

Durga | I'm Every Woman
Initiative



**Strengthening Safety &
Shared Responsibility in
Karnataka State Road
Transport Corporation
(KSRTC) - Kolar**



March 2026

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About the partnership

KSRTC Kolar, Tata Electronics and Durga have come together to enable a gender-just inter-city transport experience for all. This partnership is significant considering the tremendous increase of women, girls and gender diverse people taking buses in the state as a result of the Shakti scheme. It reinforces the idea that safety is a collective responsibility and care can strengthen solidarity and allyship among the bus users.

The partnership extends to :

1. Work on behaviour change towards allyship and action among bus drivers and conductors.
2. Bystander support from awareness to action among passengers
3. Sensitivity building towards safety and collective responsibility in bus depots and bus stands
4. Messaging on sexual violence in buses for awareness of the law and also the action to be taken.



Key Highlights

157

KSRTC Staff Engaged

16

Public Engagement Sessions

235

Passengers engaged

100

Buses with Safety Messaging

30,000+

Commuters Served

Through bus posters and safety messaging across KSRTC buses operating in the kolar region

29.07% → 11.69%

Victim Blaming Norms

Significant decline in victim-blaming attitudes

25.97% → 7.04%

Reluctance to Intervene

Sharp reduction in hesitation to safely intervene

EFFECTIVENESS OF PARTICIPATORY METHODS

95.24%

Participants confident in intervening safely as active bystander in harassment situations

93.33%

Correct understanding of sexual harassment

73.68%

Increase in positive attitudes toward addressing harassment

68%

Active Bystander Action (nearly tripled)

On the methodology: Theatre of the Oppressed as a Participatory Prevention Tool

Durga's approach is grounded in the principles of Theatre of the Oppressed (TO), a participatory methodology that positions people not as passive audiences but as active agents of change. TO enables participants to examine lived experiences of power, oppression, and violence through embodied, collective exploration. Rather than treating gender-based violence as an individual or legal issue alone, TO creates spaces where participants can rehearse real-life situations, question internalised norms, and experiment with safer, collective

responses before harm occurs. By using techniques such as forum theatre and role-play, participants reflect on fear, silence, and responsibility, while building confidence to act.

This approach aligns closely with feminist pedagogy, centring lived experience, collective learning, and shared accountability. In the context of public transport, TO proved effective in helping participants move from observation to action, supporting shifts in knowledge, attitudes, and practices around gender, safety, and intervention.



On the intervention: Active Bystander Intervention as Collective Responsibility

The program integrates an Active Bystander framework that shifts responses to gender-based violence from punishment after harm to prevention through collective action. Instead of relying solely on law enforcement or systems, active bystander intervention encourages individuals and communities to recognise and safely interrupt harassment at early stages. Participants were equipped with non-confrontational strategies such as distraction, collective support, verbal intervention, and prioritising the survivor's safety.

Emphasis was placed on shared responsibility rather than individual heroism, reinforcing that safety in public spaces is a collective duty.

Grounded in feminist and restorative justice principles, the active bystander approach enables community-centred care and accountability. It challenges silence and the normalisation of harassment, fostering environments where respectful behaviour is actively upheld. This approach significantly strengthened participants' confidence and willingness to intervene, as reflected in both quantitative outcomes and lived examples from the field.



Monitoring & Evaluation Framework

Study Design

The programme adopted a mixed-method Monitoring & Evaluation framework combining quantitative pre-post assessment with qualitative KAP-based analysis to measure behaviour shifts in gender norms, power relations, consent awareness, sexual harassment understanding, and active bystander behaviour within public transport settings.

Objectives of the study

- To measure increase in safe active bystander behaviours in public places
- To assess shifts in Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice

Sample Size and Demographics

157

A total of 157 KSRTC staff members—including drivers, conductors -- participated in the programme across cohorts. Of these, 68 participants completed both the baseline and endline assessments.

