

# Report for Vasavya Mahila Mandali on the Yuva Mitra Workshops

April 2019

## Background

A team of George Washington University Milken Institute School of Public Health (GW) graduate students (Stephanie Asher, Kayla Thompson, Gayatri Malhotra) led by Dr. Amita Vyas, the Director of the Maternal and Child Health Program, conducted an assessment of the 'Empowering Youth with Gender Based Violence Training' project. In 2018, this project piloted the *Yuva Mitra Workshops* in collaboration with Vasavya Mahila Mandali (VMM) and Girl Rising (GR) /Global Financial Strategies in India. This project, the pilot of which reached over 900 youth in 30 colleges across 3 cities in India (Hyderabad, Bhubaneswar, and Visakhapatnam) by early 2019, aimed to prevent gender-based violence (GBV) by equipping college students with the knowledge and skills needed to address this complex issue on college campuses in India through the Yuva Mitra workshops. The Yuva Mitra workshop module is designed to provide trainers information and resources to foster meaningful discussions centered on Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and encourage participants to leverage powerful storytelling to affect change.



Picture 1: Student participants pose for a GBV prevention Facebook Post outside MRS A.V.N. College in Visakhapatnam, India.

## Methods

In consultation with VMM and GR, GW developed pre- and post-surveys for the college student participants of the Yuva Mitra workshops to measure changes in knowledge, perceptions, behavioral intentions, and social action related to the GBV/gender equality content of the Yuva Mitra modules. Due to field challenges in the dissemination of the surveys, including technology and language barriers, baseline survey results were primarily received from Hyderabad. The baseline surveys are analyzed within this final report. Due to the limited number of completed post-surveys, a traditional pre/post analysis was not conducted. However, the pilot data from the baseline assessments provides rich information on the needs of college students in India as it pertains to the prevention of GBV.

In addition to the survey data, GW developed post-workshop interview guides for Yuva Mitra trainers and student participants. Three GW students (Stephanie Asher, Gayatri Malhotra, and Kayla Thompson) traveled to India from December 6 – December 18, 2018 to support the Yuva Mitra workshops in Hyderabad and Bhubaneswar and conducted qualitative interviews with Yuva Mitra Workshop college participants. The GW students traveled to 5 colleges in Visakhapatnam and 1 college and a regional event in Bhubaneswar, conducting 29 post-workshop interviews with 26 students and 3 trainers.

## Baseline Survey Findings/Themes

A total of 365 Yuva Mitra Workshop participants completed pre-workshop, baseline surveys. An analysis of the survey results is detailed, below.



Picture 2: Student participants from the Yuva Mitra Workshop pose at Gita College in Bhubaneswar, India.

## Participant Demographics

Survey respondents were college students who participated in the Yuva Mitra Workshops aged between the ages of 16-26. The average age was 19, with most participants (81.6%, n=298) falling between the ages of 17-20. The majority of participants (97.8%, n=357) described themselves as single, with only 8 participants noting that they were married (1.4%, n=5), divorced/separated (.3%, n=1), or widowed (.5%, n=2). 90.9% (n=332) of participants currently live at home with their family (72.3%, n=264) or at their college hostel (18.6%, n=68), with a small number living with friends, by themselves, or somewhere else. Participants were 71.5% female (n=261) and 28.5% male (n=104), most of whom had participated in workshops in Hyderabad (77.3%, n=282). A breakdown of survey participants by gender and city of training is displayed in Table 1.

Table 1: Yuva Mitra Survey Participant Demographics (n=365)					
	Bhubaneswar (n=50)	Hyderabad (n=282)	Visakhapatnam (n=8)	Did not specify city (n=25)	Total % of Participants (Gender)
Male	18.0%	27.3%	87.5%	44.0%	28.5%
Female	82.0%	72.7%	12.5%	56.0%	71.5%
Total % of Participants (City)	13.7%	77.3%	2.2%	6.8%	

Descriptive analysis of survey responses for all questions is included in Appendix A. A brief analysis of the responses is included, below.

## Gender Norms and Perspectives

Gender norms and perceptions were measured using vignettes. Shreya's story asked students what they would do if their sister was the victim of physical abuse perpetrated from her spouse:

**Prompt:** Shreya is 22 years old and married to Ramesh for the past one year. You overhear Shreya speaking with your mother about her marriage. Shreya tells your mother that her husband frequently hits her and she does not know what to do. Your mother tells Shreya that she should not say anything to maintain peace in the home and that this is just a part of life.

If you were Shreya's brother or sister, what you would do? Pick two things you would do.

