

# YOUNG COLLECTIVE VOICES FOR SAFE SPACES

Red Dot Foundation facilitated a series of creative workshops for Youth from Mumbai, Pune and Goa, in partnership with the Australian Consulate General, Mumbai and the faculty of Queensland University of Technology's Design Lab and Creative Industries, Education and Social Justice.

The workshop series aimed to build critical thinking skills amongst youth in the age group of 15-18 years in Western India through hands-on creative sessions. These bespoke sessions were held virtually and were co-designed by Red Dot Foundation and the QUT faculty. The thematic focus was on challenging harmful gender norms and creating safe public spaces.

Through these workshops we engaged youth in taking a stand, using creative means of expression and building a community of support through the co-creation process. Through this collaboration, we partnered with 4 schools (2 in Mumbai, 1 in Pune and 1 in Goa). Each school nominated 1 teacher and 4-6 students to participate in a three part workshop series. Through storytelling, design thinking and co-creation the workshops generated collective outputs that challenge harmful gender norms, develop ideas for solutions and individual commitments for change.

The presence of a teacher from each institution helped provide educational skills and content for teachers on creative methodology to equip students to think of creative solutions whilst "learning and doing".

<b>College</b>	<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Students</b>
<b>St. Xaviers College</b>	<b>Aditi Sawant</b>	<b>Arya Ashish Jade</b>
		<b>Saanjhi Hora</b>
		<b>Samriddhi Sengupta</b>
		<b>Sulakshana Thoda</b>
		<b>Hasti Thakkar</b>
<b>KC College - Mumbai</b>	<b>Kavita Peter</b>	<b>Saadiya Shaikh</b>
		<b>Akshita R. Kurup</b>
		<b>Nikita Deepak Narkar</b>
		<b>Mihir Umrigar</b>
		<b>Parth Jain</b>
<b>St. Francis Xavier - Goa</b>	<b>Melanie Joyce Vas</b>	<b>Jaiditya Ranawat</b>
		<b>Joel Coutinho</b>
		<b>Sanket morajkar</b>
		<b>Avril Casey Fernandes</b>
		<b>Pemla Fernandes</b>
<b>Victorious Kidss Educares</b>	<b>Moti Kumari Jha</b>	<b>Aditya Hegade</b>
		<b>Shourya Agarwal</b>
		<b>Kabir Velji</b>
		<b>Shree Munot</b>
		<b>Snigdha Bharara</b>
		<b>Pruthvish Dangat</b>

## **Teacher's Session (Co-creation Session) 11th Feb Recording**

The series started with a session for the teachers along with the team from RDF & QUT. During this session the focus was on understanding gender related problems and biases that young people face on a daily basis. This was an insightful session that set the tone for the rest of the workshops.

## Session 1 - 18 Feb - 11 am to 1 pm - Discover- 2hr Recording

- Welcome and Introduction by Elsa
- Opening address by The Australian Consul-General in Mumbai · Mr Peter Truswell
- Understanding unconscious bias and harmful gender norms
- Case study and discussion
- Design thinking - Developing the Persona - emotions, challenges - use graphic visualisations - QUT
- Padlet in breakout rooms

The session started with a short presentation on harmful gender norms, unconscious biases & how to challenge them. We then went through a case study (pasted below) about a girl called Reema. Collectively through discussion they created a persona for Reema detailing her thoughts, desires and limitations. They then wrote letters to Reema on a padlet.

### Case Study for Discussion

Reema is a first year college student in Pune. She comes from a very conservative family and is the first person in her family to go to college. She is very conscious of her appearance because she is not slim and has dark skin. She tries to cover her body wearing long sleeve outfits and oversized dresses/kurtas. She takes the local bus to college and dreads going to college as she has never been in a class with boys. Her entire schooling was in a girls only school.

