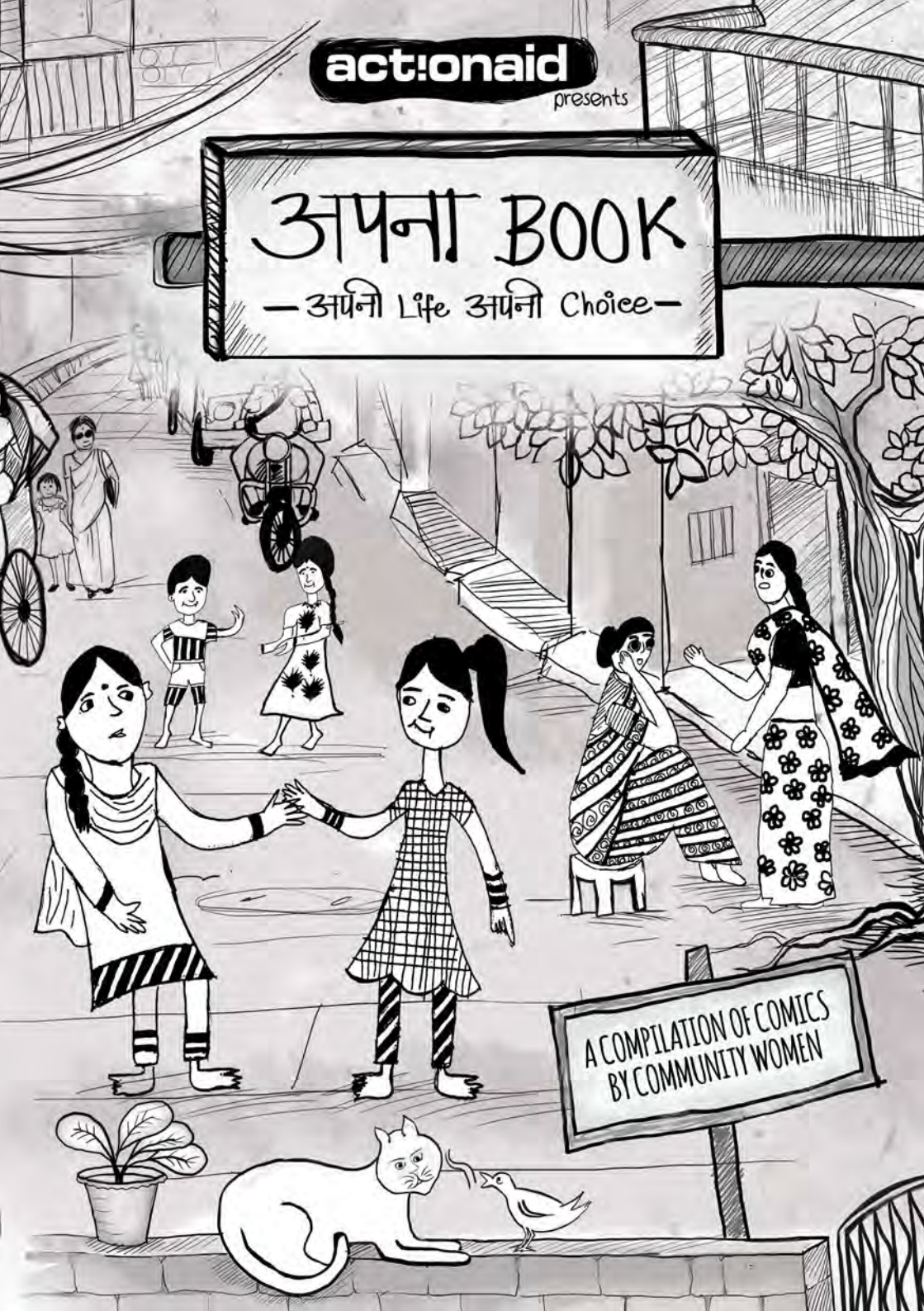


act:onaid

presents

अपना BOOK

—अपनी Life अपनी Choice—



A COMPILATION OF COMICS
BY COMMUNITY WOMEN

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A COMPILATION OF COMICS BY COMMUNITY WOMEN

An ActionAid Publication

Stories and illustrations: Done by Community Women
Cover art and layout: Nabajit Malakar | ActionAid

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FOREWORD

“Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.”

