

IDEOSYNC- UNESCO INFORMATION FELLOWSHIP

2020 Special Cohort on Intersectional
Feminism and Digital Rights

FELLOW'S PROJECTS



Communicating Women’s Health Issues in the Climate Change Vulnerable Area of the Indian Sundarbans



Barnamala Roy

Barnamala is a postgraduate in English with a curiosity to learn and considers herself an eternal wanderer. She loves the written word, still and moving images, birds and animals - and people watching!

In a patriarchal society with a poorly established healthcare systems, women's health often go neglected. Their chronic and complicated health issues are known to have exacerbated in the socio-economic aftermath of extreme weather events/climate disasters. With the increased frequency of extreme weather events, women’s health in ecologically fragile ecosystem needs our urgent attention.

This communication project is based in the ecologically fragile areas of Indian Sundarbans in West Bengal and it has two broad goals:

1. Creating a free space for women in the Indian Sundarbans (focus- Bali Island, Coasaba Block) where they can communicate their healthcare needs to an external audience (through a series of short videos)
2. Setting up a participatory media platform to build capacity among local people (especially women) in the long run through a series of audio podcasts.

I have been working with the communities in the Indian Sundarbans for the past three years. As a part of IUIF Fellowship, I have focused my efforts on the issues of women's healthcare, which is one among many problems faced by the people in the area, where I and the participants in the communication project felt there is a need for social change. The character of Sarbajaya from the 1956 feature film *Aparajito* directed by Satyajit Ray has been the inspiration behind my current project. As a woman myself, I strive to amplify the voices of the women from this intersectional identity. I wish for a wider community engagement regarding women's health in the socio-economic dilemma posed by a changing climate. To continue this work, I primarily aim to harness the cultural power of stories told through various mediums.

Find Barnamala's Video Series at:
<https://vimeo.com/user132575599>





TRANSPEAK: Trans-forming the Cis-tem, One Episode at a Time



Prithvi Vatsalya

Prithvi is a multimedia journalist with a Master's degree in Psychology. He is committed to the cause of LGBT rights. Loves reading, (un)learning, eating biryani and petting animals.

Transpeak is an attempt to spotlight trans masculine people from Mumbai. Trans masculine identities are those of people who were assigned female at birth, but do not identify as female. We are a broad group of people who may identify as male (trans men), non-binary or genderqueer, agender etc. It features six people (including the host) from the trans masculine spectrum talking about things that matter to us.

The need for comprehensive sexuality education, love, navigating educational spaces, trans joy, privilege and transitioning are the overarching themes of the various episodes.

Most of us were raised and socialized as 'girls'. Many of us are still perceived as 'women' by friends, family, colleagues and strangers alike. "Unlike trans women, who have an alternative support system such as the *jamaat*, and live together, trans men have no such support structures," writes A. Revathi in 'A Life in Trans Activism'. "My deepest desire is that their stories should create awareness among parents, policy makers, professionals and the general public so that they are sensitive to their needs and concerns," she continues. I, as the host, wants to make Revathi amma's deepest desire come true. This podcast was conceptualized and created because being a trans masculine* person myself, I know that the needs of people like me are often ignored. Transpeak aims to begin to bridge the knowledge gap that exists about my invisibilised community. It also aims to act as an open-source resource for other trans masculine folk, queer people and allies to help them understand us better.

Find Transpeak at:

<https://soundcloud.com/prithvi-vatsalya>





Communicating Problems of Anganwadi Workers



Nidhi Waldia

Nidhi is a postgraduate in Education. She is passionate about exploring the intersection of identity, power, education system, processes and structures.

ICDS [Integrated Child Development Scheme] was launched by the Indian government on 2nd October, 1975 to eradicate malnutrition and decrease prenatal and infant mortality. In the forefront of this scheme are the Anganwadi workers. However, an Anganwadi worker, who is responsible for disseminating this aspirational scheme of Indian government, is an underpaid and overworked honorary worker.

Women's labour has always been made invisible in our society and the ICDS scheme replicates this patriarchal structure at an institutional level. The Anganwadi workers are expected to work a minimum of 300 days a year and 6 hours a day to receive a meager honorarium of 7500 INR, if she runs a main Anganwadi Centre and 4750 INR, if she runs a mini Anganwadi Centre. Considering the inflation, this honorarium is not sufficient to support a household. Adding to the problem is the socio-economic condition of the Anganwadi workers, as most of them hail from the marginalised sections of the society consisting broadly of widow, disabled, disserted, divorced women and women form families below poverty line .

Moreover, the Anganwadi workers do not come under the protection of Minimum Wages Act and cannot ask for better wages as they are honorary workers and don't hold a civil post. They have been trying to raise their voices for a very long time, but in 2016 when they protested, they were denied the honorarium of 3 months of the the protest. Local communities did not support their plea due to the perception that they don't have much "work". This coupled with the minimal media coverage resulted in their voices remaining unheard.

This communication project is to help amplify the voices of Anganwadi workers and mobilize the communities in their support. As a part of the project a *Nukkad Natak* (street play) is conceptualized and performed in three villages and three multimedia articles are written and published in Hindi and English.

Find Nidhi's Work at

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Jp9YwhwiPrhdH15kx7lWhRZcrHmxkOYn?usp=sharing>





Behind the Scenes/ Parde ke peeche: A Podcast Series that Shows Mental Health Issues are not a Personal Failure.



Saumya Malhotra

Saumya is an intersectional feminist, writer, researcher and an advanced literature graduate. She is an avid reader and learner and believes in community engagement and digital rights.