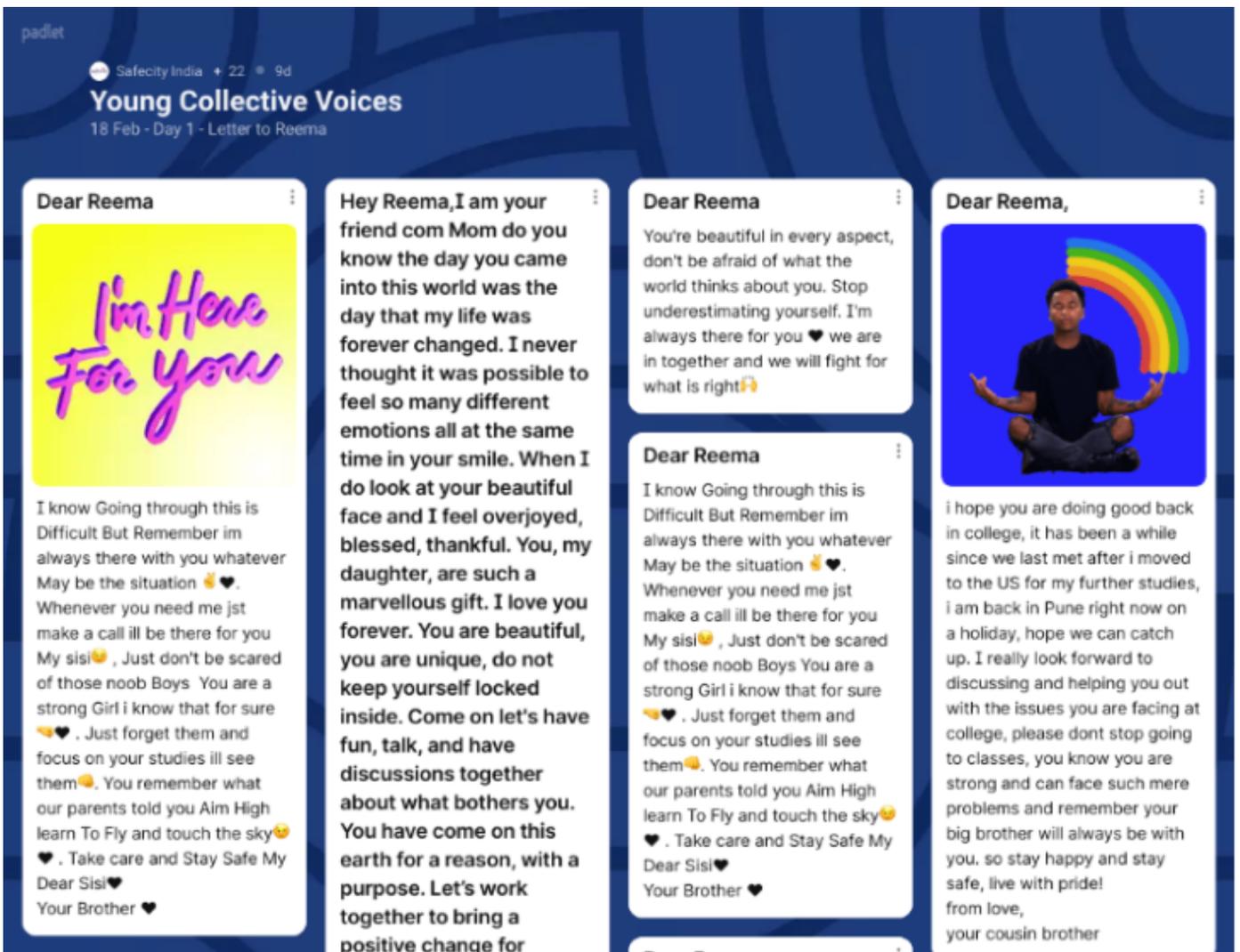
Reema wants to be a scientist. She loves science and is curious about what makes everything work. She knows that she will have to work really hard at her studies, attend long hours in college because of practical lab sessions and most likely even go for extra classes to ensure she gets the top rank. This means she has to attend evening classes and go home late when it is dark. She also loves playing cricket, watching movies and hanging out with her friends.