Sssshhhh! Hush! Chup! Khamosh! Summa iru! Shut up!

As young women particularly, we are taught to not have an opinion, to silence our voice and to smile on. This is one of the things we all need to learn to unlearn.

The Grassroots Comics workshop was such a space where women – many young and a few older – did things they had not done in a while... or in certain cases, never done at all! 29 women – from slum clusters across Mumbai and from Old City in Hyderabad stepped out of their homes, their cities and their comfort zones and came together for 3 days. They spoke, they laughed and cried, and bonded together as they told their untold stories... their own unique stories in their own words... transcending the barriers of language and culture. They then gave their characters and stories a tangible form on paper... some initially very resistant, scared and hesitant: “I have not drawn since I left primary school.” “I cannot draw.” “I have never held a pen at all... ever!” But eventually, each found their unique expression beyond the limitations of words and language, in the language of comics.

The stories they have written are stories waiting to be told, they are questions that they want to raise, and talk of subjects that are otherwise not discussed with ease. Stories ranging from “eve-teasing”, sexual and reproductive health, life-choices, domestic violence, right to play for girls, girls education, women in the informal sector, alcoholism, female foeticide, distribution of housework within the household were some topics covered. Few of these illustrations have been shared in this compilation and we hope it provides you a glimpse into the world the young women inhabit and are actively engaging with to change it for the better.

“Stories matter. Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign, but stories can also be used to empower and to humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity... How stories are told, who tells them, when they're told, how many stories are told, are really dependent on power.” – *Chimamanda Adichie*

“Apna Book” is a small attempt to enable a shift of power in favour of the young women who may seem powerless in the face of circumstances but nevertheless have powerful stories to tell.

We would end by urging all the bold and beautiful women out there...

Tell your story. Find your voice. Sing your song.
It matters.

Nirupama Sarathy

National Coordinator,

Young Urban Women: Life Choices and Livelihoods Project,
ActionAid India

INTRODUCTION

About Young Urban Women (YUW) project

The Young Urban Women (YUW) project is an initiative by ActionAid India and its partners with support from Human Dignity Foundation. The programme targets women's economic participation, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and their intersection with unpaid work including care work. It is innovative in that it attempts to bring together these key areas of ActionAid's women's rights work that are frequently dealt with separately in development interventions, despite the strong linkages between these two issues in women's lives. In targeting both, ActionAid foresees that this programme will have a greater impact by empowering young women to claim their rights.

This programme is simultaneously working across three countries - India, South Africa and Ghana. In India, the project has been initiated in Chennai, Mumbai and Hyderabad, working with over 3000 young women aged 15-25yrs. Specific locations are - Old City in Hyderabad; Semmenchery, a resettlement colony on the outskirts of Chennai; 6 slum settlements spread across Mumbai. They constitute women in the informal sector engaged primarily in domestic work, home-based work, construction work and work in karkhanas. Using a combination of programming strategies of empowerment, campaigning and solidarity, the programme advocates for an integrated approach to their issues and larger policy changes.

To know more, visit - www.actionaid.org/young-urban-women

World Comics

World Comics India (WCI) in the last few years has championed the use of the comics medium to highlight issues experienced at the grassroots. WCI developed the medium and methodology called 'Grassroots Comics' in the mid- nineties and used it extensively in India and worldwide. Grassroots comics is now established as a medium for self-expression and as a communication tool. These comics are drawn by members of the public, who rarely have their voices heard, reflecting their understanding of issues.

