

# MY BODY MY RIGHTS

DECEMBER 2021



RANGEEN  
KHIDKI



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

**CHOICE** FOR  
YOUTH &  
SEXUALITY

**Rangeen Khidki's flagship program, My Body My Rights Training Program is an unbiased and scientific, curriculum based Comprehensive Gender and Sexuality Education Program which consists of a rigorous and exhaustive training curriculum with fun activities and deeply self reflective pauses which helps individuals unlearn, learn and relearn important and relevant concepts relating to gender and sexuality.**

**The My Body My Rights workshop was conducted in collaboration with Feminist Futures India in partnership with CHOICE for Youth and Sexuality which is a non-profit organisation based out of Amsterdam and advocates for young people's Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) and for their meaningful participation in the decisions made about their lives. It works to strengthen the capacity of young people and youth-led organisations, enabling them to become leaders and changemakers in their communities. The workshop was conducted in-person with 13 participants, over the span of three days, from 13th December to 15th December, 2021 in Kohima, Nagaland.**

**Rangeen Khidki supported Feminist Futures India to build capacities of its participants on various aspects of CSE and the participants were expected to go back to their own communities and become advocates and peer-to-peer educators in their communities.**





The first day of the MBMR workshop focussed on topics such as Body, Puberty, Anatomy, Menstruation, Relationships and so on. The day began with an ice breaking exercise with the participants. The day then moved on to engaging conversations between the participants and the facilitators, where most participants opened up and shared their experiences of going through puberty. What is important to note here is that most participants did not have information about their bodies and respective anatomies. Some female participants talked about how uncomfortable it was for them to go through the process of growing up, without any prior knowledge or vocabulary. The sudden change in their bodies received a lot of unwanted attention from their surroundings as well, which added to their discomfort.

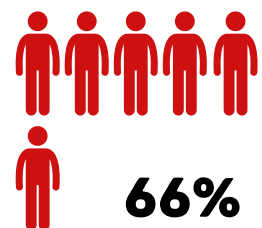
# DAY 1



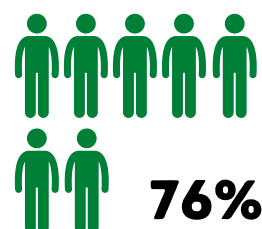
One participant shared how she wished she was born a boy due to the level of unawareness and discomfort. She felt that it was easier to navigate the world in a male body than a female. The workshop helped the participants to develop language, markers and vocabulary to understand puberty holistically, value relationships and consent which was new to most participants. While discussing Menstruation, one of the information that was given to the group was the experience of premenstrual syndrome.

*Understanding of the relevance and importance of talking about consent, safety and abuse to children.*

*Before the session*



*After the session*



The conversation within the group took a beautiful turn when the male participants asked the female participants how as men they can make life easier for women while they were menstruating. The responses given by the female members of the group were very simple: “ask us what we need”, “sometimes all we need is some space”, “bring us a chocolate”, yet these conversations never took place in their day to day lives.

Later on in the day, another activity was introduced to the group where they were asked to map their own body outlines and mark the parts which they considered were public or private to them. Most participants marked areas around their genitals as private based on what they have been told earlier, but one participant marked their entire body as private which shifted the conversations around public and private body parts. Participants organically discussed that it is their body and it is they who can decide which part is public or private or both.

One cannot see body and bodily autonomy in the binary of public and private, therefore decisions around themselves should only be governed by their own selves. Consent, boundaries, safe and unsafe touch were discussed in depth leading to discussions on healthy and unhealthy relationships. The first day of the workshop concluded on a curious and reflective note, where the participants were eager to know more and were looking forward to the second day of the workshop.