During the first week of college, she noticed a group of boys hanging out near the entrance gate of her college and making fun of all the girls entering. When she walked past, they whistled and commented on her body shape and dark skin. It made her feel very bad and she wanted to disappear.

She wishes there were multiple entrances for her to bypass these boys. She tried going early but the boys were there at that time too.

She hates going to college though the subjects are interesting. She was getting conscious about her looks, felt awkward when on campus and she stopped going out with her friends. Reema feels this is affecting her ability to concentrate in class and she cannot make new friends easily. She is planning to talk to Ms. Shah who is her favourite teacher.

The students discussed this Case study in breakout rooms and then wrote heartfelt notes to Reema.



Dear Reema,  
I know as a family we put a lot of pressure on our young girls. But I can see how smart you are and that you can achieve great things in this world. I am here to support you. Lots of love, your aunt



You ain't alone mate. I've got your back and so have your friends alright? We are here through thick and thin with you. Always with you mate. Stay cat-ionic. (Pawsitive) we shall get through this. Your lab partner, Aditya



I know it's difficult, I have been there too. I need you to understand that your self-image is completely yours and yours only. You are beautiful and intelligent, don't let anyone tell you otherwise. The next time anyone bothers you I need you to look them in the eye and take a stand for yourself. More power to you. -Your bestfriend.

Dear Reema  
I notice you have not been using the bus service lately. Is everything ok? Can I meet you

gender equality to make this world a better place to live in. Your Friend, your admirer your Mom. Moti



Dear Reema,  
You haven't been your usual, cheery self lately. Is something troubling you, dear? Feel free to talk to me about absolutely anything that could be troubling you. Know that I'm here for you, always. I will try my best to help you in every way possible. From, Your mother

Dear Reema  
Is there something that is bothering you?

Remember you are beautiful in just the way you are. you have come along way to attain education and to fulfill your dreams. Be brave enough to express and and take a stand for yourself.

Be free to express your worries and concerns to me. Lets try to solve it !!

Dear Reema  
Chin up! Stay focused. This will pass. Your friend

Dear Reema

Dear Reema,



I know we haven't had the most transparent and open conversations at home. But I want you to know that your dad and I are always here for you, behind you, and supporting you. You can always approach us with any problems, and we'll be there to help you out. Your dad and I will take the first step forward to ensure you're comfortable talking about your problems and emotions. You're our priority! We're here for YOU. Lots of love, Mom and Dad

Dear reema

Reema your strong, brave and smart I admire you .your classmate .

dear Reema,



you are the strongest person i've ever seen. You moved out of the house and started going to the college as the first member of our family. You are very strong and smart. Don't let these boys and the society tell you otherwise. I am always there for you. with love, your best friend



Spotify - 05:36  
I'll Be There for You - Long Version with Hidden Track & Dialogue  
I'll be there For U

Dear Reema,

I see that you struggle to travel in the local bus everyday being extremely insecure about how you've dressed or in the fear that something wrong might happen. We could travel together and be by each other's side during our journey. I would love to have a new friend.

-fellow female traveller on the bus



Dear Reema,  
You're such a beautiful person. I am always here for you. Lots of love, Your friend

Dear Reema,



## Session 2 - 25 Feb - 11 am to 1 pm - Dream- 2hr Recording

- Recap of Day 1
- Padlet exercise – what biases did you notice and break
- Tree of Life exercise
- Case study
- Co-creation using Poetry based on the case study
- These Hands - Expression through hand movement

After a short recap of the previous session, the students were encouraged to put on a padlet what gender biases they had noticed and challenged or broken in the last week.