WCI conducts workshops aimed at empowering these voices and producing their own 'wall' newspapers - a visual story format in a cost effective manner. What makes these comics different from a professional creation, besides the local settings and drama, is the ownership of the content. The comics are displayed in a range of locations i.e. village meeting place, bus stops, shops, offices, schools, notice-boards and electricity

poles or even on trees. World comics has worked and developed comics with the homeless, school children, vegetable vendors, agriculture labourers, single women, workers in the informal economy and many other marginalised groups spread across different parts of the world.

To know more, visit - www.worldcomicsindia.com

ActionAid India and its partner organisations across the three cities felt that bringing World Comics to our young women will help us understand and highlight issues that are of importance to them. Use of this medium has helped many young women articulate themselves on issues ranging from “eve teasing”, unpaid care work, sexual and reproductive health, life choices, domestic violence, right to play and education for girls, and other pertinent issues. Few of these illustrations have been shared in this compilation.

UNPAID CAREWORK

Sana Ghar Ka Kaam Kar Sahi hoti hai tabhi uski friend aati hai....

Sab kaam tum hi kyun karti ho mesa saath chalo... *thek hai*



USKI DOST ne use SHAHEEN center me admission karaya



6 Months ke baad Sana ne Ghar me sabse kaha

mujhe sikhaaya gaya hai ki hume ghar ka kaam miljul kar karna chahiya *Haan.... Sana sahi keh rahi hai*



Kuch din baad Sana, shaheen center mai teacher bani...

Ajisa kaam jis ke Paise nahi milte hai wo Unpaid care work khelata hai. *haan aaj hum apne ghar ko Jaangaz ko jaangaz hain*



NIDA BEGUM

EHSAS...



Alpna Shaikh - ASHIANA TRUST

MIL KAR KARENGE

Shoheda ke ghar mei 6 lag hain

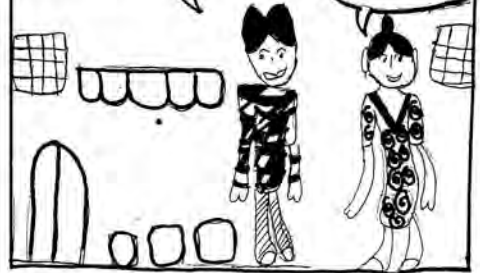
Ghar ka Saara Kaam mujhe
hi karna padta hai



Tabhi uska bhai ghar aata hai

mujhe ye Sab mat
Kaho mujhe bhool
Lagi hai Karo Boro do

Ghar ka Kaam
Karte hue thak
Gaji hu aap Sab
bhi meri madat
Karije na



Usse madat karne ek NGO worker
aati hai.

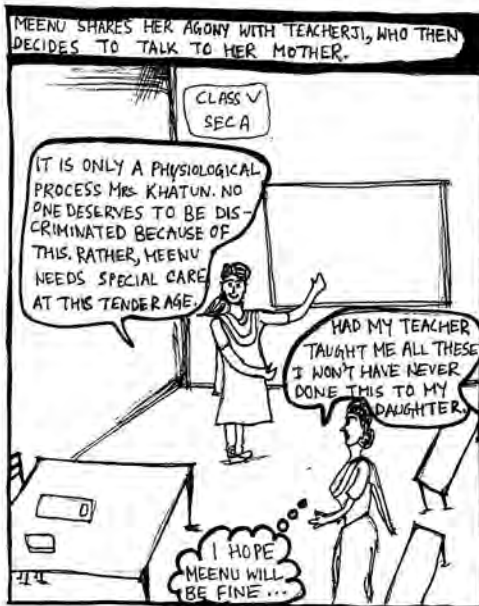
Saak Kaam tum akehi
Karoji toh Kisi din
Bimaas Pad Jaogi Saara
Kaam baadht Kar Kar na chahije



Ghar Par Sab ko Kaam baat me
Ki baat badalti hai aur sab
mil kar Kaam Karne lagte hai



SANITARY WARNING!

