

# NIRANTAR ANNUAL REPORT

(APR 2017-MAR 2018)



**nirantar trust**

A Centre for Gender and Education

At Nirantar, we believe in enabling empowerment through education, seeing and shaping education processes from a critical, feminist perspective. We promote transformative formal and non-formal learning processes which enable girls and women from marginalised communities to better understand and address their realities.

For us, gender is an identity, a way of being and seeing that includes other social dimensions, particularly those of caste, sexuality, religion, class and ethnicity.

Nirantar also works at the community-level and undertakes research and advocacy, particularly on critical issues which need greater attention from the State as well as civil society. Developing feminist leadership at the community level is an important part of our mandate.

Nirantar has been actively involved with the women's movement and other democratic rights movements since its inception in 1993.

Any part of this report may be used with an acknowledgement of the source. For more details about Nirantar's work please contact us at:

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# CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>GIRLS' EDUCATION AND EMPOWERMENT</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>YOUNG PEOPLE AND EMPOWERMENT</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>BREAKING THE BINARIES IN EDUCATION (BEE)</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>WOMEN'S LITERACY, EDUCATION AND EMPOWERMENT</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>STRENGTHENING OUR WORK</b>	<b>37</b>



# 1 INTRODUCTION

Since 1993, Nirantar, a Centre for Gender and Education, has been working to make education empowering for the marginalized. Our work in the area of education, young people and sexuality, gathered momentum in 2005, when we began working with national and state level institutions of education like NCERT and SCERT, alongside working with community based organizations to help deepen their understanding of sexuality and its linkages with their work in the field of Gender based Violence. Nirantar has also been rigorously reviewing school textbooks, curricula and programmes aimed at Adolescence and Life Skills Education.

In the year 2017-18, we reached out to nearly 300 NGOs activists and around 600 young and adolescent boys and girls through trainings and workshops organised for building gender and sexuality perspective. Other

than these trainings organised for specific organisations and institutions, we also reached out to NGOs and CBOs through our institutional courses and trainings. More than 50 organisations participated in our institutional trainings this year through which we were able to engage intensively with more than 200 field and middle level workers to help them incorporate feminist perspective in their everyday work with targeted communities.

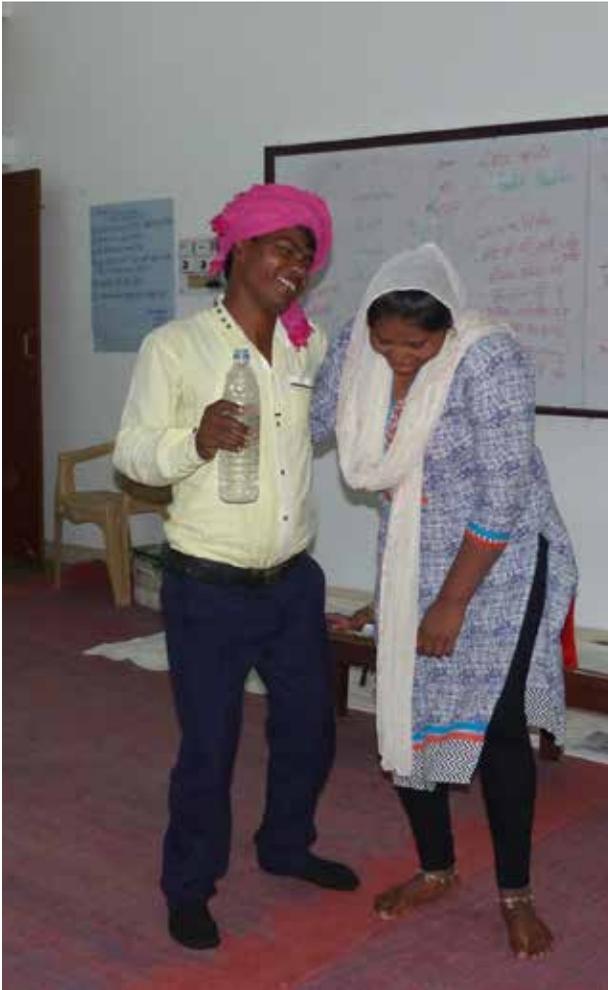
## **Building perspective and skills for using gender and sexuality lens.**

Over the years, we have organized workshops, trainings and courses on issues related to gender and sexuality and their intersections with caste, class, religion, region, and language. We have conducted these interventions with a range of participants, including staff members of community-based organizations and government programmes, teachers and educators working at grass-root level, and women and adolescent girls from marginalized and minority communities.

### **Yuva, Yaunikta and Adhikar Training - 5-days National Level Training on Young People's Sexuality and Rights**

Nirantar conducted its Sixth Institutional, "Yuva, Yaunikta aur Adhikar" programme from 11th to 15th of July, 2017 in Delhi. This was a 5-day residential programme where the participants were karyakartas and social workers from different organisations working with young people on various issues. Through this programme, we wanted to map the current discourses on Gender and Sexuality, and facilitate capacity building of community workers to engage and incorporate their understanding into the organizational work. Over the course of the five days, participants built their perspective on the themes such as Gender, Sexuality, Mental Health, Consent, Pleasure and Desire, through a mix of theoretical sessions, activities, and discussions grounded in the lived realities and experiences of the participants and the groups they work with.

