

# Prajnya 16 Days Campaign against Gender Violence



**2010**



Between 25 November and 10 December 2010, Prajnya organised the 16 Days Campaign against Gender Violence in Chennai, for the third successive year.

### **What we tried to do, how we think we fared**

- This year we wanted to spotlight safety in public spaces. We piloted a Women' Safety Audit in one South Chennai neighbourhood and shared the report at a public forum around the question, "Is Chennai Safe for Women?"
- Public spaces were also the subject of the consultation we organised between student union representatives and Chennai Police. While getting colleges to respond and participate remains a big challenge, those who did respond did so with an encouraging enthusiasm.
- Prajnya has wanted to work with the administration and police, facilitating an interface between them and civil society. This year, we made a beginning with a fruitful partnership with Chennai Police, whose representatives were present at the public forum and the seminar on ICT and gender violence, in addition to the special consultation, Intersect.
- Innovative programming such as Laddies Night took the campaign out to new audiences. We did not keep systematic track but a conservative estimate would suggest that around 500 people attended our various programmes this year in spite of torrential rains.

After three years of campaigning, the Prajnya team has decided to take a one-year campaign sabbatical to take stock, focus on follow-up and consolidate our resource base.

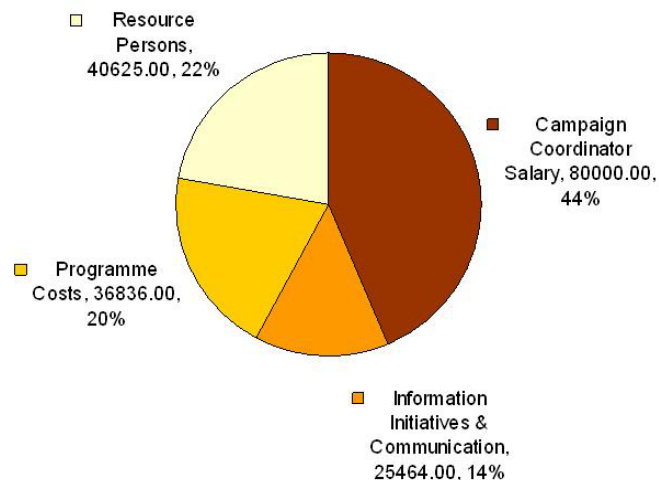
### **2010 Campaign Partners**

AVTAR Interim Women Managers Interface Network (I-WIN) ▪ Chennai Police ▪ Empowering Women in IT (eWIT) ▪ Full Circle @Chamiers ▪ International Foundation for Crime Prevention and Victim Care (PCVC) ▪ Koblerr ▪ Madras School of Social Work ▪ Omayal Achi College of Nursing ▪ Queen Mary's College ▪ The Marappachi Trust ▪ Tulir Centre for the Prevention and Healing of Child Sexual Abuse ▪ Zara Tapas Bar

### 2010 Campaign Fundraising



### 2010 Campaign Expenditure



### 2010 Campaign Supporters

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### 2010 Campaign Team

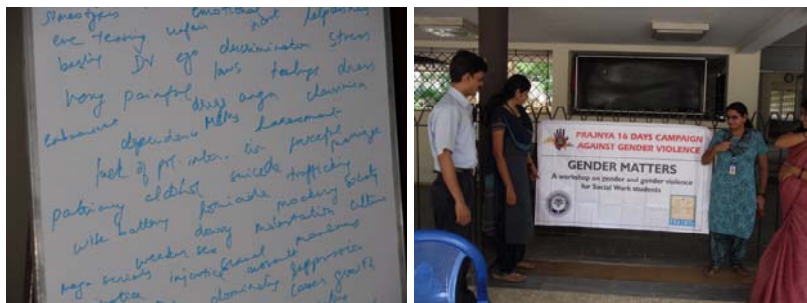
*Campaign Coordinator:* Namitha Joseph

*Campaign Team:* Anupama Srinivasan, Swarna Rajagopalan, Subhashini Selvanathan, Hemant Shivakumar, Nirupa Sundaravadanan, Priyadarshini Rajagopalan, Sowmya S., Sruthi Krishnan, Nandhini Shanmugham, Sweta Narayanan, Vasughi K., Uma Vangal.