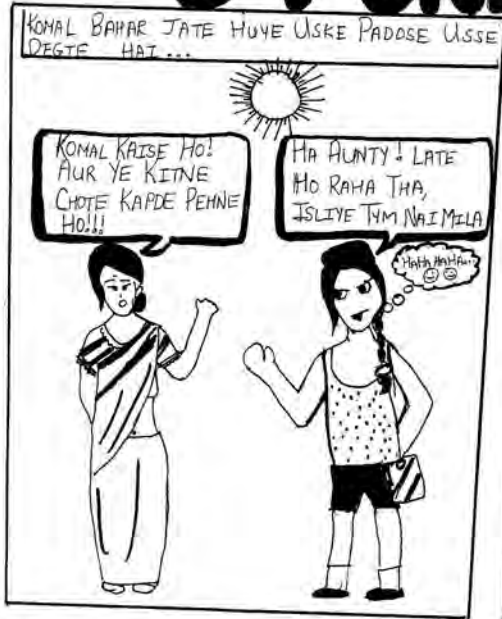


JANKARI HAI ZARURI



RUKSAR SIDDIQUE

UTURN



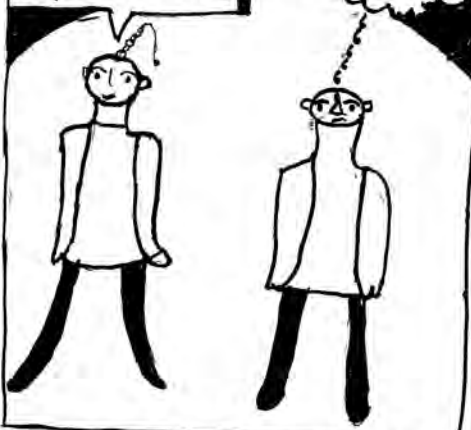
KOMAL JIAT

SHAADI YA SAUDA

ASPA WAS MARRIED AND HAPPY. SUDDENLY ONE DAY HER HUSBAND DIED.

Mother in law is going to have a child

????



MOTHER-IN-LAW ILLEGALLY FINDS OUT THAT ITS A GIRL CHLD

OH MY GOD MY SON IS GONE AND NOW YOU ARE GOING TO GIVE BIRTH AGAIN

?????



NEXT DAY

YOU DONT HAVE ANY RIGHT TO LIVE HERE LEAVE THIS HOME



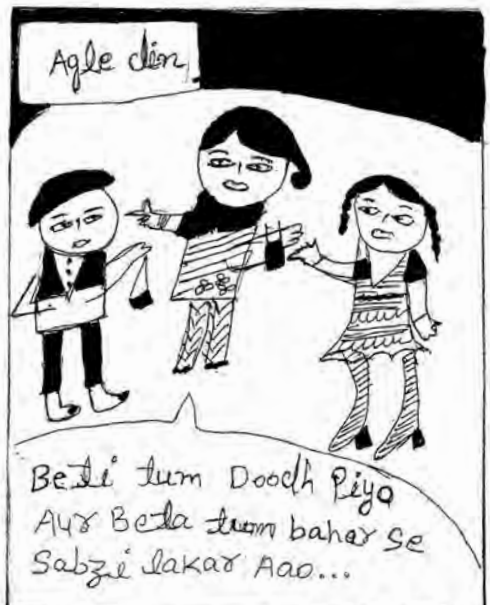
THAT WOMEN WAS A SOCIAL ACTIVIST.

YOU HAVE ALL THE RIGHTS TO LIVE IN YOUR HUSBANDS HOME EVERY AFTER HIS DEATH



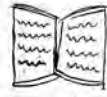
SARA

MA KO SABAK



FARNA FATIMA

KAASH KI ...



R. MENAKA.

MAINE KAR DIKHAYA

AYESHA 5th pass karna chahati hai

AYESHA
Mujhe padhna hai
par mai gareeb
ho...

NEHA
Fikhar k yo karti
ho, Shaheen Centre
me free education
milti hai

SHAHEEN CENTRE

GOOD MORNING MAM
Mujhe bhi admission
chahiye..

K yo nahi

AYESHA friend ke Sath Centre
jarahi hai aur khush hai...

SHAHEEN CENTRE

Mai dil Lagake
padhungi....