My aim for the project is to impact discourse around mental illness in women and urge a more empathetic relationship between the doctor and the client. It entails a podcast series of 6 episodes so far. These episodes are recorded in an informal Hinglish dialect. Two consecutive episodes follow the story of one client who has consented to talk about/ letting someone else talk about their story. One of the two episodes involves a first-person account of their story/ someone sharing their story in first-person. In contrast, the second episode involves a short diagnosis from the

psychiatrist and a socio-cultural analysis from the host to contextualize the issue at hand. The primary audience for this project is psychiatrists from the small town of Hisar in Haryana. However, these episodes can strike a chord with anyone looking to listen to women from a small town talk about their mental health issues.

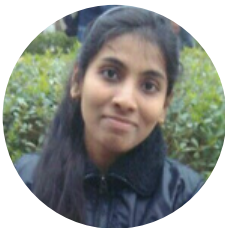
By giving the mic to those with mental health struggles and contrasting that with a “specialist’s” perspective, these episodes aim to urge the audience to decipher the gap in their narratives. With some contextualization, they also probe the audience to understand the larger systemic causes behind someone’s mental fatigue and trauma. I hope that this series promotes open and more empathetic communication between the clients and their doctors. Moreover, the podcast can also provide an in-depth exploration of what it means to be a woman with mental illnesses, especially in a small town, to anyone interested.

Find Behind the Scenes at
<https://soundcloud.com/saumya-m/sets/behind-the-scenes-parde-ke-peeche>





Democratic Love: Right of Choose & Special Marriage Act



Shreeti Shubham

Shreeti is a postgraduate in Media and Governance. She likes to explore the possibilities of communication in social change. She loves poetry and literature

The Special Marriage Act of 1954, enables two adults to get married irrespective of their religious and caste identities. However, the procedure of a notice put up in public domain for a month and dispatching a copy of it to their residential address not only violates the privacy of the individuals involved, which is protected under Article 21 "Right to life & personal liberty" of the constitution, but also compromises their security by making them vulnerable to attacks by fanatic groups/ families.

These complicated and often risky processes involved in this act makes an interfaith couple either break their alliance or get married after conversion, which is comparatively much less complicated. With the introduction of anti-conversion law in the state of Uttar Pradesh, conversion only for the purpose of marriage is made illegal. The law blocks all ways for interfaith couples to officiate their relationship, as on one side, the Special Marriage Act does not provide them privacy or safety, on the other hand, religious conversion for marriage is penalised. It'll have serious consequences on women's right to choose. Through this communication project I would like to examine and discuss these aspects of India's marriage laws.

Find Shreeti's works at

Democratic Love Podcast link - <https://soundcloud.com/user-608130316/democratic-love-right-to-choice>

Democratic Love Film link - <https://vimeo.com/519058117>

Article 1: Women's Right to Choose a Partner

<https://feminisminindia.com/2021/03/10/women-right-to-choose-partner-after-18>

Article 2: Civil Marriage Laws in India Failing Interfaith

Couples <https://feminisminindia.com/2021/03/15/civil-marriage-laws-india-failing-interfaith-couples>

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Unveiling A [New] Digitally Immersed Reality



Asawari Luthra

A post-graduate in cultural anthropology, Asawari is passionate about gaining a textured understanding of human behavior. Seeks to employ knowledge and expertise to reflect upon and affect complex social problem



Vani Bhatnagar

A graduate in design, Vani has a keen interest in the field of gender studies and digital communications. She is passionate about Design, Travelling, Photography and Videography

Today, smartphones and wireless networks are part and parcel of just about anywhere and everywhere we go. Our project explores this increasing reliance on digital devices and infrastructure—a phenomenon which has become self-evident

with the pandemic—through a three-part video series. In particular, we investigate the ways in which individuals and communities, during the pandemic, have employed the internet to acquire (online) education, to seek social connections and to protest injustices. Acknowledging the myriad pleasures and potentials of the digital medium, we simultaneously direct our lens towards it's adverse dimensions and effects: unequal access to the medium; the ways in which big tech companies capitalize on our social relationships to generate profit; and to how the government surveils, censors, and shapes narratives about protestors. Our video series, thus, seeks to highlight how networked infrastructure is a *dudhari talwar* or a double edged sword. In so doing, we hope that our audience begins questioning and critically engaging with the ways in which digital infrastructure penetrates their everyday lives and is stirred to imagine and shape a freer internet and society.

Find Asawari and Vani's work at:
<https://vimeo.com/user135425190>



Re-Imagining Our Roles: Building Feminist Consciousness Among Officer Wives At Airforce Station



Shreya Batra

For Shreya, life itself is an ethnographic field and empathy is a political tool to analyze things. Books, Netflix and everything in between and her best self can be found on rainy days.

A participatory communication for social change program targeting institutionalized patriarchy. The use of audio-visual nudges is used to facilitate experiential sharing, making an all women safe space where they could freely express their opinions. The participatory mode of bringing social change is significant when we want to address culturally sensitive issues so that what is 'not accepted' could be made a site of discussion.

This project aims to start those conversations around patriarchal traditions inside the Indian Airforce which are rooted in tradition and enforced by culture. It tries to develop consciousness among women so that they take steps to stop the "Welcome" practice wherein a newly married officer wife is put through hours of traumatic experience as part of a prank. The consciousness building activities will also try to re imagine the role of women, especially wives of the officers and question the written manners and etiquette that are expected out of them.