The top three choices selected by respondents were:

- 1) "Even though I know that my parents will not listen to me, I would tell them to file a police complaint" (47.4%, n=161)
- 2) "Even though it would upset my family members, I would still speak to them and try to convince them to let her leave her marriage" (42.1%, n=143); and
- 3) "I would advise her to leave her marriage since her husband's behavior is incorrect" (38.2%, n=130).

The top choice for females was "Even though I know that my parents will not listen to me, I would tell them to file a police complaint" (49%, n=118), whereas the top choice for males was "Even though it would upset my family members, I would still speak to them and try to convince them to let her leave her marriage" (46.5%, n=46). These answers signal, at the very least, a base-level knowledge that spousal violence is illegal and/or wrong— with many participants indicating they would take action to help protect their siblings. These responses, however, conflict with many of the student responses to the qualitative interview questions related to the action they would take if they found out their friend was slapped by her boyfriend (more details can be found in the Interview Findings section).

Participants were then asked why family members would not want a girl to go out with a boy to the movies:

**Prompt:** Kiran is a 16-year old girl and her classmate, Vineet, asked her to go to the cinema with him. Kiran's parents allowed her to go with him. Kiran's aunt and uncle are not happy and disagree with her parents' decision.

What do you think the three main reasons are for Kiran's aunt and uncle disagreeing with Kiran's parents? (Check three reasons only)

The majority of students noted that it would be because either "The family reputation will be harmed if Kiran goes out with a boy" (64.7%, n=213) or "Kiran should not go out with boys before marriage" (58.1%, n=191). These answers demarcate that even though the students are aware of the wrongness of gender-based violence, they can recognize the underlying stigma associated with males and females spending time together.

Participants were asked to answer



Picture 3: VMM facilitates a discussion between the GW Graduate Students and Andhra University Students.



regarding their level of agreement with six gender-norms based questions on a scale of 1 (strong agreement) to 4 (strong disagreement). 56.5% of males and 55.7% of females (55.9% overall, n=175) agreed that men were still responsible for providing economically for the family. A little less than half of the students (43.1%, n=135) agreed that a wife should always obey her husband, though lesser women (11% lesser than men) than males agreed with this statement. Students majority did not agree that:

- 1) Men cannot take care of children as well as women (38%, n=119);
- 2) A woman should tolerate violence to keep the family together (27.2%, n=85); and
- 3) Teasing is harmless fun (24.3%, n = 76).

Almost all the students agreed that girls should be able to decide when they want to marry (94.6%, n=296).

### Knowledge & Understanding of GBV

Yuva Mitra Workshop participants' knowledge and understanding of gender-based violence was assessed by asking if gender-based violence was preventable. A majority of students (79.6%, n=249) responded that gender-based violence was, indeed, preventable.

Participants were asked to read a story that depicted eve teasing and then to choose what type of GBV the story was an example of. The majority of students answered correctly, with 65.6% males (n=63) and 60.1% (n=137) females recognizing the story as eve teasing. Approximately 10% of males and 9% of females did not recognize the story as GBV.

### Personal Experiences with GBV

A series of questions asked students about their own personal experiences with GBV. The majority of students either rarely (38%, n=128) or sometimes (39.5%, n=128) spoke to their friends about GBV. A higher percentage of male students (15.6%, n=15) than female students (8.8%, n=20) had never talked to their friends about GBV. Over 80% of male (81.3%, n=73) and female (86.8%, n=198) student respondents marked that they do not know anyone at their college who has faced gender-based violence. The qualitative interviews taken post-Yuva Mitra Workshop contradict with this response – nearly all the students interviewed had

personally experienced or witnessed GBV in their communities or colleges.

Participants were asked to recall what they did the last time they saw people their age or friends participating in different scenarios of gender-based violence (eve teasing, cyberbullying, and physical abuse). For the most part, the majority of students stated that they had never seen instances of the gender-based violence scenarios occur. As evidenced from the qualitative interviews, this lack of proof is not due to the lack of GBV in the community, but from a lack of awareness as to what gender-based violence looks like in the real world. However, in the case of eve teasing the highest percentage of female respondents chose "I felt really bad and I stopped the act in the moment," (29.2%, n=62). A quarter of the male respondents chose the response, "I did not feel good about it, but I did not do anything," (25.8%, n=23). For each category, between 2-5% of boys joined in on the scenarios of gender-based violence with eve teasing being the most often joined in on



Picture 4: The VMM, GW, and GR Training Team poses for a photo outside of MRS A.V.N. College.