AYESHA ka Sapna
Pura hua.....

Mai pass hogayi
Jo mera Sapna tha

CONGRATULATION
Tumhari Kammyab
pass...

SAMEENA PARVEEN

मैं स्कूल नहीं छोड़ूंगी



R. SUMAN

“बोलीवुड” का “सच”



जब मैं कानून जानती हूँ



महावारी की जानकारी



अब तुमारी जबरत नही



जीने का टुक



X. Pooja

ऋग्विवाज का ढुंढे इलाज



नेहा धिंगरा

NEHA DHINGRA

मीरा क्यूद



सुमन बाई की कहानी.....



आशा जगदाब (कल्पमठ)

मेरी भी राय प्रथम



मेरे भाव का पहिया





स्कूल नहीं छोड़ूंगी



Name: Shaista Shaikh



रसोई या पढ़ाई



At Home :-

Tina kaha hai??
Bartan chhoda hai!!
Padhai chod aur
Kaam pe aaja

Haa Maa.
Aasahi hoon



Kash Mein bhi bhai
ki tarah padh Sakoon

At School-teacher Pooch ti hai

Tina tune Home-
work Nahi kiya
Jabki tera bhai
ke Pura Kar diya

Maa kahti
hai ladki ko
Padhai karoo
Nahi.



Jaake Eske
Maa ke saath
baat Karna hai

Teacher Maa se baat Karna

Tina ki Maa aaj
galat kar rahi hai
aaj ki jamaane mein
Ladka Ladki Dono kara
kar hi!

Age se alsa
Nahi Karoongi
Teacher ji



Ghar Mein:-

Tina aaj-se tu
Padhai kar. Kaam
main Karloongi

Shukriya Maa
Mein Padh ke
doctor banongi



Thank You
Teacher

میرا پیسہ میرا حق



آواز

حاجہ! جب بھی آپ شوہر سے گم حجابانہ بات کرتے ہیں پوچھیں تو وہ اس کو سانس کے متعلق ہی لیتا۔

مہر ایک عورت تھی اور تھوہر ایک لڑکی تھیں۔ یہ دونوں ایک ہی گھر میں رہتی تھیں۔ مہر کی والدہ نے مہر کو یہ بات بتائی تھی کہ شوہر کو گم حجابانہ بات نہ کہے۔



حاجہ! ایک گم حجابانہ عورت تھی۔ اور اس کے 4 بچے تھے۔ ان کے گھرانے میں غریبی تھی۔

مہر نے کہا کہ میں نے شوہر کو گم حجابانہ بات نہ کہنے کی بات کہی تھی۔ اس لیے مجھے یہی لگا کہ شوہر نے اس کو گم حجابانہ بات نہ کہنے کی بات کہی۔



مہر نے کہا کہ میں نے شوہر کو گم حجابانہ بات نہ کہنے کی بات کہی تھی۔ اس لیے مجھے یہی لگا کہ شوہر نے اس کو گم حجابانہ بات نہ کہنے کی بات کہی۔

اگلے دن وہ اپنے شوہر سے بات کرتی تھی۔

مہر نے کہا کہ شوہر نے اس کو گم حجابانہ بات نہ کہنے کی بات کہی تھی۔ اس لیے مجھے یہی لگا کہ شوہر نے اس کو گم حجابانہ بات نہ کہنے کی بات کہی۔



کیونکہ اس کو گم حجابانہ بات نہ کہنے کی بات کہی تھی۔ اس لیے اس کو گم حجابانہ بات نہ کہنے کی بات کہی تھی۔

مہر نے کہا کہ شوہر نے اس کو گم حجابانہ بات نہ کہنے کی بات کہی تھی۔ اس لیے مجھے یہی لگا کہ شوہر نے اس کو گم حجابانہ بات نہ کہنے کی بات کہی۔