Following this they did the “Tree of Life” exercise which is a self reflection exercise that encouraged them to introspect and make a note of things in life that are important to them, including their own attributes, areas they wished to strengthen themselves and baggage they want to let go of. They were encouraged to have this ‘tree of life’ as a work in progress that they could revisit & amend anytime they chose.

Another case study (pasted below) was discussed about a girl named Divya. Based on the discussion the students did a poetry cocreation exercise facilitated by the team from QUT. The poem that was the outcome of this exercise is pasted below.

### Case Study

Divya is from Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh and is a 14-year-old student in high school. She studies during the day and tutors children from the neighbourhood at night to assist her family during a difficult financial period. Divya secretly wishes to become an astronaut one day. She is aware that her family will not be supportive of her unconventional dream because she would need to go to an IIT in another city for further studies. But she persists in pursuing it. When Divya's uncle learns of her plans to continue her education for college, he becomes agitated and calls for a family meeting.



In front of her entire family, Divya is reminded of her family's values and customs, that she must aim to get married and let go of her dreams to pursue higher education. No other woman in her family has been to college.

Divya stands firm and explains her point of view and her aspirations. Divya's father is furious at her for speaking up, and to bring her back to reality he splashes a bucket of cold water on her. Divya feels embarrassed, humiliated, and petrified, but this isn't the first time she has felt this way. They mistreat her every time she is caught studying, and the abuse continues.

Divya's friends noticed the blue marks on her hands and asked her about it. Divya broke down and told them everything. To Divya's surprise, none of her friends have ever been subjected to such harsh punishments from their parents. She was upset and confused when her friends told her that this is not normal and she should do something about it. But neither knew what to do. Confiding in their teacher was also not the best option because the chances of the teacher taking a stand for Divya were slim and being from a small town, her teacher was friends with her family.

Next week one of the IITs is coming to the school to promote their courses and share some of the possible pathways for students. Divya heard that some of the female college students will be speaking at the event.

She is hopeful that she can find a pathway towards her dream of reaching the stars. She needs to find a way to convince her parents to allow her to continue her studies.

## Poem - I am Divya ( Collective output based on the case study)

### *I am Divya*

Alone. Lost. Misunderstood  
My family does not understand me  
No one understands me  
The chain of expectations biting into my soul.

The only walls that hinder my growth  
are the ones that I recognise as a wall  
and there will always be a socially obligated one  
I want more, my heart demands more.

This seems like the rock bottom,  
but the only way left now is up,  
I need to fly, for I will be the astronaut  
that touches the highest of the skies!

I am a girl, not a puppet  
I will do what my heart says.  
And fly where my wings take me  
I will claim my space.

I will set the way for the other girls in my family & community  
I am going to change these ideologies for the future to see.  
Unbridled passion and ambition will never die  
Don't Stop. Don't Give Up. Keep Trying.

My shining future - open your heart  
I am coming home.  
My wings won't be clipped  
I won't be restrained from soaring the skies.

People Can live Without Water for 3 Days,  
Without Food for 8 Days  
But they Can not live without Hope  
even one Second  
So never Lose Hope ☐☐  
H O P E : Hold On Pain Ends

When life will be getting me down,  
I will bounce back and will fly high in the sky  
I will be hope, I will be happiness, I will make my pathway.  
I will find a way. I will make the way.

The sky is the horizon, I will soar high  
I will not be shy, there is no time to sigh, I will soar high

There will be no more cries, it is time for me to rise  
I am unique, I am stronger, I am the future astronomer  
Aim High, Learn To Fly, Touch The sky. ♥

Co-created at the Young Collective Voices for Safe Spaces organised by Red Dot Foundation, Consulate General of Australia, Mumbai and Queensland University of Technology on 25 February 2022.