Day by Day, November 25 to December 10, 2010

November 25

## GENDER MATTERS: A WORKSHOP FOR SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS



Social workers are uniquely positioned to directly help those who experience violence. The 2010 Campaign began with a workshop for social work students, organized in partnership with the Madras School of Social Work. The objective was to get the students thinking about practical, day-to-day issues related to gender violence. The discussions revolved around some real life situations, with no easy answers:

- What do you say to someone who asks you if your vocational training programme will help her earn more than she did as a sex worker?
- What do you say to doctors and nurses who don't even realise or document burn injuries inflicted on a wife by her husband?
- How do you help a woman who has been raped by her father get an abortion if your personal faith says its the wrong thing to do?

“I was keen to emphasise a few key points: that no matter what kind of organisation they joined after graduation, this would be relevant, it isn't just a women's issue; that they would have direct opportunities to help those who'd experienced violence and therefore ought to make sure they knew their facts and used the right vocabulary; and that they needed to understand the importance of keeping careful records, of respecting privacy and confidentiality, and above all, prioritising safety.”

Anupama Srinivasan, *Campaign Chronicle*, 25 November 2010

**November 26**  
**AIKYA: AN EVENING OF MUSIC**



AIKYA: An Evening of Music brought together three performances into one programme. First, the Sa Re Gaa Children's Choir performed. They were followed by Snehidhi Singers who sang songs by Subramania Bharati. Snehidhi Singers are members of the Centre for Women's Development Research's various groups and unions, performing for the first time. Both choral groups were trained by Sudha Raja.



The choral performances were followed by a short Carnatic music kacheri by vocalist Vidya Kalyanaraman. She was accompanied by B. Ananthakrishnan on the violin and Kallidaikurichi Shivakumar on the mridangam. Vidya exclusively performed compositions by women.

"AIKYA is a Sanskrit word for harmony, for oneness, for coming together and for merging. When Sowmya and I were hunting for a single word that could bring together the three components of the 2010 Campaign concert, we stopped at AIKYA. It was perfect..."

"The words of the last song, similar to 'Little drops of water... make the mighty ocean,' were so appropriate for AIKYA, a programme that brought together girls (and a few boys) and women from different parts of Chennai, different life-stages and singing in different styles to say one simple thing: We will not allow the silence about gender violence to continue. We will talk. We will write. We will organize. We will sing. We will end that silence."

Swarna Rajagopalan, *Campaign Chronicle*, November 28, 2010

**November 27**

**NOT SILENCE, BUT VERSE: A READING OF POETRY**



For the third year in a row, Prajnya organized a poetry reading, inviting Chennai poets to read from their work and end the silence on gender violence. 'Not Poetry but Verse' featured four poets: Kutti Revathi, Salma, Sharanya Manivannan and K Srilata, who conceptualised the reading and helped put it together. Full Circle at Chamiers once again played perfect hosts for the reading.

"Men need only and paper to pen their poems; we women require courage,  
determination and fortitude to express ourselves."  
Salma, at the reading.

"Full Circle was full and that's just the beginning. As the evening progressed, the  
full house was spell bound as they heard Kutti Revathi, Sharanya Manivannan,  
Salma and Srilata, their voices rising and falling with the emotions that echoed some  
universal experiences of women."  
Uma Vangal, *Campaign Chronicle*, 3 December 2010

November 28  
WHAT'S IN A GAME?



Adapted from Takebachthetech, 'What's in a Game?' aimed to motivate parents to play the video games that their daughters and sons regularly play, looking at each game from the point of view of female characters and violence directed specifically at women.

“...in games such as the crime-action game *Grand Theft Auto*, women are seen selling their bodies as strippers and prostitutes for the pleasure of the main characters, only to be raped and brutally murdered later. The reason why game developers put these elements into their games may be that they want to make their games realistic; unfortunately, this uncivilized treatment of women and girls is part of the real world.... However, I believe what game developers need to realize is how much of an impact these games have on modern day society, especially on their teen buyers.”

Naren Pradhan, excerpt from opinion piece posted on the *What's in a Game* blog, 3 December 2010.

**November 29**  
**SAFETY AUDIT WALK**



The women's safety audit is a research tool used in several cities around the world, to identify the factors that determine whether women feel either safe or unsafe in a particular area. Prajnya piloted the safety audit in select areas of Besant Nagar, chosen for its combination of a popular public space (the beach) and residential areas. A group of local residents carried out the audit, looking at infrastructure – roads, street lights, pavements, shops and roadside hawkers and also doing spot interviews with several others. Prajnya will now take the findings to appropriate local authorities; we also hope to extend the audit to other parts of the city.

Excerpt from the preliminary report:

What we recommend (based on our preliminary findings):

1. In 'winter' months, the lights need to come on earlier, at 5:30pm at least.
2. The existing street lights need to be fixed and new ones added on some of the inner lanes.
3. The height of the light posts could be lowered, so that they offer better light and are not blocked by the trees.
4. Something is done about the Electricity Board building: the windows are re-fixed, the building cordoned off or security appointed.