Zehra Jabeen

میری کہانی



Patel Ishra

#ACTEQUAL FACTOIDS

1. Close to two out of every three Indian women are, in their prime working years, primarily engaged in unpaid housework. Over 60% of these women said, they did so because no other family member helped out with the chores. (NSSO, 68th round). #ActEqual
2. If we add up the distance that every rural woman in India walked in a year, just to carry water, the aggregate would be 64,000 times the distance between earth and moon. Yet, in India, household work is not recognised as 'economically productive work'. #ActEqual (Source: avg distance rural women walked in 2012 is 173 KMs according to NSSO data released in 2014).
3. Data shows that women form up to 69% of workers engaged in dairy work. Millions of women spend considerable time milking cows, feeding fodder, cleaning cowsheds and collecting cow dung. Yet, only about 18% of women are employed in Dairy Cooperatives. #ActEqual (Source: People's Archive of Rural India)
4. In Venezuela, home is considered a place of economic activity, giving women the right to form unions and bargain collectively, along with the right to social security. Isn't it time India's Statistical Organisations also count working at home as 'economically productive' work and follow suit? #ActEqual
5. 13.12% of India's population lies in the tender age of 0-6 years, who need intensive care support in feeding, cleaning, clothing, learning, safeguarding. It is mostly women who individually take on a larger share of this responsibility. #ShareTheWork #ActEqual (Census:2011)
6. According to central and state government legislations of India, women employed in factories and sites as construction workers, plantation labour, factory workers, beedi and cigar workers, contractual labour and inter-state migrant workers are all entitled to rooms for children, along with a trained woman in charge.
7. According to the data of 2011-12, the Labour Force Participation Rate of married men was as high as 92.7% as compared to the dismal 32.7% for married women. If work is equally shared at home and workplaces have friendlier policies for young mothers, more women could continue working after marriage. (Source: Centre for Women's Development Studies).

8. According to the Agricultural Census 2011, women form over 75% of India's agricultural workforce, yet fewer than 13% own land!
9. In India, girls between classes I to X drop out of school at a rate of 46.7%*. That's almost 1 in every two girls. The most common reason is to 'take care of the house'. (*District Information System for Education)
10. Over 16 million women work as home-based workers contributing about 35% of household incomes, and yet home is not recognized as a place of work under labour laws. [WIEGO report based on NSSO data - <http://wiego.org/sites/wiego.org/files/publications/files/Raveendran-HBW-India-WIEGO-SB10.pdf>]
11. Number of ASHA, anganwadi workers are 4 times the size of railway workers. These 62 lakh women (ASHA, Anganwadi workers etc.) spend almost 40 years of their lives subsidizing the state but are considered as "voluntary workers" and don't get even the minimum wage, let alone employee benefits.
12. As per census 2011 and 2001, people who do not engage in any economically productive work are considered as "non-productive". They include students, women attending daily household chores like cooking, cleaning utensils, looking after children, fetching water etc., dependants such as infants, very elderly people, pensioners, beggars, vagrants, prostitutes and persons having unidentified source of income and with unspecified sources of subsistence and others.
13. India's population is likely to increase by 60 per cent between 2000 and 2050 but the number of elders, aged 80 years and older, will go up by 700 percent and above 60 years of age, will shoot up by 360 per cent, resulting in a demographic greater than the total U.S. population in 2012. With a dearth of adequate geriatric care infrastructure, unmet demand for special care services and facilities for the elderly, and less than 11 percent of them having a pension of any sort, it is mostly women's informal care that will be subsidizing the government. [United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and Help Age International Report - <http://www.gktoday.in/indias-elderly-population-some-fundamentals/>]

For more – www.actionaid.org/actequal

ABOUT THE CHANGEMAKERS!



Ishra, 15, Navpada, Mumbai

Ishra invests a lot of time convincing hers and others' parents that the work division between the male and the female child within the household should be equal. The girl child should not be made to compromise her studies because of additional responsibilities of the household.



Aliya, 22, Navpada, Mumbai

Aliya is very articulate about her confusion between religious beliefs that she was conditioned not to question and her recent learning that makes it an imperative to question blind faith. She now thinks that getting over such a conditioning is a process and will take time though she does not spare questioning whenever deems necessary.



