow up to be non-violent and non-discriminatory.

Third, our programmes should be rooted in the Human Rights Approach. It is important to develop an understanding that human rights are the basic rights that every person needs in order to live a fulfilling life and it is everyone's duty to stand up for each other's human rights. It also helps us create the important understanding that women and girls are human beings first, before they are mothers or sisters or wives or daughters.

Fourth, we refer to our participants as allies, not perpetrators or champions or heroes. As we work towards gender equality, we need to ensure that we are not promoting the idea of boys 'protecting women' or 'granting them their rights' or 'helping women' by challenging gender norms.

Fifth, our programmes should also cater to the needs of men and boys, and create safe spaces for them to reflect on the impact of gender norms on their lives. Gender equality is not just a women's issue. It affects people of all genders including men and it is important

to create spaces for men and boys to reflect on their own experiences related to notions of masculinity and gender norms, and their vision for how gender equality can benefit them as individuals.

Sixth, our programmes should complement the programmes for women and girls and not replace them and they should incorporate the voices of women and girls. Programming for men and boys should promote collaboration and dialogue through the inclusion of the voices of women and girls.

Seventh, programmes should foster critical thinking skills and should be rooted in adult learning principles and a participatory approach. We should develop activities that foster critical thinking, problem solving and communication skills so that participants can reason and arrive at solutions and action plans independently. We should respect the lived experiences of our participants and create a platform for them to reflect on those experiences.

Finally, we should be prepared to engage participants over a longer duration as this kind of change takes time. Gender norms around roles and responsibilities change relatively faster than norms around masculinity and violence. Providing loosely structured but sustained inputs to facilitate a continuous reflection helps to counter the constant patriarchal messaging from the environment.

ABOUT ECF

Equal Community Foundation (ECF) was co-founded by Will Muir and Rujuta Teredesai in 2009 with a vision of a world free from gender-based violence and the mission to raise every boy in India to be gender-equitable. Our strategy has focused on: building innovative programmes; building tools to monitor and evaluate outcomes and scaling the approach and programme by providing capacity building support to partner organisations across the sector.

Action for Equality (AfE), ECF's flagship programme, is a community-based gender-transformative programme for 13-17 year old boys. We equip adolescent boys with the knowledge and skills to identify, challenge and change gender norms. We actively engage parents and other community stakeholders to create an enabling environment for the boys to change gender norms. Till date, Action for Equality, has engaged 5891 boys across 20 low-income communities in Pune.

The AfE programme draws on the work of organisations such as Promundo, ICRW, CORO, MAVA, Samyak and Masum, among others. Over the years it has been adapted, contextualised, structured and refined through the dedicated efforts of our programme mentors and various other members of our team.

Through Project Raise, ECF supports partner organisations to integrate the approach of engaging adolescent boys into their existing programmes by sharing resources, curricula and tools. Since 2015, we have trained facilitators from over 50 organisations and over 700 school teachers from across India.





Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung

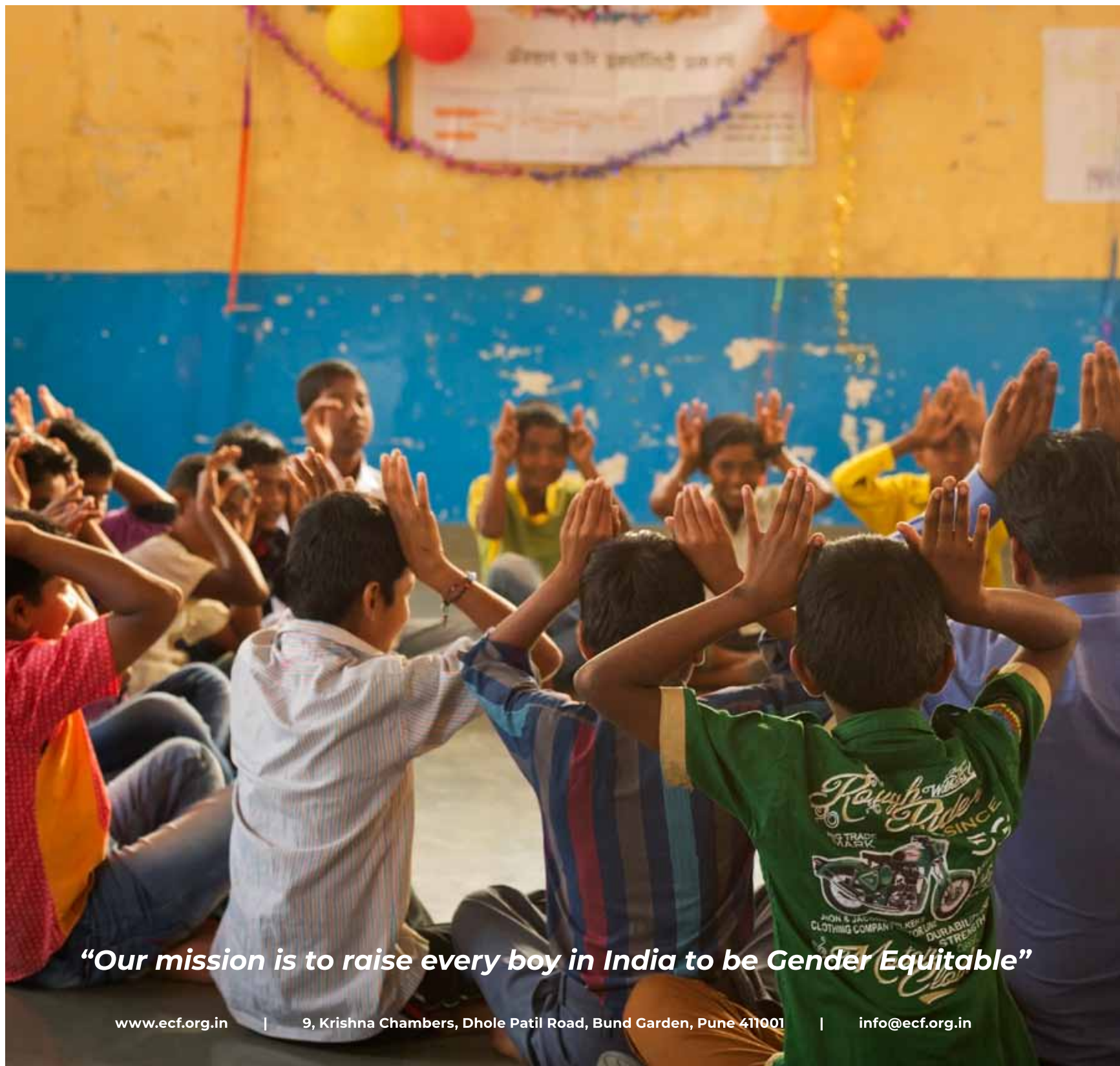
The Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung (RLS) is a Germany-based foundation working in South Asia as in other parts of the world on the subjects of critical social analysis and civic education. It promotes a sovereign, socialist, secular and democratic social order, and aims to present alternative approaches to society and decision-makers. Research organisations, groups for self-emancipation and social activists are supported in their initiatives to develop models which have the potential to deliver greater social and economic justice.



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“Our mission is to raise every boy in India to be Gender Equitable”

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