We are organising the YYA courses for last five years and every year its an enriching experience for facilitators and participants alike. Not only that the discussions on gender and sexuality get nuanced every year but a contemporary context also allows us to talk about newer dimensions and challenges of work organizations and activists face while working on issues



of gender and sexuality. This year we focused on talking about how we as activists can integrate this perspective in our everyday work while acknowledging the field realities. Participants appreciated this approach and recommended that we include more sessions of this nature where we can draw linkages between lived realities of people and practical ways of including our understanding of gender and sexuality in the work with different communities.

### **Gender Based Violence (GBV) and Sexuality Workshop in Lucknow**

Nirantar conducted GBV and Sexuality Workshop

in Lucknow in November 2017. The objective was to enable participants to reexamine their opinions on Gender and Sexuality, and to address the need to shift the lens from Violence Against Women (VAW) to GBV, by bringing to the fore fundamental questions like what is violence, how do we recognize violence, who perpetuates violence, is violence the same for the everyone, and discuss strategies for fighting, resisting, and engaging with identity politics.

The workshop focussed on the intersection of violence and sexuality, triggering conversations on how and when we do we identify sexuality

as a plausible cause of violence, what are the implications of having only cisgendered women in this conversation, is there a need to include other stakeholders, what are the terms of inclusion and exclusion that we need to think about in our process of working with gender.

## **Training of Trainers (TOT) in Delhi**

The Training of Trainers, engaged with participants who are currently involved in their organisations as a trainer and have previously been a part of our training on gender and sexuality . The 5 day training used varied training methods - -group work, activities, role play, observation, and case study, to equip participants with different tools of conducting trainings and workshops in their fields . The training was designed to give participants from diverse backgrounds an opportunity to come together (based on issues they are working on) and share experiences. The participants were divided into four groups and each group was given a broad theme like health, violence, education and gender sensitization etc to work upon. They were asked to make a training design constituting of aims, objectives, methodology and conclusion for a 3 days capacity building input. . A library was also setup with films, books, articles, short stories developed by academicians, activists, writers etc in Hindi for the group to access and make use to develop the training format. The idea was to help participants understand that designing and systematic preparations are the stepping stones of any good training programme. Each group was also given a specific target group for whom the training had to be designed. The participants appreciated this methodology and shared that it will help them a lot as trainer to develop their own trainings programmes for field staff in much structured and planned way than what they did earlier.

## **Relooking at GBV from Sexuality lens**

The GBV Pamphlet was launched at the 2017 National Aman Network Meeting. The feedback on the pamphlet and the accompanying policy paper, identified how the perspective introduced by the pamphlet and the paper were vital and important to organizations working on issues of gendered violence to help widen their mandate from Violence Against Women (VAW) to Gender Based Violence (GBV), and underlined how the current political climate made it all the more critical to understand and discern cases of consent and coercion.

Along with the publication of the pamphlet, we also tried to look at alternate ways of disseminating the learnings from our work around GBV and Sexuality. We collaborated with the School for Media and Cultural Studies (SMCS), Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) to produce a series of short Public Service Announcements around the idea of the norm and transgression of the normative in relation to triggering GBV.



## 2 GIRLS' EDUCATION AND EMPOWERMENT

While there have been shifts in social attitudes towards girls' education, with there being greater recognition and acceptance of the need for it, it is yet to translate to perceiving education as a right, or as a means of empowerment. Education is still mostly seen as a factor that will enhance girls' marriage prospects, ensuring upward mobility. Girls, specially from marginalized communities - Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribes and Muslim families are still dropping out of the system in greater numbers. While it was commonly understood that the large proportion of girls dropping out from the education system belong to rural areas, recent data revealed that there is not much difference in the dropout rates for rural and urban poor communities. As per the DISE data, the dropout rates are at highest at the secondary level, i.e 27% as compared to 8% at elementary level, the rate of girls reaching secondary level from elementary is merely 54%, leaving

behind 46% girls who are unable to complete their education and might also have to drop out of the skilled job market.

With the agrarian crisis deepening, the migration to urban areas is seeing an unprecedented surge causing an increase in urban resource poor communities. While livelihoods and employment are the biggest priorities for these communities, education for girls often becomes a casualty. Parents choose to invest instead in the education of their sons with the aspiration of economically gainful employment. A research study done by Nirantar – ‘In the Midst of the City’, showed that while girls are dropping out due to the domestic pressures and control on girl’s mobility, the reasons for boys dropping out are mostly unrestricted mobility and lack of parental control . While girls are struggling to continue their education and putting a lot of hard work to manage both school and domestic responsibilities, boys find education meaningless and lose interest in the school quite early in their lives. These gendered realities provide critical insight in our interventions with young people, especially girls. We attempt to include the voices and gendered realities of girls from urban resource communities in the curriculum to empower them to negotiate their life decisions and exercise agency.

## **Parvaaz Adolescent Centre for Education (PACE)**

Nirantar has been working with never enrolled and dropout girls from past three years in partnership with Delhi based organisations. During the third phase of the project, we expanded our centres in two new areas within





East Delhi with Action India NGO, started our project in Bareilly district under partnership with Sakar NGO, and also started new centre in old Delhi with BUDS NGO to provide learning opportunities to girls who did not have access to education or those who could not complete basic education due to several reasons. . While working with girls, we realised that learning centre meant different things to different girls, where it became much more than merely a learning space for them. It brought together girls from different religion and regions together in a way that early married girls also got a second chance with education.