111

In addition to the quantitative assessment, 111 qualitative participant comments capturing reflections, reactions, doubts, resistance, and commitments expressed during sessions were systematically documented and analysed using the Knowledge–Attitude–Practice (KAP) framework.

235

A total of 235 participated in the short workshop-based cohorts (20-Minute Engagements) conducted in transit settings such as buses and bus stops. Given the short duration and rapid engagement format, these cohorts were not assessed through formal assessments.

Monitoring & Evaluation Framework

Evaluation Design

A. Full Structured Intervention Cohort

- Out of the participants, **157** participants underwent the complete **2-day** structured intervention programme. Due to the duration and depth of engagement, this cohort was considered for full quantitative baseline–endline and qualitative KAP (Knowledge–Attitude–Practice) analysis.
 - a. **Quantitative Assessment**
 - Method: Structured baseline and endline questionnaires
 - Analysis approach: Percentage comparison and shift analysis between baseline and endline responses
 - b. **Qualitative Assessment– KAP (Knowledge, Attitude, Practice):** Each dialogue was coded as Knowledge, Attitude, Practice, and then the responses were aggregated and converted into percentage scores
 - Knowledge (conceptual understanding)
 - Attitude (value orientation and belief shifts)
 - Practice (behavioural expression or intent to act)

B. Short Workshop–Based Cohorts (20–Minute Engagements)

1. The remaining participant groups primarily took part in brief 20–minute outreach workshops conducted in transit settings such as buses and bus stops using DARE tool kit to build safe Active Bystander Interventions.
2. Given the short duration and rapid engagement format, these cohorts were not assessed through baseline–endline and KAP tools. Instead, effectiveness was understood based on participants’ reflections and spontaneous responses.

Monitoring & Evaluation Framework



Ethical Considerations

- Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection.
- Participation was voluntary and data was used solely for programme evaluation and learning purposes
- Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained during documentation and reporting.



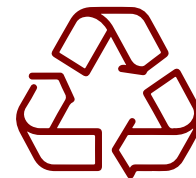
Data Collection and Management Tools

- The programme used a triangulated data collection approach including KoBo tool-and structured facilitator observation notes to capture thematic reflections and behavioural shifts.
- All data was securely stored in Excel and Google Drive, organised cohort-wise and thematically, with restricted access to maintain confidentiality and ethical compliance.
- Microsoft Excel was used for quantitative analysis, including baseline–endline percentage comparison, calculation of domain-wise shifts.



Limitations

- Social desirability bias possibility
- Short-term behaviour measurement
- Short duration sessions



Proposed Sustainability & Scalability

- Integration into KSRTC induction training
- Institutionalisation of Active Bystander framework
- Expansion to additional depots

Findings & Insights

KEY BARRIERS IDENTIFIED IN NOT INTERVENING



Fear of disbelief and social judgment: A significant proportion of respondents cited fear of not being believed (25.64%) and concern about being judged or creating trouble (26.92%) as major deterrents to speaking up.



Cumulative institutional hesitation: 30.77% identified multiple barriers together—including fear, stigma, and unclear complaint pathways—indicating layered emotional and systemic constraints.



Limited procedural clarity: Some participants expressed uncertainty about whom to approach (11.54%) or doubted whether reporting would make a difference (5.13%).



Persistence of victim-blaming norms: 39.69% attributed harassment to women's clothing or lack of caution by women, reinforcing harmful gender stereotypes.



Normalisation of unsafe environments: 20.63% perceived harassment as “unavoidable” in crowded spaces, reflecting acceptance of risk rather than collective prevention.

Overall, emotional and social barriers emerged as stronger constraints than procedural gaps, highlighting the need for norm change and collective accountability.

Findings & Insights

(post-intervention)

A. Quantitative Analysis

BASELINE

Reduction in Victim-Blaming & Gendered Norms

ENDLINE

29.07%



such as women avoiding short skirts or tight dresses and not travelling after 7 p.m. as reasons for harassment.