# Padlet of "What biases did you notice and break"

**Tree of Life**



Here's today's self-reflection activity

**Roots :** Non negotiable values  
**Leaves :** How the world sees you  
**Branch :** How you see yourself  
**Bark :** Your name | a word that describe you  
**Fallen leaves :** Emotions you want to give away  
**Gunny bag of manure :** Things you don't have in you yet, but would want to get inside you

**The Basic cleaning role at home is not a gender specific role.**



**KUCH BHI**

This week I faced majorly 2 gender stereotypes that are:

1. Arts is not a stream for "boys" and that's "kuch bhi" as the g.i.f says
2. I am fond of doing house chores and to do help mom in cleaning and kitchen work and people are like these works are for girls and i am again like "kuch bhi" 😂😂

**Girls should be well behaved; boys are expected to act out. Women should not take part in financial decision making. Girls should not work in military, defense and navy. These areas are only meant for Men.**



**As a woman**



I was unapologetic or didn't even attempt to be "modest" about being good at what I do. Channelled my inner Kayne.

<https://media.giphy.com/media/YIs9xzW9N7Gp2uhsxg/giphy.gif>

**I questioned the assumption that women should not have a say in making financial decisions.**

**encouraged my brother to clean the house and make some chai for me for a change:))**



**CHAI TIME**



made my brother do some house work



**JUST SAY NO TO VIOLENCE.**

That leaders can find a solution in a peaceful manner taking into account everyone's point of view. I am referring to a meeting I was present at, of very powerful people who all have big egos and yet made sure everyone's views were heard. This was mainly driven by 3 women. Contrast that to Russia invading Ukraine. Can be sorted out in other ways. - Elsa

**EQUAL PROTECTION FOR EVERYONE**



I talked to my friend who was not allowed the same rights as her brother to speak to her parents and explain them tht Generation has changed today There are no difference between Girls and Boys ,Today Girls can do anything right from protecting boundaries to flying planes , Jst they need to change their mind , Coz A Negative Mind will never Give u A positive Life 🙌👍

**I encouraged my brother to do the dishes as well. So now the morning duty is mine and evening duty is his.**



**washing the dishes!**

**STAY STRONG AND HAPPY**



I spoke to my parents and convinced them that I should be allowed the same freedom as my brother. I should not have to come home earlier or be made to skip certain events or outings with my friends just because im a girl.