**November 30**

## **GRITPRAJNYA: YOUTUBE CHANNEL FOR GENDER VIOLENCE RESOURCES**



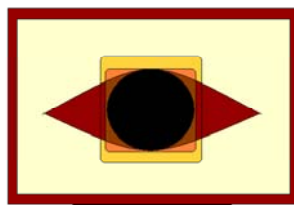
The creation of a YouTube Channel devoted to public domain resources on gender violence follows from our own need to be able to find such resources as easily as possible.

Check out our channel and send us your suggestions:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/gritprajnya>

**December 1**

## **GENDER VIOLENCE RESOURCE GUIDE FOR TELEVISION CREATIVE TEAMS**



Television serials show a serious concern about social issues but as their storylines develop, concerns about viewership and advertising appear to influence their direction. Prajnya has drafted a desk resource for scriptwriters and directors in television, and is developing it in consultation with industry professionals, in the hope of wide adoption.

## December 1 LADDIES NIGHT



How can we involve more men and boys in our efforts to end gender violence? This has remained a challenge not just for Prajnaya, but for organisations across the world. This year, as part of the 2010 Campaign, we decided to adapt a concept called Walk a Mile in Her Shoes, and that is how the first ever Ladies Night was born!

Hosted by Zara Tapas Bar, a popular local pub, Ladies Night saw over fifty men step into women's shoes for the evening and demonstrate their support!. Every half hour, groups of men stood tall, walked the ramp and literally sashayed in high heels provided by Koblerr; they won free drinks from Zara as well as the chance to win gift vouchers from both Koblerr and Indian Terrain. All in all, a fun evening!



**December 2-3**

**EXPLORING GENDER VIOLENCE THROUGH THEATRE: A WORKSHOP**



For the second year in a row, Prajnaya came together with Queen Mary's College (QMC) and The Marappachi Trust to organize a theatre workshop to explore issues of gender violence. For students from QMC, this was an opportunity to work with stalwarts like Mina Swaminathan and Mangai; and a chance to channel their understanding of violence through a creative medium. The students performed short poetry pieces at the Public Forum, highlighting the lifelong experience of violence.

**December 4**

**WHO'S YOUR *SHERO*?**



The habit of violence and the attitude that violence is acceptable both take root very early in life. Prajnaya's Education for Peace reaches out to schools and teachers to help them teach the opposite. This writing process, conceptualised by the Education for Peace Initiative, put the spotlight on what women can accomplish and contribute to society. After all, when women can accomplish so much in less than ideal life conditions, how much can they do in a world without violence?

We invited Class VI students to submit essays about their shero (she+hero), stating "The world is a better place because of ..." Schools selected the best submissions they received, and we then made a further selection of 24 essays, in both English and Tamil. The young authors were invited to read their essay out before a jury of educators and writers. Three English and three Tamil essays were selected for publication in Chakram-Chakram, a children's newsletter published by The Aseema Trust. All the essays read out will be posted on the Education for Peace Initiative's blog over the next few months. <http://prajnyaforpeace.wordpress.com>

Participating schools included: Abacus Montessori, Avvai Home, Bala Vidya Mandir, Besant Arundale Senior Secondary School, Vana Vani Matriculation Higher Secondary School, Sri Krishnaswamy Matriculation Higher Secondary School, Sri Sankara Senior Secondary School.

**December 5**

## **IS CHENNAI SAFE FOR WOMEN? A PUBLIC FORUM**



Safety in public spaces and street sexual harassment has been a key focus of this year's campaign and the public forum held at Spaces reflected this. The objective of the forum was not to debate the relative safety of women in Chennai, Delhi or Mumbai, but to encourage an expanded understanding of the concept of safety itself, beyond more than an issue of crime or law and order.

Moderated by Dr. Nirmala Prasad, Principal, MOP Vaishnav College of Women, the forum featured Katheeya Talha of Blank Noise, architect and urban planner Kavitha Selvaraj, Ranjitha Gunasekaran of The New Indian Express, Nithya Raman from IFMR's Transparent Chennai project and DCP Adyar Dr. Sarangan. In addition, the safety audit group represented by Sharadha Shankar and Malini Varier, presented their report highlighting key findings and recommendations. Despite the torrential rains, the over 120-strong audience of men and women stayed on, sharing experiences of violence and debating critical questions such as the responsibility of the state versus that of individual citizens in ensuring safety.