11.69%

Reluctance to intervene dropped sharply

25.97%

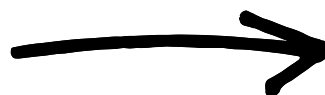


choosing non-intervention option due to personal/work consequences and also lack of knowledge on safe interventions and waiting for the victim's consent (which were less common reasons)

7.04%

Responsibility for Safety Shifted towards Collective Responsibility

22.06%



belief that a woman herself should handle harassment

11.11%

High Confidence to Act as Bystanders

28.57%



willingness and confidence to intervene

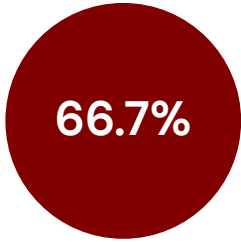
47.89%

Findings & Insights

(post-intervention)

B. Qualitative Analysis – KAP

BASELINE



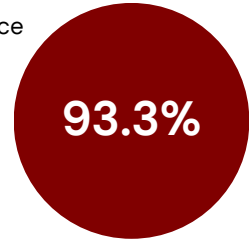
Knowledge Shift – Recognition & Rejection of Sexual Harassment

conceptual clarity around intention, repetition, and power imbalance



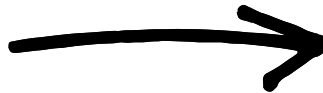
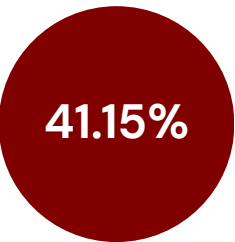
"If the intention is bad and he keeps repeating it, that is clearly sexual harassment."

ENDLINE

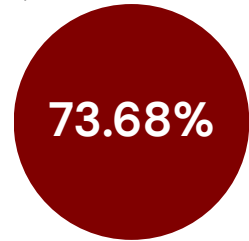


Attitude Shift – Increase in rejection of victim-blaming

how they rejected victim blaming tendencies such as shaming women for what they wore for example and emphasised intention, empathy, and shared responsibility for safety.

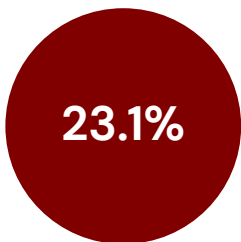


"Clothes of a person does not justify harassment."

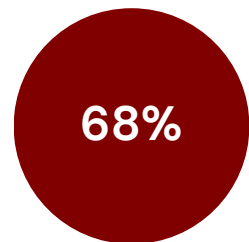


Practice Shift – Rise in Active Bystander Action and Collective Responsibility

reflecting readiness to intervene without escalating risk



reliance on legal systemic dependence



PARTICIPANT VOICES FROM THE SESSIONS

"In Kolar, harassment will not happen; it will happen in Bangalore only. If it's happened here, it means we won't leave him." **another woman participant quickly said**

"You're doing good job, my support always there for you and I'll address this issues if I saw." **Participant appreciated**

After knowing the bystander action strategy –"If harassment happens, what will you do?" **DURGA team questioned and another participant said** "I will support the person who is getting harassed."

One of the woman passenger questioned, "what is the need to harass someone, why not treat us as humans?"

At the start of the session, one of the participant asked "If there is a problem to the women it is her issue and she should only address it, how can other can go and talk about it.

"We are responsible for public safety." – **one of male participant in the bus mentioned**

"I will share this with my family and friends to spread this useful topic"

"If such a situation arises in the future, I will act according to what was explained here".**Participant promised to take firm action**

One of the student passenger mentioned that "before knowing the strategies I always thought its a girls issues and I don't have a role to play and now I will practice to intervene."

In a group of students, girl said " If any girl around me is undergoing issue, it is safety concern and because I am around, I am also responsible to the issue not the girl alone"

Stories of Change

“We are here to help” is all it takes!

