



DURGA INDIA'S MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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DURGA DARES



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“What is it about the women’s compartment in a bus, that makes you feel safe?” When I’d travel in any public transport, I’d feel the need to answer this question, posed to me by my university professor, a couple of years back. When we speak of safe spaces for women, we don’t mean CCTVS or a false sense of security. It is the shared nods of affirmation, the saving of a seat for another woman, the holding of another passenger’s luggage. It is the knowing that a brush against your back was a mistake; the collective pushback against an intrusive conductor who deliberately forces his way into the ladies section in a ruse to collect ticket fare.

This newsletter is the equivalent of the ladies compartment in a bus, for me. Sometimes there’s discomfort, but in the end, we pray silently for the young girls and women we meet, by chance, to continue to occupy public space. Continue to dare.

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DURGA'S LENS: OUR VOICE COMMUNITY

PHOTOS BY ASHBIN K BABU, INTERN AT DURGA INDIA. IN FRAME ARE PICTURES FROM OUR CELEBRATION OF INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DAY 2023 AT VVN DEGREE COLLEGE, BENGALURU. THE THEME WAS 'WE MATTER: WHY YOUTH VOICES NEED TO BE HEARD.'





YES- MAKES SENSE !

Written by Priya Varadarajan

YES or the Youth Engagement Strategy for us at Durga was the engine behind most of our work for the longest time. If the strategy or the brain part of the anatomy is to build a gender-just world for all, particularly non cis-het men, then the direction of working with women, men and the system are our feet. The arms automatically for us meant the activities and the programmes we built. Therefore, when you think of the heartbeat - it is our work with Youth! Why do we call our youth work the heart of our organisation's work?

Flashback - 2010 - a module of how to engage with theatre at the core, in a programme for safety, was something that kept me awake at night. Will it work, how and who will engage with it. That's when I got the opportunity to try it for the first time ever with a bunch of students in a college in Bangalore. Theatre of the Oppressed was new for them, but they latched on to it seamlessly. This session gave me most of my initial learnings. The participants were young, they were unafraid, they were ready to try, opinionated and unleashed! The first ever module for us was co-designed at this stage with them!

Flashback 2014 - by this time we had done some research on safety for women and girls in public transport and realised that a small simple tech tool would be great to alert people in buses when there is sexual violence. Imagine a city like Bangalore bubbles with organisations like start ups to established IT companies. I reached out to sophisticated companies, to innovation platforms to leaders in the IT sector. No one took such a device seriously as they were too busy solving what they called "bigger" problems! (More than safety?!) It was then that I met a young group of 5 students from the city's reputed engineering college who heard me out and said - "We don't know if the device will solve for safety, but we can definitely make the prototype!" That's how the first ever panic alarm globally to alert sexual violence in a bus was born!



Flashback 2017 - Brigade road on the eve of new year of 2017 had seen a lot of violence and sexual harassment. Our youth team at Durga brought all their communities together and this group decided that they will make sure that we will welcome 2018 with warmth, care and safety! Over 150 youth of Durga programmes flooded the streets of Bangalore to have their eyes for every one else and ensure safe celebrations! This gave birth to scale in our Voice programmes where youth in colleges are brought together to understand their rights as citizens of India, the secularism provided by the constitution and importantly our duties for the country and its citizens - all keeping gender justice at the core!

Flashback 2020 - the first ever global summit called NGAGE (Next-Gen Advocates for Gender Equity) focused on gender and youth to culminate with the 16 Days of Activism and International Human Rights Day was launched by our Voice team. It brought thousands of youth from across the globe to deliberate on issues of gender and action on making a safer and more respectful world around them. This event to date still is one of its kind!

Is it important for youth to engage on gender issues? Yes, it is, because while you will suffer the problem for a lot longer, you will reap the benefits too. Yes, it's important to engage because your women friends can feel comfortable to wear anything they want to. Your male friends will feel unafraid to cry out for help. Your neighbour will not be awkward to tell their mum about their sexuality and all people can feel they belong! Makes Sense?

We also wanted to take this opportunity to thank our partners: Kantar India Foundation, the CSR arm of Kantar India; Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies; CGI, and Utopia India Pvt Limited for their support to Durga's cause.