Feminist approach to education has guided the teaching–learning processes at these PACE centres. The technical support provided by Nirantar includes, capacity building of teachers, providing curriculum and teaching learning tools, close and regular onsite support to the teachers to strengthen their pedagogical and academic skills. We also help coordinators and leaders of the organisation in dealing with specific problems faced in running the centres smoothly or dealing with crisis in the face of communities’ resistance towards gender equality mechanisms. Local language of the learners is recognised and appreciated by the facilitators to create mutual learning environment. Gender approach to education was the primary entry point in all thematic sessions. Classroom experiences relating to lived realities of the learners, thematic walks, exposure visits to local resources,

institutions and public places were integral part of the teaching – learning process. Learners shared their opinions, wrote letters, and by curated local magazines out of their areas of concerns.

## **All round approach to learning**

### **Story writing and Dastan Goi session**

In last one year of the project, we have focused on storytelling and collective reading sessions with learners to improve and strengthen their reading skills. Such sessions inspired them to write their own stories based on their experiences, relationship with parents, brother, loneliness after marriage and access to resources like water, roads etc. We organized Dastan Goi with girls to improve their story telling skills, wherein, all the learners actively participated in the discussion that emerged from the shared story.

### **Art workshop with girls**

Kiran Nadar Art Museum invited our centre girls to visit their museum. After the visit, we organized three days workshop with Sanjay Camp girls in which they were asked to draw images of their areas and discuss issues they would like to highlight in their drawings. Girls prepared their own boxes that contained drawings and illustrated their perceptions of their lived



realities and realities encountered in bastis. Under the sexuality theme, they prepared collage on how girls should present themselves from their perspectives. All of them enjoyed the workshop and actively participated in the activities.

### **Continuous and comprehensive assessment of learning**

Continuous and comprehensive assessment was considered an integral part of the teaching and learning process. We emphasised on developing understanding of the learning process. Teachers were encouraged to

reflect on their own planning process. Assessment helped in understanding the needs and challenges of individual learners. Exchange of learning and experiences with parents.

*"I want to move out of the house to study or do some work. I have always desired to wear new dresses and put on make up to look beautiful. Why can't girls have friends? Why are we forced to get married to a boy selected by parents? No one tries to understand us."*

-Views shared by participants during workshop

Involvements of parents are considered important in the learning process because learning cannot take place in isolation. Centre level events were organized where they shared experiences and learning progress of their children/ partners =. Games, quiz and songs were used to engage with the community and create comfortable environment. Such platforms have become inspiring spaces where mothers, siblings and husbands have shown conviction in education and created mutual learning space for girls.

### **Teachers' training on feminist approach to education, gender and pedagogy**

In the beginning of second and third phase, new teachers and mobilizers participated in six days training to develop understanding about feminist approach to education, learning process, and pedagogy of teaching Hindi and Maths with young learners. Sessions on gender and sexuality were conducted to develop basic understanding about the issues. It is important for the teachers to reflect and question their own biases and judgments before creating learning opportunities for other.



### **Follow-up with Girls- an Integral Part of PACE**

#### **Orientation for employment/career Options**

After completion of the learning course, orientation sessions were organised

for learners to provide exposure about work done by different organisations for young people. Khabar Lahariya media network conducted session about media and opportunities of young girls in their organisations. Similarly, Azad foundation and Dhriti organisation also conducted orientation sessions and shared information about driving course and entrepreneurship course offered by their organisations. Such sessions encouraged girls to pursue jobs that challenge gender norms.



### **Forum theatre workshop for previous batch girls**

Three days forum theatre workshop was organised for girls from Welcome and Sanjay camp communities who had previously participated in theatre sessions. We discussed cultural differences among girls from East Delhi and South Delhi. During Historical walk sessions, girls found it difficult to interact with girls from other centres. The workshop helped in building close relationship among girls enabling them to share their desires and challenges. Most of the girls wished to explore the outside world, visit different places, become independent, develop relationship based on their choices. During the performance, they developed alternative strategies to deal with their challenges. It was interesting to see girls helping each other and provide emotional support.

## **Resource Material Development for Young People**

### **Booklet based on stories written by girls**

Girls are encouraged to express themselves by writing letters to themselves

or to the teacher, depending on what they want to share and what they want to keep within wraps. Based on the letters that they wrote to teachers and facilitators, we compiled some. However, the material included the journeys and experiences of teachers and facilitators while working with these girls.

*"I was married at early age and came to Delhi with my husband. I did not know anyone in the city and was unable to speak Hindi. I felt ashamed to use my local language with neighbours. I had no one to share my feelings and loneliness. I asked my husband to buy balloons in the morning before leaving for factory. Those balloons became my friend to listen to my feelings and emotions."*

- Lines from story written by one learner

The booklet provides reflections and experiences of girls on issues of love, desire, gender based violence, migration and early marriage etc. These stories are not only about struggles and achievements; but also about the processes, the journey, internal conflicts, conversations around desires and their struggles to live their aspired. These stories may be told by a few girls in some bastis or colonies, but they speak to a large community of young girls with similar experiences of gender, poverty and deprivation. The booklet can be used as a good resource material to begin conversations with girls and create a space for non judgemental and uninhibited sharing.

### Curriculum for out of School learners

Teaching – learning process and curriculum for those who could not complete education have mostly remained ignored in the context of larger educational concerns. With strong believe in providing quality education to those who could not take part in mainstream education or had to dropp out, we have developed a curriculum using feminist pedagogy. The curriculum is designed to develop an understanding of the world in a comprehensive way by incorporating different entry points like gender, sexuality, caste, religion . The main objective of the curriculum is to build literacy, numeracy and theme



*"We never realised that subjects are interlinked with each other. While working on the curriculum with girls, I have understood how gender, power, caste and class are linked with subjects.*

*In this teaching and learning process, we are learning many new things from girls and also teaching them subjects which directly linked with their daily lives."*

- One of the teachers from learning centre



based skills of the girls from the perspective of gender and sexuality. Themes are identified from the lived experiences of the adolescent girls from urban resettlement colonies and integrated with issues like water, body, media, market, food.