Praveen H, a participant in a Durga session at KSRTC Kolar, shared an incident that took place while he was on duty as a bus conductor. During the journey, he noticed a young woman being harassed by a boy who repeatedly said, “I love you, love me.” Several passengers witnessed the incident, yet no one intervened. Even a woman police officer seated next to the girl did not question the behaviour or take action.

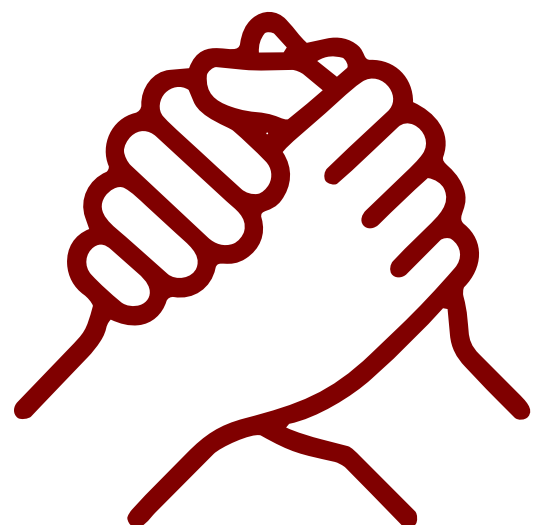
Praveen shared that he could not remain silent. He intervened, confronted the boy, and asked him to get down from the bus. As the boy left, he threatened Praveen.

Despite this, Praveen did not step back. He reassured the young woman, saying, “Be brave. We are here to help.” Praveen shifted his position from being a passive witness to an **active bystander**. His response not only stopped the harassment at that moment but also modelled accountability within a public transport setting, reinforcing safety, support, and collective responsibility for commuters.

Quiet Intervention, Immediate Safety

Gowamma Ganiger shared an incident that occurred while she was travelling on a bus. She noticed a man sitting next to a young woman in a manner that occupied two seats and made the woman visibly uncomfortable. Recognising the situation, Gowamma intervened by calling the young woman away from the seat and helping her move to another place on the bus. This ensured the woman’s immediate safety and comfort without escalating the situation.

Later, the young woman approached Gowamma and thanked her for the timely support. This incident highlights how **small, intentional actions** can create immediate impact in public spaces. By intervening in a calm and non-confrontational way and recognising the power she has within the bus, Gowamma disrupted inappropriate behaviour, prioritised the woman’s comfort and safety, and demonstrated how simple everyday acts of allyship can help make public transport safer and more supportive for women.



Conclusion

This is just a beginning, while its a Conclusion in this report!

Our work in Durga is all about enabling safe public spaces for everyone. This is done by working closely with systems actors who can play a pivotal role in making these spaces just, equitable and responsive for everyone.

Durga's journey in public transport started in 2015 and we designed the panic alarm as a simple solution to alert people about sexual violence in public transport that went on to become policy in 2019. The focus has been to shift the burden of safety from the person experiencing the problem to everyone who occupies the space with them. We call this Active Bystander Action, centering care as the core strength to identify early signals of sexual violence and normalise simple interventions as actions to diffuse this problem.

This report is a short reflection of our learnings, experiences and initial journey in KSRTC, Kolar. We engaged with conductors and drivers across bus depots, worked with staff across bus stands and also with passengers – showing bystander action as courage and strength. We have also embarked into a multi-year relationship with KSRTC to continue this work. This report will share with you the effort and our achievements. The approach is to do a few things:

1. Work closely with staff in buses to bring a behaviour change towards championing safety in their inter-city buses
2. Sensitise passengers on bystander actions and their important role in the right moment to diffuse crime
3. Put up messages in the buses on sexual harassment and how it can be prevented

I want to thank KSRTC DC Mr. Shreenath N for the unconditional ready support he provided from Day 1 for all our plans, always ahead of the game in understanding the exact needs we have on the issue and agreeing to act on it instantly. I also want to thank Tata Electronics and particularly Ms Niharika Kaul for the faith they had in us to do this tough work!