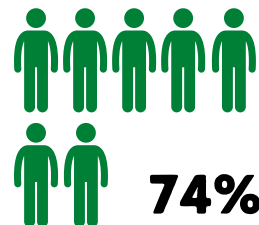
*Comfort when it comes to talking about sexual pleasure and sex with children.*

*Before the session*



**49%**

*After the session*



**74%**



# DAY 2

The second day of the workshop started with discussions around Mental Health and moved on to the broader topics of Gender and Sexuality. Participants were taken through a process of unlearning and relearning and were invited to look deeper within themselves to identify their existing biases or conditioning. The first step in this process was to distinguish between sex and gender and understand that sex, which is usually considered biological, is not as permanent and unchanging as it is claimed to be. Participants were asked to recall the first time they recognised or understood what gender they belonged to, as a continuation of discussions around how and when gender identity starts to develop in individuals, and this brought forward diverse stories and experiences.

One male participant shared his experience of when, for the first time during his childhood, it was pointed out to him that he was a boy and that meant that he was not supposed to try on his mother's makeup or play with it.



Female participants talked about how in their villages, girls are expected to help out in the kitchen from their childhood. Every participant shared their experiences of having lived through gender roles and norms, and realised that they have been living with them since their childhood and up until now. It is not one standalone incident that makes one recognise their gender, it is multiple of them and in various forms and ends up leaving a permanent mark on adult lives. .

Before moving on to discussing the realities of living in a heteropatriarchal society, the participants were engaged in an activity which made them reflect on the existing power structures within the society. It is important to have conversations around power, privilege and gender and reflect on the seemingly irrelevant actions which add to the larger picture of gender based discrimination. The small size of the group allowed the participants to engage in rich conversations and they started building from each other's thoughts.



A discussion on disability rights and how it fits within the practices of feminism, was initiated by a male persons with disability participant. Two participants who were living with disability shared their experiences of living in a society which looks at them with sympathy instead of empathy. They talked about how they are looked at as 'abnormal beings' where in reality, they are just as human as the abled ones and how it limits their opportunities to lead a fair, equitable and dignified life.



The pleasure affirmative nature of the workshop emphasised on all types of pleasure, including self pleasure. Participants shared what pleasure meant to them and talked about how something as simple as walking in the rain or painting or listening to music gives them an immense amount of joy and pleasure. The conversation also included discussions on sexual pleasure, consent and intimacy. Participants also mentioned how talking about sexual activity is a taboo in their tribal communities and this pushes young people often make decisions about their bodies that can have long term impact. The heavy influence of religious norms in their tribes often create limiting structures that may prevent them from engaging in conversations around sexual pleasure and safe sex practices. When members of the society are not aware of what pleasure is, then it becomes very difficult for them to identify what is the alternative to violence. The participants talked about how it is important to talk about not just gender based violence, but also sexual pleasure and satisfaction in relation to one another. When the narrative is of pleasure and happiness, prevention of violence becomes easier.

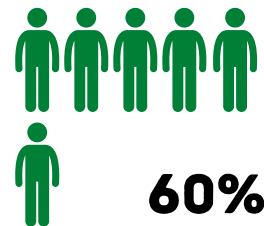
*Understanding that the best time to start talking about body, gender and sexuality with children is during their Early Childhood.*