Another unique aspect about this curriculum is the critical pedagogy

that gets built in the process of teaching and learning. This curriculum is framed in a manner that will enable facilitators to understand the need for pedagogy in bringing tangible change in the lives of adolescent girls. It will provide an opportunity to reflect critically on issues in terms of their political, social, economic and moral aspects. A critical framework will also help girls to see social issues from different perspectives and understand how such issues are connected to their lives. For instance, understanding of democracy as a way of life can be charted through a path where girls reflect on how they engage with others (e.g. friends, neighbors, the opposite sex, elders, etc.), how they make choices (e.g. activities, play, friends, career, etc.), and decisions. Issues related to human rights, caste, religion and gender are also critically

reflected on by girls in order to see how these issues are connected to their everyday experiences, and how different forms of inequalities become compounded and are perpetuated. Critical pedagogy facilitates a collective decision making through open discussions by encouraging and recognizing multiple views.



## 3 YOUNG PEOPLE AND EMPOWERMENT

### **Early and Child Marriage from Gender and Sexuality Lens**

Over the past few years, we have helped build discourses around early and child marriage, young people, gender and sexuality through advocacy based on landscape analysis. More recently, we have been making presentations based on preliminary learnings from the action research at the national and international consultation like AJWS research conclave, and the IASSCS conference in Bangkok, to highlight the issues of gender and sexuality in context of young people. . We are happy that wherever we have presented our work, we have received positive responses.

## Action Research Study

While young people are one of the largest segment of development interventions, the majority of interventions are limited to either SRHR or livelihoods work. We also . Through our action research study, we aimed to better understand the heterogeneous groups that often get clubbed under “young people” and unravel how they make sense of their contexts. Within this, our interest lay in understanding the role that we, as stakeholders in the development sector and NGOs can play in creating spaces that may be empowering for the participants. Our particular interest was to look into the possibilities and limitations that lay in honestly talking about complex and difficult socio-economic-political issues related to gender, sexuality, caste, class and religion, with young people within NGO spaces . For the research to be participatory and not extractive, and bring embodied knowledge and experiences into the conversation,we used techniques from ‘theatre of the oppressed’ as a method of research and political consciousness building towards these objectives.



In the last one year we have witnessed a shift in conversation among karyakartas, where they are much more open to asking their groups, “How did you feel” after a session rather than “What did you learn?”, and this marks, to a degree, recognizing the importance of their role as facilitators who aim to ‘understand’ young people rather than ‘teach’ them. This is a huge shift for the organisations that often work in pre-ordained module which may or may not be contextually relatable for the girls. Sometimes set political

agenda and articulation dictate curriculum. While each of these have their own place in an organisation's work, it is important to recognize when they may become an impediment to honest engagement with the groups they work with.

On the one hand, Action Research has helped in assisting the karyakartas to understand the limits of what is possible in a space created by organisations and the communities they work with, on the other hand, we could also push the boundaries to intervene or engage with the space in the way that could help organisations to adopt new methods of engaging with young people. The action research process helped us immensely in coming up with different strategies through which we can engage with young people across different identities while also being mindful of the power dynamics that may make the engagement difficult. The action research was conducted with 5 partner organisations from different parts of the country especially from the early and child marriage high prevalence states- Sahjani Shiksha Kendra UP, Vanangana UP, Vikalp Rajasthan, Kislay Delhi and Muskan MP.

### **Capacity Building of Organisations on youth Centric Approaches**

As part of our commitment to build capacities of organisations working with young people, we reached out to 8 organisations across India to build their perspective and share with them the tools and frameworks to develop youth centric approach in their work. The organisations that were part of our capacity building work included - Rajasamand Jan Vikas Sansthan Rajasthan, Vidarbha Molkareen Sangathan Maharashtra. The trainings were organised around issues of gender, sexuality and marriage and how it can be incorporated in their work with young people. We also dealt with issues of menstruation and how one can look at it from the perspectives of religion, education, caste, etc. The workshop participants included members of their sangathan and naari adalats along with peer educators and programme coordinators.

### **Research with Young people in Urban Resettlement colonies in Delhi.**

This research, which began in August 2016, emerged from Nirantar's work in the two resettlement colonies of Khanpur and Trilokpuri under the project titled PACE, (Parvaaz Adolescent Centre for Education). The aim of the project was to work on education with girls who had dropped out



of schools and were in the age group of 14 to 25 years. Around the end of the first year of the project, we strongly felt the need for a nuanced understanding of issues of friendship, education, migration, violence and family. We shared the research concept with Action India, an NGO that has been working for over 20 years in Sanjay Camp and Dakshinpuri and had been our partner for PACE project for two years. Our research participants included the young girls and boys who had been involved in the various activities that are organized by Action India.

This research is an exploration of the complex relationships that the young boys and girls living in Sanjay Camp and Dakshinpuri have with the various stakeholders (such as friends, family, social media, the education system and the sarkaar) who impact their lives in different ways . Narratives of love and friendships shared by boys and girls collude and intermingle to bring forth ideas that cannot be clearly differentiated. There is neither one simple definition of love or friendship, nor a homogenous experience of either. As we have seen, boys and girls experience intimacy in their friendships quite differently. Female friendships revolve around sharing personal narratives of struggles and finding solace in knowing that you are not alone in that

struggle, whereas boys bond over networking, especially for employment opportunities and monetary help. Both groups talked about having limited spaces of interaction and building new relationships. Schools, tuition centres and participation in activities organized by the NGO provide the only spaces where these fleeting moments of interaction were permissible.