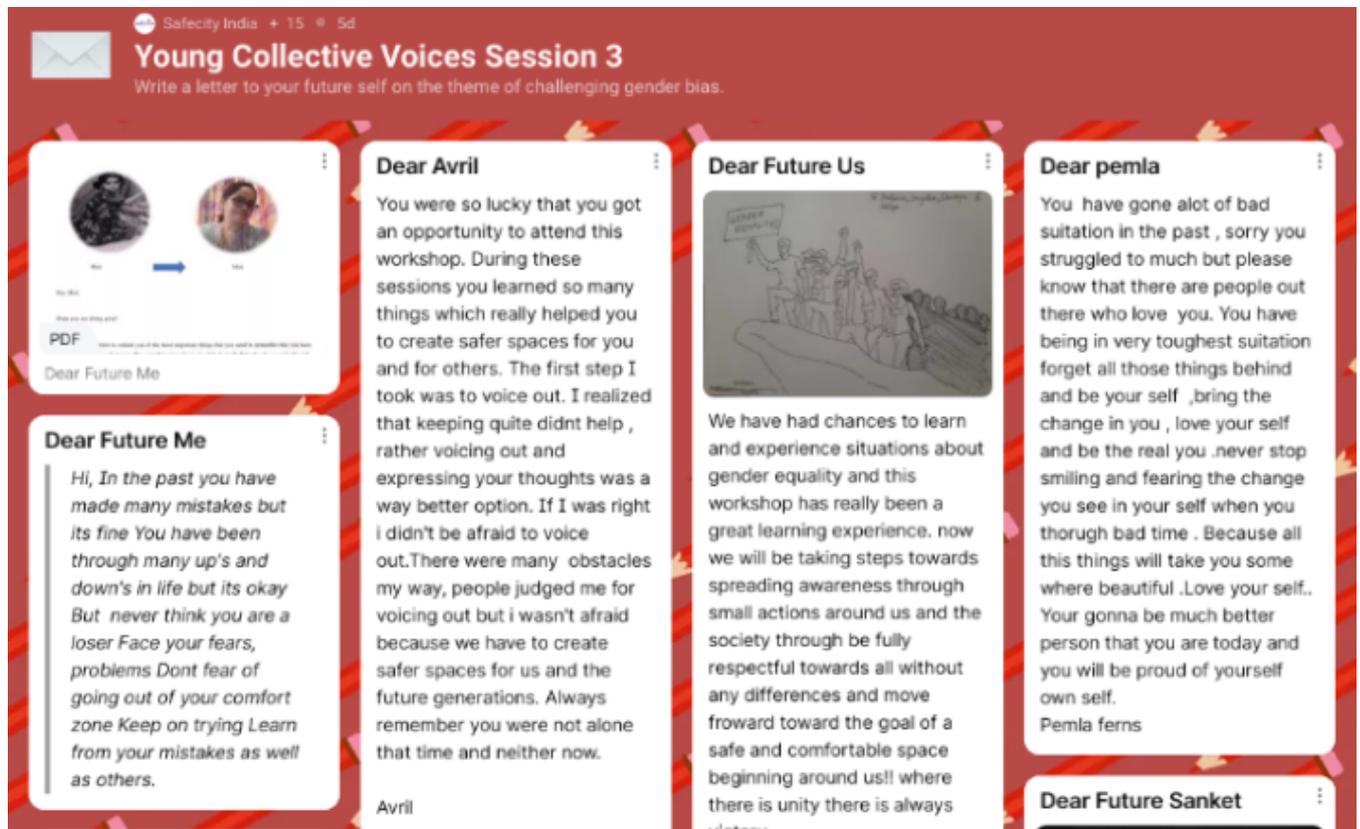
XXX

### Session 3: 4 Mar - 11 am to 2 pm - Develop Recording

- Recap of Day 2
- Movement based exercise using actions
- Performance recording
- Reflection exercise (write a letter to your future self)
- Discussion of Insta Live

After a recap of the 2 previous sessions, the students were encouraged to each share 1 or 2 key points that stood out for them from the previous session. This was followed by an exercise on expressing oneself through movement. The students then went into breakout rooms, where they discussed the past sessions and then each wrote a letter to their future selves in the backdrop of biases that they encounter in the present. They also discussed the Scheduled Insta live interview.

### Letter to your Future self





At the end of the sessions the students had the opportunity to decide who amongst themselves would conduct an Insta Live interview from Safecity's Instagram account - @thesafecityapp with a senior female leader from the Australian consulate.

The students went through a session with the RDF team where they were taken through the process of hosting an Insta Live live. They then put their heads together and brainstormed questions that could be asked at the interview.

**IG LIVE: Young Collective Voices  
In Conversation with Ms Grace-Ann Lobo**



**Guest**  
**Ms Grace-Ann Lobo**  
Public Diplomacy Officer  
Australian Consulate General in Mumbai



**Interviewer**  
**Saadiya Shaikh**  
KC College

Date - 8th March, 2022

Time - 11am IST

Platform: @thesafecityapp

#IWD2022

#BreakTheBias

#GenderEquality



Shaikh Saadiya was selected to conduct the interview on behalf of the entire team.

Watch the Insta live [here](#).

Here's what some of the participants had to say about the program  
"Volunteering for these sessions, I thought that I would get to just talk about basic gender norms. But the sessions taught me so much, and I truly mean it. The biggest takeaway being of 'self-awareness'. Being aware of the stereotypes that surround you, trying to break free out of them, trying to merely survive.