**Before the session**

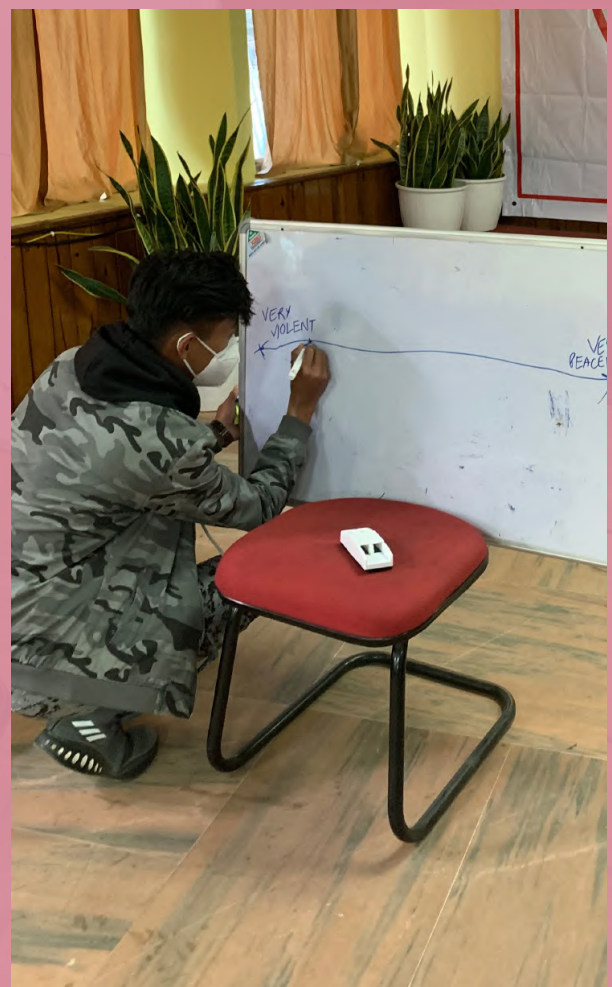


**50%**

**After the session**



**60%**



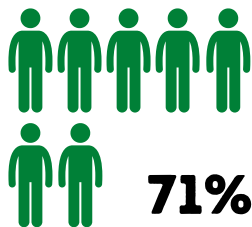
***Knowledge about diverse gender identities, sexualities and their intersections.***

***Before the session***



**51%**

***After the session***



**71%**

The discussions on types of Gender Based Violence were not restricted to just the definitions, but also included discussions on the impact of such violence and attempting to shift the perspective of victim blaming to a survivor centric perspective. The participants were given different situations as examples of types of violence and were asked to assess and rate the degree of violence for these situations as per their own understanding. The responses of the participants to each situation were so varied that it showed how violence also cannot be seen through the binary of black and white or right and wrong lens. One of the female participants shared how she had always blamed herself for being on the receiving end of a violent act and thanked the group for creating a safe space for her where she could not only reflect on it and process her experiences and emotions, but also talk about them.

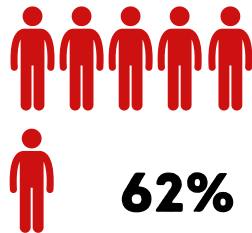




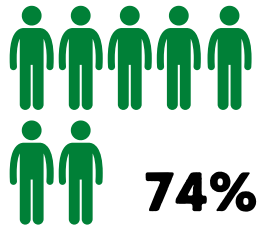
# DAY 3

*Comfortable on talking about contraception, reproductive rights and abortion with adolescents.*

*Before the session*



*After the session*



The last day of the workshop was mostly informative in nature and included topics such as Contraception, Pregnancy and Abortion. The rights based approach of the curriculum emphasised on the meaning of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights and explained the various aspects of it with informative videos and animations. By the end of the three day workshop, the participants decided to initiate such conversations within their community by organising group discussions, peer to peer dialogue, and even awareness programs. They have drawn up the next few steps and are currently working together with the team of Feminist Futures India and Choice For Youth to contextualise the content of the programa, and design the delivery in their communities to create sustainable impact. The workshop concluded on a very hopeful and positive note with a poetry reading session and some music.



**"As a young person, to be an advocate of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights for me, is an act of love. I'm truly glad that we were able to collaborate with Rangeen Khidki for the Body Festival Training Program at Kohima. All of our participants mentioned how the sessions were simplified, and empowered them in taking the conversation forward. It is our hope that the domino effect continues."**

**Sekulu, Founder at Feminist Futures India and Consultant with Choice For Youth**

**"I have learned a lot from the training sessions but I believe I will need to learn more about the varieties of gender and sexuality."**

**"Children have the right to learn about sex and sexual pleasures for them to be aware of and to be able to make right decisions."**

**"Honestly, before this workshop I didn't have much information about consent and safety, these 3 days have really helped in grasping these issues and what they stand for"**

**"I will have to admit that concepts of gender identities, sexualities and their intersections are still very confusing and I have a lot more left to learn and unlearn."**

**"After receiving knowledge from this training, I firmly believe that I will be able to guide children from an early stage and encourage them to talk about sex and gender."**

## **REFLECTIONS**