Friendships that brew here could not be continued outside in public spaces like parks and malls for fear of being reported to their families. From the idea that love is eternal, to establishing that there is one and only one true love, (sacha pyaar) to how love demands a performance of the normative roles of femininity and masculinity. Bollywood is, for our participants, undeniably the one source of information that defines and dictates how to behave in friendships and romantic relationships. Both, boys and girls, fantasise about their future love/spouse, but their expectations are in direct conflict. While girls expect someone who can free them from their present realities, , boys' expectations grew from typical gender stereotypes. While girls could recognize and reflect on their burdens, and imagine the possibility of living their lives differently, the boys' narratives were riddled with the burden of continuing the family lineage, responsibility of



procreation, and providing for one's family. Male privilege perhaps blinded them to the structural issues which were an integral part of the narratives of the girls.

The research methodology included Focus Group Discussions on five themes: namely, state-citizenship, education, work, love-friendship-marriage, and media. These FGDs were conducted separately with girls

*Both, boys and girls, wished that co-education would be made mandatory by the government so that schools could provide that safe space where girls and boys would not hesitate to talk with one another, thereby building an understanding of the self and the other that may gradually change the prejudices they harboured against each other.*

and boys, strategically, keeping in mind the discourse around mixed-sex interactions particular to this area. After 34 FGDs in total, we conducted two rounds of in-depth personal interviews with 20 respondents, totaling to 40 interviews in all.



## 4 BREAKING THE BINARIES IN EDUCATION (BEE)

The TransLiteracy project is an attempt to queer education in India and bring in more diverse voices into the fray of mainstream primary, secondary and adult education. Several transgender persons have had to drop out of school owing to traumatizing experiences at school which include but are not limited to bullying, harassment, sexual and physical violence, mis-gendering, and a lack of understanding, sensitivity, and support from school authorities, students, their fellow peers and parents. As part of our research for the TransLiteracy project, Nirantar conducted a baseline assessment of literacy and numeracy levels with Derewale Hijras in Noida (Hijras who live with their Guru in an alternative family structure called a Dera) which indicated that many of them had dropped out between grades 5th-8th. Additionally, Nirantar's analyses of case studies revealed similar experiences of queer students that pushed them out of school. Some of these include lack of infrastructure especially accessible



toilets, lack of queer friendly teaching-learning methods, violence faced at the hands of teachers and peers, unrepresentative curricula, among others. While teachers have very rigid way of looking at gender identities, the children who do not fall in neat categories are further marginalized because of their intersections of caste, class and religion coupled with gender identity and sex characteristics that often make it difficult for such children to continue schooling. Not only schools, some of these children are even forced to leave their native homes to get away from oppressive families and communities. For students who have dropped out, there is almost no scope to either complete their schooling or get an opportunity to come back to education in informal ways, greatly affecting their already meager employment opportunities. Many trans-persons and queer people engage in occupations such as sex work and begging to sustain themselves. However, since both these occupations are criminalized, their vulnerability and chances of facing further violence exacerbates further. Nirantar explored educational opportunities for Hijra community, which is a marginalized group even within the trans community, and decided to work on a specific curriculum to include and address specific concerns and needs of the Hijra community.

We primarily looked at two kinds of interventions –direct work involving adult education with persons from the Hijra community, under Project Nayi Disha, and textbook analysis of mainstream education system under the Project Vistaara.

## Adult Education – Nayi Disha Sakasharta Kendra

This year, Nirantar partnered with SAATHII and Basera to set up and run Nayi Disha, an adult literacy centre in Mayur Vihar, designed to cater to the educational requirements of the Hijra community in the region.

The literacy centre, was based on learners' convenience and approachability. Because of the specific challenges that the Hijra community faced, it was deemed critical to choose a location that is close to the residence of our learners so that it minimized their travel time. Additionally, we realized that for our participants to commit time to the centre, we needed to bring their Guru into confidence. Many of the learners happened to be from the same Hijra Dera (a socio-economic structure which is led by a Guru and whose followers/chelis engage in organized begging), so to ensure greater ease of participation, the project spent time building a relationship with the Guru – working with her to ensure her support for the project.

Once the venue was finalised, the learner registrations began and the centre was formally launched in December 2017, with over 16 registered learners. Classes were conducted on Mondays and Thursdays mornings from 10:00 a.m to 11:00 a.m. However, despite our best efforts, owing to multiple challenges stemming from tensions between the chelis (our learners) and the Guru, denial of access to the classroom space, and the dropping out of our teacher – we were forced to close the centre in March. Moving forward, a new plan based on our learnings of the first centre is being drafted, and a different model of the project will be implemented in the upcoming months.

## Textbook Analysis from Queer Perspective

Nirantar in coalition with four other partners has been working on understanding ways in which queer identities engage with the law, education and health in India and advocating for methods through which these spheres can be made more inclusive of and sensitive to queer lives. The project fosters a holistic, rights based approach, with partners working in tandem to understand and address issues pertinent to various communities under the queer umbrella. Engaged as the technical expert for education, Nirantar worked on the following aspects ;

- Build an analysis framework, to examine policies, acts and other

pertinent documents to understand how they can be made more inclusive of diverse genders and sexualities, and more sensitive to the concerns of students who diverge from a heteronormative binary.