Ruksar, 23, Navpada, Mumbai

Ruksar believes education is important in order to achieve economic independence and assert one's choices. She is currently working and have been able to negotiate delaying her marriage till she completes her education.



Mehmuna, 58, Bandra (E), Mumbai

Mehmuna came to the comics workshop as a guardian of one of the young girls. She was very nervous in the beginning as she never held a pencil ever before in her life. However, she was the second one to finish her comics at the end of three days.



Asha, 42, Chembur, Mumbai

Asha, despite difficulties in her family and intruding gazes from her neighbours, manages to live her life in her own terms. She comes from a socially marginalized family and continues to fight her battle in court for her entitlement to land in her native place. In the city she works towards capacitating women to assert their rights. She is one of our cluster coordinators.



Chhaya, 21, Dnyaneshwar Nagar, Mumbai

Chhaya thought she will never be able to even draw a straight line. She literally had to be pulled out of her room in the first day of the workshop. After the initial inhibition was broken she found it was fun and became the third one to finish. These days Chhaya is very happily pulling her fellow mates out of the house and engaging them in comics making.



Jyoti, 18, Dnyaneshwar Nagar, Mumbai

Jyoti was one of the youngest member when she became part of the YUWP. Her parents were resistant to send her for thecomics workshop. Confirmation of her participation came much later though she did not miss to finish her comics first, while others were still struggling. Jyoti too trains the young girls to make comics in her area.



Komal, 23, Dharavi, Mumbai

Once being cat called for wearing shot dress by a neighborhood lady, Komal now ensures she waves to the same lady almost every day before she leaves the housing complex with her experimental clothing and a smile on her face. She feels women do not have to be answerable for choosing to be who they are or what they do.



Adhira, 40, Dharavi, Mumbai

Adhira is the most funny and jolly. She believes no matter however hard the situation is we all deserve a 'comic' relief! She prefers to laugh off the sorrows of life and inspires other to do the similarly.



Abhisikta, 26, Mumbai

Abhisikta, amidst managing the necessities, aspires to become a 'grown-up' at some point in her life. Along with her YUW gang, she strategizes various means to bridge the communication gap between the young girls and other 'grown-ups' like parents, family members, teacher and so on. At the end of the three day training she felt comics can be one of such means and one does not need to be a trained artist to make one.

ABOUT THE CHANGEMAKERS!



Archana, YUW, Old City, Hyderabad

Archana has been working with Shaheen from the last several years. Archana says, 'Comics workshop has given a very powerful medium to communicate important issues to people, issues which are often not discussed in public and are considered to be taboo'.



Rani, YUW, Valmiki Nagar, Old City, Hyderabad

Rani was an avid reader of comic books since childhood. She used to always enjoy reading, but never felt that could design, sketch and create a comic by herself. During the workshop she said, 'training has left me thrilled! I can now draw instances from my own life and capture it all on paper and share my own thoughts and feelings through it'.



Sameena, 21, Sultan Shahi, Hyderabad

Sameena loves reading books, newspaper and all education material and comics (in newspaper) but never knew how to create it. She's thrilled to create her own comic story within 3 days of comics workshop without any training. She says, 'This was a great learning experience for me. Now I can make these comics on different issues and create awareness'. As a part of Shaheen, she wants to give this training to her friends and relatives, so that they can also benefit from this medium.



Farhana, 34, Sultan Shahi, Hyderabad

Farhana believes that this is a creative medium to reach out to audience of different age groups, as it includes pictures and stories. Creating Comics doesn't require big venue or much money. Farhana says 'through this workshop, I have learnt how to make comics and have developed interest also in this medium'.



Menaka, YUW, Hyderabad

Menaka is part of YUWP and is undergoing skilled based training at Shaheen on Mehendi designing, painting and knitting. She is pursuing her nursing course and loves sketching and drawing. Menaka says, 'In this training, I was able to design very nice characters, and was able to express my thoughts through them. My comic came out very well and everyone around really appreciated my comic'.