**December 6 (postponed to December 21 on account of rains)**

## **WORKSHOP ON GENDER VIOLENCE FOR HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS**

In partnership with PCVC and Tular, Prajnya organised a day-long workshop on gender violence for nursing students from Omayal Achi College of Nursing. Given that nurses are a first point of contact for those who experience violence, it is crucial to improve their understanding of the issue as well as their ability to deal with specific situations. The workshop highlighted both conceptual issues and practical challenges through several hypothetical situations: what can I do if a pregnant woman with three daughters is desperate to do a scan to see if this fourth child is a boy? If a woman comes to the clinic with her fourth fracture in three months and I suspect she is being abused, what can I do?

**December 7**

**INTERSECT: A CONSULTATIVE DIALOGUE**



College students in the city continue to face sexual harassment on the street and while using public transport. This was discussed at Intersect, a consultative dialogue between students and the Chennai Police, facilitated by Prajnya as part of the 2010 16 Days Campaign against Gender Violence.

Intersect was held on 7 December 2010 at the Jawaharlal Nehru Outdoor Stadium meeting room and attended by representatives from Prajnya as well as several senior police officers including Joint Commissioner Chennai North Mr. Seshasayee, Deputy Commissioner Kilpauk Ms. S. Lakshmi and Asst Commissioner Vepery Mr. Ashokkumar. Student union members from Anna University, Ethiraj College, Hindustan College, Madras Christian College, Meenakshi College for Women, Queen Mary's College and Women's Christian College participated in the session.

The focus of the discussion was on safety in public spaces, looking primarily at issues of sexual harassment. Students were given an opportunity to briefly present their key concerns: misbehaviour by men in buses; frequent phone calls from strangers; harassment on the trains; harassment by hangers-on at tea-shops and bus-stops; strangers taking photos or videos on cell-phones; groups of men or boys who follow girls who travel to college on bikes.

In their turn, the police officers responded to these observations by the students, describing several potential solutions: the 1091 helpline number; the importance of noting down the IMEI number on cell phones; the importance of filing a complaint and the SMS helpline, 9500099100, to which emergencies can be reported.

Students were unanimous that visits by women police officers would not only help students understand police procedures better but also motivate them to register complaints. This will be an important element of future Prajnya programming with students and Chennai Police.

December 8-9

## GENDER SENSITISATION & WORKPLACE SEXUAL HARASSMENT: A WORKSHOP



For the second year, AVTAR I-WIN and Prajnaya partnered to organize a workshop on gender sensitization and workplace sexual harassment with Hengasara Hakkina Sangha from Bangalore doing the training. Human resources professionals from nine different organizations participated in the two-day workshop.

“As we all know, it is considered taboo to speak to about such incidents and hence many women suffer in silence which emboldens perpetrators of such crimes. The lack of understanding and sensitivity on the part of the society and the people handling such issues adds fuel to the fire. Absence of proper redressal mechanisms which are swift, fair and confidential further compounds the challenge.

AVTAR is a strong proponent of women’s careers by offering flexi-career solutions and gender equality initiatives. Prajnaya’s work in the area of peace, justice and security is highly essential. Their 16 days campaign against Gender Violence which includes workshop on Gender Sensitization and workplace sexual harassment workshop compliments the work that we do in making the Indian workplace more welcoming for women.”

Saundarya Rajesh,  
Founder-President, AVTAR Career Creators

**December 10**  
**LOGGING INTO (IN) SECURITY:**  
**A SEMINAR ON ICT AND GENDER VIOLENCE**



The increased use and abuse of Information and Communications Technologies and their potential as an instrument of gender violence were the subject of this seminar.

“Everyone is impacted by ICT, whether as users or non-users. We often assume that access to the ICTs automatically means inclusion and therefore empowerment. But there are digital dangers, with implications for the security of women”, said Chloe Zollman of Bangalore-based IT for Change. Dr Rama Subramaniam, criminologist and CEO of Valiant Technologies pointed out that the majority of victims online are not aware that they had been victimized. Discussing the challenges that law enforcement officials commonly face, Dr. Sudhakar IPS, Asst. Commissioner, Cyber Crimes Cell, Chennai Police, cited several examples of online abuse directed at women, especially after the breakup of a relationship or a marriage. Jamuna Swamy, Head, Information Security, Hexaware Technologies, drew attention to the importance of both prevention and deterrence, as methods to anticipate and address online violence.

The seminar, the first in partnership between eWIT and Prajnya, was chaired by Kalyani Narayanan, Vice President - eWIT and attended by a cross-section of IT professionals, students and other concerned citizens.