- Build an advocacy document based on the school/college experiences of queer persons for wider circulation among civil society organizations working with transgender and sexual minority communities and policy makers.
- Build a review framework and analyze NCERT English textbooks and chapters to identify gaps in the existing textbooks and recommend building a more inclusive curriculum.

The policies and documents analyzed are, Right to Education (RTE) Act (2009), the Framework of Implementation of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA), and the University Grants Commission's Anti Ragging Circular. The policies analyzed clearly showed that the majority of laws in India, either invisibilize, (on the rare occasion that they do recognize) criminalize queer identities (Sec. 377<sup>1</sup>) or misunderstand and conflate varied identities under one umbrella (The Transgender Persons- Protection of Rights Bill, 2016). Most policies usually appellate cisgender, heterosexual men, and when gender equality or equity is a key focus of the document, they also appellate cisgender, heterosexual women. The analysis report employs a queer feminist perspective to interrogate the gaps and silences in these documents. The framework was developed based on three main parameters – explicit inclusion of queer identities, inclusivity of gender in a non-binary sense, and the inclusion of sexuality including sexual orientation related concerns within these documents.

While the various state partners analyzed documents from gender equality, equity and inclusiveness perspective, the majority of documents reiterate and reinforce equality and inclusiveness only within the cis, hetero framework. While these documents recognize intersectional marginalities on the basis of caste, class, religion, region and gender – their articulation of gender is limited to a cis-hetero normative binary. The report prepared

1. Section 377 refers to 'unnatural offences' and says whoever voluntarily has carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman or animal, shall be punished with imprisonment for life, or with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to 10 years, and shall also be liable to pay a fine. The Supreme Court read down the colonial-era ban on gay sex on Sept 2018 decriminalising same sex between consenting adults. However, the legal provisions are not automatically translated into social reality unless some concerted efforts are made in that direction.



thus not only highlights the silences in the documents but also offers advocacy solutions across different thematic areas. To make the education system more inclusive one needs to rethink infrastructural issues and building support services including sensitive teachers and teaching learning processes.

Along with this report, Nirantar also developed a report on Problems Regarding Access to Education for Queer Persons, based on the case studies of queer persons' experience of mainstream education spaces as shared by other partners in Project Vistaara in partnership with Saathi. Through case studies, the report tries to explore some of the ways in which educational spaces are made inaccessible or difficult for queer persons, which has far reaching effects on various aspects of people's lives ranging from their access to higher education to mental health services to job opportunities . Along with their chosen gender and sexual identity, expression,\ and their gender and sexual characteristics, other factors such as caste, class, region, location of the school, religion, etc also play a role in limiting access of queer persons to educational spaces. The report is divided into the following thematic areas – peer related concerns, teacher related concerns, infrastructural and administrative concerns. During this period, Nirantar has also conducted orientation sessions for Vistaara partners on conducting curriculum review in their respective states.



## 5 WOMEN'S LITERACY, EDUCATION AND EMPOWERMENT

Education plays a crucial role in the development and growth of an individual, society and country and enables people to access and claim their rights and entitlements. We work extensively in adult women's education by building capacities of other organizations, providing linkages between literacy, community development and women's rights.

In the year 2017-18, we have worked with seven partner organizations in the States of Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand. Approximately, 175 centers are functioning in these States with total reach of about 7400 women across two states. Out of these, 5000 women are in the basic phase, and around 2400 women have moved to the advanced phase. As a resource group, Nirantar has provided support to other partner organizations and Tata Trust's field intervention in eastern Uttar Pradesh. Some of the highlights of our literacy work this year are:

## Strengthening leadership skills of learners

Perhaps the most challenging part of working on adult women's education is sustaining literacy skills of women and establishing their educational achievements in community . Availability of simply written, contextual material in their own languages is key to bring education into play both at their individual as well as community level. Nirantar organised a Material Creation Workshop in Delhi with 33 participants from 4 states. The workshop not only aimed at creating engaging and useful material for neo-literates but also provided a platform for strategizing and implementing neo-literate women to exhibit their leadership skills. We created survey formats and PRA PLA tools which highlighted concerns of some of the social issues and governmental schemes that concern our women. For instance, survey formats were created on condition of toilets in school, PDS, aaganwadi among others. The neo-literate women conducted these household surveys on their own, analyzed the collected data, and presented to the community leaders as well as administration. This was quite an empowering experience for women giving them an opportunity to implement their learnings.

## Creating resource pool of Community Based Organizations to forward the cause of adult women education.

Our Annual Literacy Training, an intensive engagement process which lays the principles of adult education for the participants along with equipping them with feminist pedagogy for imparting empowered learning experience for adult women from marginalized communities., was attended by 29





representatives from 14 Civil Society Organizations and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) groups (who we believed could integrate adult education with their work with women and livelihoods). Through this activity not only did we create a resource pool of stakeholders who might be interested in adult education, but also established the linkages of adult women's education with women's empowerment.

Along with conceptual understanding, the training programme also gives an opportunity to participants to interact with and make sense of the adult women's education programme implementation in praxis. The participants are taken for a field trip to Sahajani Shiksha Kendra (SSK), a women's organization located in Lalitpur district of UP to provide exposure and learn from the experiences of grass root level workers and teachers running the literacy centres.

## **Building teachers' Network**

A two day teachers' sammelan was organized in November 2017 with an objective to collectivize and appreciate the journeys and experiences of rural women teachers. All the teachers, who have been part of adult women's education process were from the same community as their learners, and had themselves struggled to come out of their houses to become teachers. More than 200 teachers from 18 organizations from 5 states participated in the sammelan.