We are thrilled to be in this journey with KSRTC and travel in their buses from city to city, taking safety as a norm with us. Look for us in your next bus!

Regards

Priya Varadarajan

Glimpses from KSRTC-Kolar Initiative Activities



Glimpses from KSRTC-Kolar Messaging Event






**ಸುರಕ್ಷಿತ ಪ್ರಯಾಣ
ನಮ್ಮೆಲ್ಲರ ಜವಾಬ್ದಾರಿ**



**ಬಸ್ಸಿನಲ್ಲಿ ಯಾರಾದರೂ ನಿಮಗೆ ಅಥವಾ
ಯಾವುದೇ ಪುದುಗಿಗೆ, ಮಹಿಳೆಗೆ ಮತ್ತು
ಮಗುವಿಗೆ ತೊಂದರೆ ನೀಡಿದರೆ :**

- ◆ ಸುಮ್ಮನಿರಬೇಡಿ, ಒಂದು ಹೆಜ್ಜೆ ಮುಂದಿಬ್ಬ ದನಿ ಎತ್ತಿ
- ◆ ನಿರ್ವಾಹಕ / ಚಾಲಕರಿಗೆ ತಕ್ಷಣ ತಿಳಿಸಿ
- ◆ ಕಿರುಕುಳಕ್ಕೆ ಒಳಗಾದವರಿಗೆ ಸಾಂತ್ವನ ನೀಡಿ

"ನಿಮ್ಮ ಸುರಕ್ಷತೆ, ನಮ್ಮ ಕರ್ತವ್ಯ"




**ಏಕೆಟ್ ಕಡ್ಡಾಯ,
ಸುರಕ್ಷತೆ ಐಚಿತ!**



**ಲೈಂಗಿಕ ಕಿರುಕುಳ ಕಂಡಲ್ಲಿ
ನಿರ್ವಾಹಕ / ಚಾಲಕರಿಗೆ ತಿಳಿಸಿ**

ನಿಜ ಜೀವನದ ಹೀರೋ ಆಗಿ




**ಗೌರವದ ಗಡಿ
ದಾಟದರೆ ಅಪಾಯ!**



**ಲೈಂಗಿಕ ಕಿರುಕುಳ
ಶಿಕ್ಷಾರ್ಹ ಅಪರಾಧ.**

ತಪ್ಪು ಮಾಡಿ ತಪ್ಪಿಸಿಕೊಳ್ಳಲಾಗುವುದಿಲ್ಲ.
ಹುಷಾರ್!

**Watch Out for these Posters
On KSRTC buses!**



Durga India works to make public spaces safer, more inclusive, and more responsive—particularly for women, girls, and gender-diverse individuals. This initiative focuses on transforming one of the most essential public systems—public transport—into a space of safety, trust, and shared responsibility.

For over a decade, the organisation has worked with students, workers, educators, and communities using interactive tools such as Theatre of the Oppressed to help people reflect on power, safety, and their role in shaping inclusive environments. Through participatory dialogue and experiential learning, these engagements encourage individuals to recognise and act upon their responsibility in addressing harassment and exclusion in public spaces.

Durga India has also been actively engaged with Bengaluru's public transport ecosystem to strengthen safety mechanisms and collective accountability within public transport systems. One of the organisation's key contributions to promoting active bystander intervention in public systems was supporting the introduction of panic alarm systems in BMTC buses, an initiative led by Durga to enable quicker responses to harassment and safety concerns.

Our Reach

We've reached over 45,000 people, nurtured over 12000 active bystanders who prevent and take action to deter sexual crimes in public spaces. We've worked with over 15 government institutions and catalysed over 200 VOICE communities (solidarity spaces that place power in the hands of the people in all our partner institutions).

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