KANTAR



CGI





DURGA'S LENS: OUR VOICE COMMUNITY

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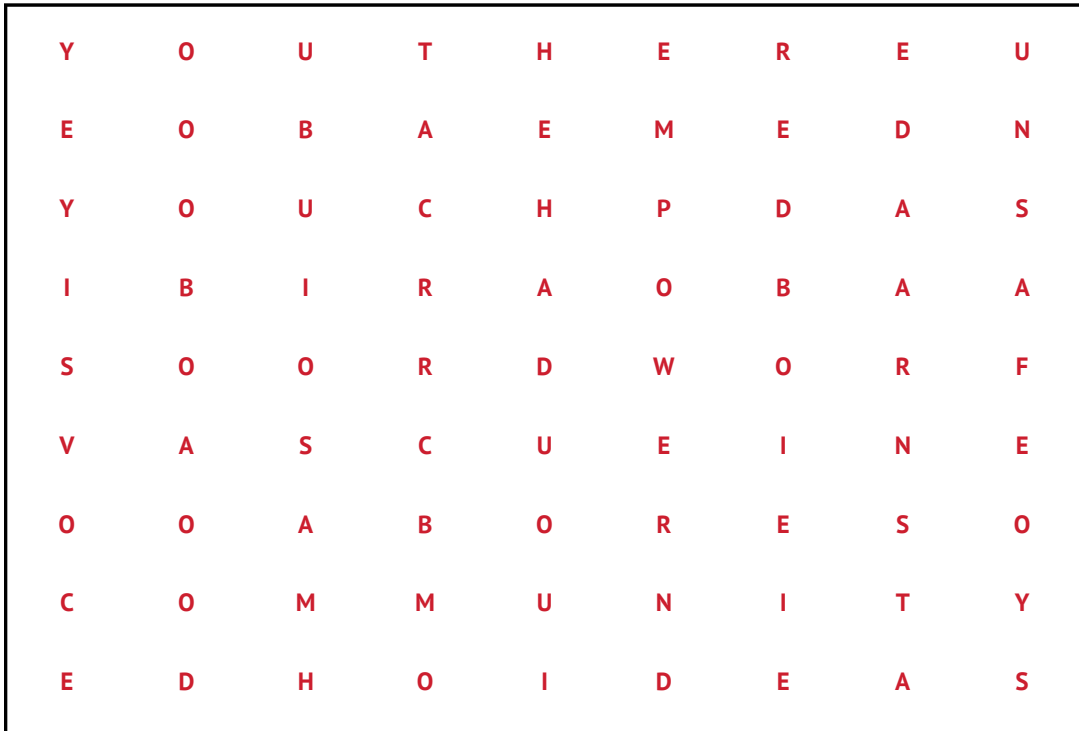


BURIED TALES

Illustrations: Lalithashree Ganesh. Concept: Winnie Pande



WORD SEARCH!



1. YOUTH
2. EMPOWER
3. COMMUNITY
4. VOICE
5. IDEAS

WEIRD BARBIE

Written by Gautami Nagari

Weird Barbie has her keys between her knuckles. She's always walking fast.

Tufts of her hair are ripped out. She's got orange juice on her skirt.

Weird barbie is crayon-coloured. She's in splits all the time, but she isn't smiling anymore.

She's patched herself up best as she could.

Weird Barbie takes after nobody. Her teeth are stained sketch pen yellow.

Her handbag holds her heels, remnants of her shadow.

Weird Barbie is everything. She's a girl, she's a student, she's a graduate.

She's a plaything. She's a daughter.

Weird Barbie looks like you. She looks like me.

She's lost her head before.



DURGA'S LENS: WOMEN AT WORK

THE PICTURES REFLECT OUR ENGAGEMENT WITH WOMEN FROM BBMP COMMUNITY. OUR SESSIONS WITH THE WOMEN FOCUS ON GENDER, GENDER STEREOTYPES AND HOW THEY CAN ACTIVELY START TO NEGOTIATE FOR CHANGE IN THEIR OWN SPACES OF WORK.





DURGA'S LENS: OUR WORK WITH COMMUNITIES

FROM TOP LEFT: OUR ACTIVE BYSTANDER INTERVENTIONS WITH STREET VENDORS; OUR WORK WITH BMTC BUS DRIVERS AND CONDUCTORS; ENGAGEMENTS WITH BOYS AND GIRLS FROM YEDIYUR GOVERNMENT SCHOOL AND OUR WORK WITH SECURITY PERSONNEL .