Teachers shared during the Sammelan that their own educational levels were not good enough to be a teachers but they learned from experience and strengthened their literacy skills along with their teaching skills. The teaches also shared about learning a new pedagogy which is very different from the pedagogy conventionally used. Many teachers talked about their



struggle of using the new pedagogy and stepping out of the comfort zone of the familiar. Constant support and insistence from the programme team though eased their shift.

We also invited mainstream school teachers to interact with our teachers so that a space of cross learning could be created. The school teachers in the Sammelan shared that the event has encouraged them to put in more energy and creativity in their teaching. In addition to bringing together teachers working at the grass root levels, Sammelan also provided a common platform to talk about feminist approach to education and empowerment.

## **Review of basic phase work and charting the ways forward**

We organised a review meeting (17th-18th March 2017, Delhi) of our basic phase of literacy with the third phase partners to wrap up the previous year's work; share experience, learnings, and forge way forwards. Based on the decisions taken in the review workshop, an advance phase orientation (11th-12th April 2017, Ranchi) for the third phase partners was also organized. This orientation laid the foundation of our advance phase



of literacy program and its expected outcomes. The partners' organizations also got a chance to discuss and clarify all the doubts related to advance phase of literacy work and its implementation.

### Training of teachers and of partner organizations



We organised trainings of teachers for our literacy partners of Tata Trust including Tata Trust's direct initiative in Bahraich. The trainings were conducted with an objective to ensure smooth functioning of adult women's education

project by familiarizing teachers, coordinators and supervisors to the primers and teaching learning pedagogy and enabled us to reach out to approximately 147 teachers and 33 members of partner organizations and other organizations . The training process also creates a resource pool of trainers to take forward the feminist teaching methodologies to strengthen empowering processes for women.

Following table shows the trainings conducted in the previous year:

S.No.	Training Type	Date and Place
1.	Teachers' Training for Advance Phase	16th to 20th May 2017, Delhi
2.	Teachers' refresher training	26th to 29th May 2017, Bahraich
3.	Teachers' training	13th to 18th June 2017, Bahraich

S.No.	Training Type	Date and Place
4.	Teachers' refresher training for Youthreach	25th to 29th July 2017, Roorkee
5.	Basic training for newly recruited teachers	22nd to 25th Aug 2017, Bahraich
6.	Annual Literacy Training	5th to 11th Dec. 2017, Delhi
7.	Basic Teacher's refresher Training	8th to 10th Feb. 2018, Torpa

### Mid-term Review of the Programme:

The SSK's literacy programme completed two years of its 5 year project. Thus the midterm review of the programme was planned and conducted by the external consultants, both quantitatively and qualitatively. The overall objective of the review was to understand the progress of the programme and identify areas of improvement.

The qualitative review was done by Vandana Mahajan and Nitika Pant, the quantitative analysis was done by Impact, New Delhi. While Impact used the baseline format for the comparative analysis collecting data from all the centres and panchayats through random survey method, the qualitative review included visits to literacy as well as literacy and information centers, and discussion with learners, teachers, and programme implementers at different levels. In addition to reporting on the progress done so far, reviewers were also asked to question and recommend ways to strengthen the intervention in future.



### Monitoring and evaluation of the field

We work closely with our partner organizations to provide regular and sustained technical as well monitoring and evaluation support for a

smooth functioning of their literacy programmes. In this pursuit, we conduct regular field visit to the partner organizations and interact with the learners to understand their levels of competencies, monitor day to day functioning of the centers, and offer inputs based on the observations of the visiting team. This year we conducted 8 field visits covering all the partner organizations in Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh.

## Sahajani Siksha Kendra (SSK)

SSK is our sister organisation whom we provide technical support. This year we collaborated with them in organizing new teacher's training, refresher training of teachers, advance training, gender and caste training. The 2 day Teachers' Sammelan was a one of its kind successful initiative for the teachers. We also conducted an external mid-term audit of the organisation which provided SSK and us with the useful insights of a bright future ahead.

In Sahajani Shiksha Kendra (SSK), women's literacy interventions, information center and girls' education are a major thrust of the programme. During this year, SSK adopted an approach of strengthening its existing work and promoting women's literacy through various interlinked efforts. Community meetings were organised at large scale which were very helpful in creating a positive dialogue with the community on women's literacy and its role in strengthening community access to entitlements.



### Literacy Centers:

30 new literacy centers were opened during the period between April 2017 and March 2018. Members from Panchayat and some Sarpanches lend their support in conducting community meetings to share the objectives behind opening these centers and motivated community members to support women in accessing them. A base line was conducted to assess the learning and empowerment levels of women

enrolled at the center. At the same time, the end line was administered in the centers that had completed 18 months. At total of 51 literacy centers are currently run by SSK wherein 2376 women are enrolled.

The table given below shows the status of Literacy centers and the number of women enrolled at the centers.

Literacy Centres	Total no	Women Enrolled
Presently Running	51	2376
Basic Literacy Center	23	884
Advance Literacy Center	14	720
Closed Literacy Center	14	772

### Literacy and Information Centers

Literacy and Information center are conceived as a space that is available to all community members within the broad ambit of women’s leadership. With continuous efforts of the SSK’s commitment, these have been established as a space for community activities ranging from access to information to government schemes to access to indoor sports for boys and girls. While women come to the centers both for the literacy and for accessing information, some men also come to read news paper or gain information regarding various government schemes. The teachers and field workers help women to not only access forms related to their entitlements, but also help them fill forms and assist them in submitting at the right places/offices.