(4.5%, n=4), and physical abuse and cyberbullying at 2.2% (n=2). Female students joined in a .5% of the time (n=1) for eve teasing and physical abuse.

## Social Media Use

A component of the workshop focused on the use of social media and other communication channels to create GBV awareness and advocacy campaigns and therefore a series of questions were asked on students' social media use. The three most common social media/messaging accounts were WhatsApp (93%, n=226), Facebook (65.4%, n=159), and Instagram (65.4%, n=159). Most of the participants use social media several times a day (54.2%, n=198), with only a few students rarely using social media less than weekly (2.2%, n=8) or never (3%, n=11). The majority of respondents either use social media to communicate with others related to politics and social issues sometimes (31.8%, n=116) or rarely (26.6%, n=97).

## Interview Findings/Themes

### Knowledge and Experiences

#### Students

For most of the students interviewed, the Yuva Mitra workshop was their first exposure to education or training on gender-based violence prevention and/or gender norms. Partially due to this lack of exposure, the student participants most easily recognized and understood extreme versions of gender-based violence, such as human trafficking or child marriage. For example, during the "Creating social media strategies for campaigns" activity the students were asked to create social media campaigns related stories (real or fictional) about gender-based violence. Six out of seven (87%) of the groups that presented at MRS A.V.N. College in Visakhapatnam presented on an example of human trafficking or child marriage they had experienced or heard of, but none presented on eve teasing or domestic violence.

Students left the training with a stronger foundation of knowledge on GBV, but still had trouble clearly identifying gender-based violence or discrimination in their own communities. When asked if men and women are treated differently in India, most of the students interviewed said men and women were equal in India. (*"No, they are not treated differently. They are equal."*) However, when probing further it was clear through the students' stories that women in India are:

- **Given less favorable job and learning opportunities.** (*"Woman has to do household work, and man has to go and work. This is strategy according to their living."*)
- **Restricted in their movements.** (*A young female student said that even though men and women are equal her brother advised her against going near males. She said he often tells her, "be careful, you are a woman, you are a girl, you are a child. My mother also says that... Yes, my whole family says that."*) (*"Girls are not allowed to come out of the house, especially. Their parents do not like them to go do jobs or to study at higher education."*)
- **Removed from decision-making.** (*"They are equal, obviously... Every decision in the household is taken by the men. The head of the family is also male. There is not participation for the women in making men's decisions. If someone wants to marry her daughter, he just informs her that we are going to marry her."*)



Picture 5: A student poses for a photo outside the Yuva Mitra classroom in Visakhapatnam.

- **More likely to be married then educated.** (*"My grandfather was allowing his daughter to study until tenth class. Then afterwards, he married her off. Some of them are allowing to study, some of them are not allowing."*)
- **Responsible for the gender-based violence they experience.** (*"I'm going to know, what's the reason why he had beaten her... why he has to do like that."*) (*"What is the reason he slapped you? What is the fault?"*)

Male students are, in contrast, asked to do more strenuous physical tasks and must meet high expectations. (*"Girls are not preferred for the march- parades because they are not physically strong. So boys are very stressed at work. They select boy students, rather than girls."*) They are also given preference for jobs and career opportunities due to their gender. One student directly called out the contradiction between knowledge of equality and treatment, stating, *"Selfishness is the main reason... both men and women are treated equally, but some of the men in the society will not accept it. They will go against it."*

One of the questions asked during the qualitative interviews was, "Let's say your very close friend's boyfriend slapped her. If she tells you that her boyfriend slapped her, what would you tell her to do?" Participant answers to this question highlighted the responsibility assigned to women for being victims of gender-based violence:

- *"Then, I want to judge who is right and who is wrong. I suggest her to be not like that some of the time, and that the boy not slap the girl, because she's a girl, she trusts you."*
- *"I will ask her some questions. You have selected a boyfriend without knowing his attitudes, his behavior? ... I will advise her that you have not married him, you are not partner with him for your whole life. You can also slap him."*
- *"First, I want to understand why he slapped her. And if my best friends don't have any mistake, without mistake her boyfriend slapped her, then I'll come to her boyfriend and ask him why you slapped her."*
- *"I'll have to know the situation, why he slapped her. If the situation is a silly situation, a common thing, it was like he will beat her for small issue, I'll talk to them."*



Picture 6: Four female students pose for a photo outside Ballayya College.