The case studies gave me a powerful insight on the fact that how internalized patriarchy and misogyny is. There's so much unlearned and relearning yet to be done, and we must do it to be better versions of our ourselves.

It made me feel free, unjudged and actually made me feel safe talking about anything and everything. I actually felt like Young Collective Voices coming together for a change.

The interview was hands down the most incredible and insightful thing I've done till date, no exaggeration. The fact that I got to represent my colleagues in front of the Australian Consulate was surreal. Also, talking to Ms. Grace Ann Lobo was so refreshing and comforting. It felt like I was talking to her sitting in the same room. Thanking everyone for choosing me to attend these sessions, to ensure that I make a change in the society and myself."

~Shaikh Saadiya.

KC College

"The workshop and the sessions were very insightful especially when connected with case studies and interactive activities. It helped me to broaden and shape my understanding of a safe space and taught me to be empathetic to the sufferings of people - I personally don't know. I'm so grateful for the sessions as it helped me understand myself and my capacities better, and encouraged me to stand up for injustice in the slightest form and be a pillar of support for those who are suffering. Thank you so much for these sessions!"

-Samriddhi Sengupta

St. Xaviers College

"This has been a remarkable & informative workshop I have attended. I was not sure how the whole workshop would go. How would I be able to share my views and connect to the presenters, workshop leaders, and especially Red Dot Foundation? But I was astonished by the way the entire journey was covered with the different life-teaching stories and experiences. *Undoubtedly* this workshop has given us a chance for our self-discovery and has also brought a positive change in our thought /emotions/cravings in the activities we have undergone over the 3 days.

We were equally respected, heard and received a fair chance to express, and write whatever we were comfortable at. Activities and planning were well organized and well-coordinated by Red Dot Foundation. Through this workshop, we also got a chance to listen to global members' voices and get benefits out of it. In a true sense, the Red Dot Foundation is a global, safe, and friendly platform where we all women, girls, and other victims can knock on the door for humanitarian assistance. Throughout the workshop, we had many "WOW "moments.!!! Red Dot Foundation certainly will achieve its milestone and will have a safer city working rapidly to bring a positive change for all of us to make this world a better place to live in. Highly appreciated workshop for everyone who has participated enthusiastically with an open mind."

-Moti Kumari Jha

Victorious Kiddss Educares

"Red Dot Foundation organised workshop on the theme 'Gender Equity creating safer places' for various schools / Colleges across India.

Each session was designed and organised in a manner that involved students/teachers/and all the participants' participation expressing their personal views and sharing various incidences of their life. This workshop also included various activities such as reflecting on one's actions, expressing one's viewpoint, expressing via Padlet, getting to know and communicating with each other in breakout room etc. The workshop also included various case studies.

The sessions involved critical thinking, self-expression, how to seek guidance and how to be confident enough to live the live the way you want, to achieve goals without facing gender biases and irrespective of any gender or whether you are a boy or a girl, each individual has equal rights and opportunities for themselves.

The workshop was very lively and mind awakening, breaking the Gender biases and gender Stereotypes, family/societal barriers and restrictions, broadening their mindset and moving forward no matter what and achieving the goals.

On behalf of the institution St.Francis Xavier HSS, teachers and Students ( Participants) I would like to thank Red Dot Foundation for giving us the opportunity to be part of the workshop. Overall a great exposure and good learning experience.

Thank you Red Dot Foundation..!!"

-Melanie Joyce Vas

Sr. Francis Xavier Higher Secondary School

"These sessions were extremely engaging and inclusive. I discovered a "new me" in the due course of the sessions. It was really fun and empowering to be working with an international team. These sessions were a safe space for us to be able to give our opinions and it allowed us to be ourselves unapologetically."

-Sulakshana Thoda

St. Xaviers College

Each participant has been sent (through their college) a copy of the book Art for Healing as a token of appreciation for their attendance.

In addition each participant and college has also received a certificate of participation.