Zahera, 25, Sultan Shahi, Hyderabad

Zahera is working with Shaheen and wants to use Comics as a medium to share on women's rights at several forums not only in her own vicinity but across the states and countries. Zahera gave the title for her comic 'Awaaz' which means voice. She says, 'Through this medium, I would like to take women's voices to bigger forums. I have always been a story teller and like to weave stories out of everyday life events, through our own stories we can communicate better with the people we work with'.



Irfana, 19, Aman Nagar, Hyderabad

Irfana is part of the YUW programme. She shared about the challenges she has gone through in her life, in addition to not completing her education and supporting her family by making mosquito nets with no time left for her things she likes to do. Irfana said, 'Through Shaheencenter, I started enrolling in courses that I liked and picked up skills. Attending this workshop has been a great learning experience for me and I got the opportunity to express my story through the medium of comics'.



Pooja, YUW, Hyderabad

Pooja is an active member of the project and has been introduced to Shaheen through her mother who is working at Shaheen. Being part of the YUWP, Poojabelieves strongly in women's empowerment and during the comics workshop she described views on women empowerment through her comics. Pooja says, 'Through the activities conducted in this project, I was exposed to several women's issues such as decent work, including paid and unpaid work and issues of sexual and reproductive health. I've now confidence to go to police directly and report cases'.

ABOUT THE CHANGEMAKERS!



Nida, 16, Sultan Shahi, Hyderabad

Nida created comics on housework, since she wants to sensitise people on Unpaid Care Work – Recognition, Reduction and Redistribution, and the amount of time women spent, which they can utilize in some other things if the work gets reduced. Nida believes in the beauty of Comics as it can be portrayed as a simple story and can be understood by semi-literate people with different dialects. During the workshop Nida was happy since she learnt sketching.



Neha Begum, YUW, Hyderabad

'I am a thinker', says Neha. She left school at an early age and cannot read or write. But the comics workshop brought out her creative skills of sketching, where she weaved her own story and created dialogues (with the support of her friends). She was excited to hold a pencil after many years and is happy to do something that she's never done before.



Sara, 17 yrs, Old City, Hyderabad

Sara found it very difficult to write or sketch during the workshop. Having left her schooling long time back, she found it extremely difficult to articulate herself and share her life story. To the point that towards the end of the second day, she was not willing to pick her pen! She had to be encouraged to share her story through this medium, after which the next day she started sketching her key comic characters and also asked for help. By half day her comic was complete with its basic characters and her story of separation in marriage became a bold story, communicating the right of women to stay alone!



Suman, Valmiki Nagar, Hyderabad

Living in a community where girls social mobility is restricted due to eve teasing, Suman created her story using Comics on eve teasing happening at public places (schools) and that there must be an end to it, if women raise their voice. As part of Shaheen, she wants to use comics as a medium to raise awareness, since these issues are not discussed publically.



Anuradha, 42, Hyderabad

Through the comics story workshop, Anuradha brought out issues revolving around gender discrimination that women are facing, pushed by their families into household chores. She says, 'as women we are constantly taught to prioritise house over other things, this message is reinforced through various directions including the house, schools and the society that we are a part of'.



Neha Dhingra, Hyderabad

Neha has portrayed her story on girls' exclusion due to socio-cultural norms and practices. She shared that women are restricted from performing religious functions/ puja during their menstrual cycle, this not only fosters a feeling of exclusion at subconscious level but works to the detriment of women in the long run as they internalise these notions and later perpetuate them. She says, 'I have always found rituals around menstruation to be very problematic, as it restricts women's capabilities. Stigma around menstruation also perpetuates negative body image amongst young girls making them disrespect their biological functions and accord negative notions to natural processes'.





actionaid

ActionAid is an anti-poverty agency working in India since 1972, currently reaching out to over 6 million people every year, who belong to marginalised and socially excluded communities. It operates in 25 states and 1 Union Territory.

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www.actionaid.org/india



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FOUNDATION**