There were recognizable contradictions between denial that GBV existed in their communities and the stories they shared during the trainings and in interviews. When asked, many students said their communities did not have a problem with GBV, and that they had not seen examples of what was talked about in class. (*"Only maintain love and affection and caring, not involving sex like that. No ma'am [I don't think that a male would slap a female]. It's mostly love and affection, yes."*) Regardless, those same students recalled numerous instances of stalking, sexual harassment, child marriage, and eve teasing they had witnessed, heard of, or experienced. (*"Following a college girl. Wherever she is going, he is just following that girl. And he is not even... he's just going and touching her and behaving like an idiot."*) (*"Tried to rape her. Tried, just tried. But she ran away. I have seen often like this situation."*) One girl mentioned that there was no gender-based violence in her college, but males would



call out to her, “Hey beautiful. And that’s it. It does not lead to abuse. It’s just a word, just talk. Really friendly.”

No instances were recalled of GBV experienced by males. Some shared stories of sexual harassment and stalking of females were resolved by male members of the community joining together to find and chase away the perpetrator after the situation had escalated. For instance, one student noted, “When I saw her tears in her eyes, whoever he might be, it does not matter... We went and asked him ‘Why are you following her?’... he pushed me. So my body builder friend gave him a slap to his face... he got scared and went away.” From these contradictions, it seems the lack of recognition of GBV as a problem is due to the lack of knowledge about GBV.

### Trainers

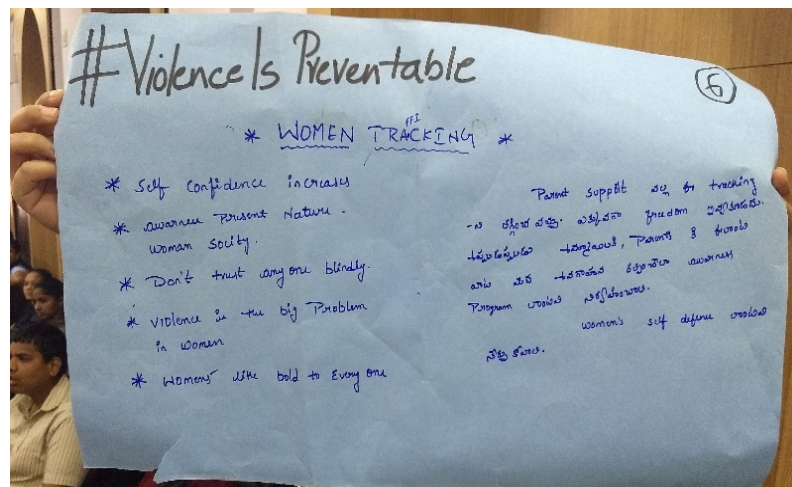
The Yuva Mitra workshop trainers came from a variety of different backgrounds, and learned from both the training modules and the shared student experiences. One trainer continued self-education regarding GBV in India outside of the classroom so as to be able to update the students on the latest statistics and news. These learnings also had an effect on his personal, family life: “I am reading a lot about the gender-based violence so I am also sensitizing. I have children, and now I have a promise, so I have to treat the boys and girls in the correct way. So, I have to give both equal opportunity and equal things.”

The trainers in Bhubaneswar used their knowledge and experience to build upon the Yuva Mitra training modules with additional materials and visual aids – including a storybook presentation that explained gender vs. sex and girl vs. boy stereotypes. Even though these trainers were not trained by GR, GW believes that VMM and GR can learn from these trainers’ experiences for effective implementation of this intervention.

### Significance of workshop culture

GW conducted a review of the Yuva Mitra workshops based on observational findings and qualitative interviews, which can be found in Appendix B. Some key notes include:

- **Interaction between male & female students** was important – and mentioned by a number of students as a key point of learning from the workshops during qualitative interviews. (“We are in that same age group. We got the very good opportunity to collaborate more and more.”) (“The group discussing, definitely [was my favorite].”)
- **Hands-on activities** were highlighted as the favorite activities for students during qualitative interviews. (“She made us to speak... participating and all that, like preparing charts.”) (“There is an interaction section, I have not seen many activities like that. I liked it.”)
- **Time given for reflection and discussion** was important for the students to absorb and process what they were learning. The capacity to share and discuss among peers was often mentioned during the qualitative interviews as a favorite part of the workshops. (“They asked us our feelings in the situations where we’ve undergone through.”) (“We know few things before but



Picture 7: Notes from a group of student building a social media story related to GBV at MRS A.V.N College.

*we never spoke them aloud.”) (“My favorite activity was the fourth activity when I gave a speech about women abuse and many of the people encouraged me.”)*

## Reactions & Reflections

### Students

Students concluded the workshops with a strong desire to enact change in their community. The storytelling modules of the training were novel for many of the students – though the majority of students had at least one social media account, most had never used or thought of them as a platform for social change. Student participants learned how to use hashtags and share stories of gender-based violence using Facebook as a platform. During the interviews, they highlighted using person-to-person communication as a vehicle for change. On advocating against gender-based violence, one student said, *“At first, I am not bold enough. I was so afraid... I should stand for myself and others. I’ve started speaking and being an advocate.”* Many others mentioned they would instigate more conversation in their communities about gender-based violence and share the learnings from the trainings with their friends and parents.



Picture 8: Students work to describe differences in boys and girls in Ballayya College.

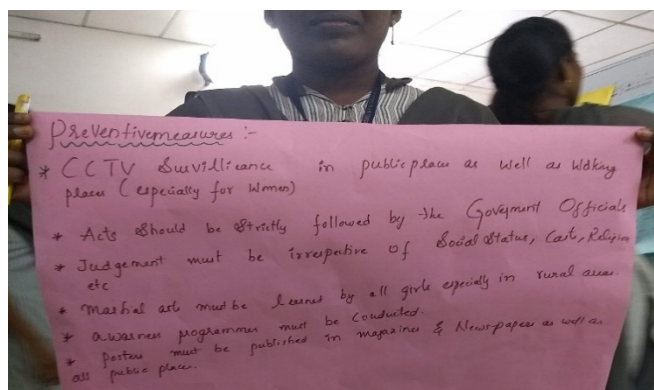
Some students were inspired by the Yuva Mitra workshop to make more tangible, immediate change in their communities. One student started a Girl Rising student organization (which already has 150 members) to raise awareness on the importance of girls’ education and has plans to invite parents in local villages to a training session. During an interview conducted by a GWSPH student for Girl Rising’s Facebook page, the student shared, *“We started to gather some money to educate girl children, as the private schools are not going to give their education for free. In my city, there is a school that is joining hands for me to collect less fees for [girls] who [previously] could not study.”*

Throughout the workshops, students promised the trainers they would not be perpetrators of gender-based violence in their own communities. *“If I have a chance, I will absolutely make this program highlighted. I want to give sex education to all the adults and people so that they may stop doing wrongs in the coming future.”* Regardless of the method, it is clear the students who participated in the Yuva Mitra workshop felt encouraged by the training and left with a commitment to make a change in their communities.

### Trainers

During the qualitative interviews, Yuva Mitra Workshop trainers reflected on the personal effect the Yuva Mitra workshops had on them. One trainer shared a personal commitment instigated by the workshops, stating, *“I also promised myself no gender-based violence in my home... I am sharing with my friends also.”* Another trainer shared her excitement and happiness that she had the opportunity to encourage students to share their experiences with gender-based violence because she has been blessed in her life to be surrounded by a good support network.

The trainers did share that the magnitude of stories they heard about gender-based violence



Picture 9: Students worked in groups to create potential GBV



could be overwhelming. They noted that they were heartened by the enthusiasm of the students, but saddened by how much gender-based violence is being experienced by the students they're training. This may be one reason why some trainers have given the students they train their contact information in case they are victims of gender-based violence. One of the trainers shared that their students' parents reached out to them when they were the victim of eve teasing and cyber bullying. *"When these girls are facing eve teasing or sexual abuse, so that time the parents are calling to my colleagues, and my colleague is going and they are sharing what are the opportunities they have to defeat the sexual abuser... in that one stop center for everything about the violence against women, so they are providing the counseling, they are providing the legal support. When these girls are informing us of violence is when they are requiring the help. So we are referring them to government services and supporting them where we can."* These connections are extremely important for students to give access to resources for those who are currently (or have previously) experienced gender-based violence in their communities.

## Discussion and Next Steps

The Yuva Mitra Workshops are an important catalyst towards prevention against gender-based violence in India. For many students, this was their first introduction to gender-based violence and prevention through story-telling. This introduction has encouraged these students to have important discussions with their family and friends on their perceptions and expectations related to gender norms and gender-based violence. In some cases, this workshop was the first time students felt comfortable enough to share their own experiences with violence. Many of these students have committed to becoming change-agents in their communities related to preventing gender-based violence.

Throughout this report, it is important to recognize that changing attitudes and behaviors takes time. The 2-day Yuva Mitra Workshop is a great opportunity to raise awareness and knowledge related to gender-based violence in India. That being said, more time and resources need to be dedicated to this effort to change gender-based norms and GBV perceptions and actions in India.



Picture 10: From left to right, the GW & GR Evaluation team - Angel Kharya, Kayla Thompson, Stephanie Asher, Smriti Kaul, and Gayatri Malhotra.