The Information centre has also become an important place to connect with adolescent girls in community. Monthly discussions on issues like early marriage, adolescent health, gendered upbringing, and gendered social norms of gender are held at these centres. Girls are encouraged to use various sports facilities. The center is also open for boys for a limited period allowing them access to the library and indoor games. Gradually, the community



has come to own the center and “support samitis” are formed at the village level to ensure community’s involvement in the management and running of these information centres.

The table given below for Literacy and Information centers;

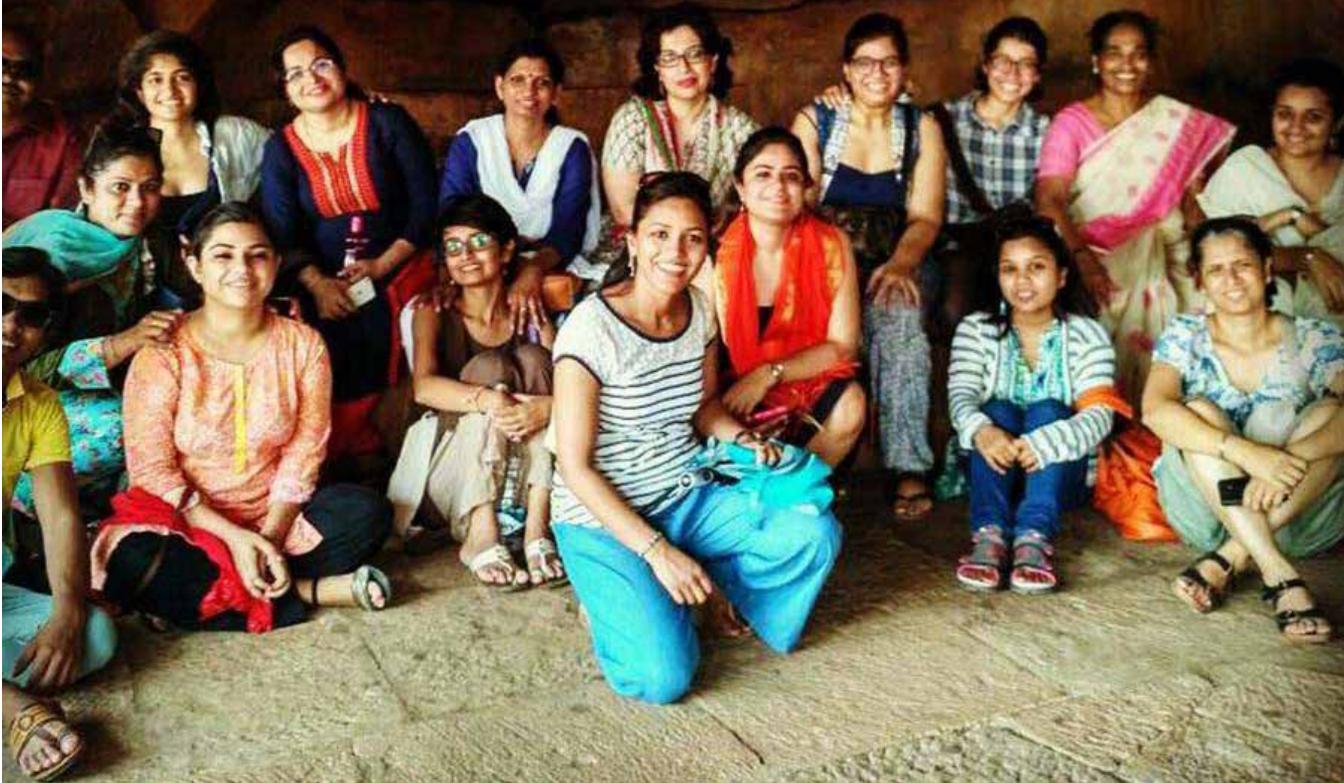
Literacy & Information Center	Total no.	Women Enrolled
Presently Running	26	1434
Basic Literacy & Information Center	12	596
Advance Literacy & Information Center	14	802
Closed Literacy & Information Center	1	36

### **Capacity building of Teachers and Field Workers/Supervisors:**

Capacity building of teachers was recognized as one of the important aspect of SSK’s work with investment required to build perspective on key issues like caste, gender and sexuality along with strengthening the pedagogical skills of teachers and supervisors. Two consecutive trainings on caste and gender were organized with 68 teachers and staff members of SSK. These trainings were helpful to understand the caste based system of hierarchy. The discussion on gender being a social phenomenon along with caste also pushed participants to reflect on their own socialization.

**Teachers’ Training** The teachers’ training for advance phase of learning centers was organized with Panchayat Module.

It was a six days training aimed at building perspective and pedagogical skills of teachers and new recruits who were to conduct training in new villages and centers. Operational aspects of running centers like maintaining records and creating live and engaging environment in the center were also discussed in the training.



## 6 STRENGTHENING OUR WORK

Women's movements have been and continue to be an important part of Nirantar's history. We have been an active part of various campaigns against violence against women and also support various groups especially women's groups in their struggles for human rights and justice for women. Last year we participated in Women's day celebrations of 8th march where girls from PACE center also came to be part of the rally.

Nirantar also works actively towards creating space for non-binary conversations and building advocacy networks with like-minded organizations to push for positive and political engagement with sexuality and gender. We organized a host of consultations and workshops in the year 2017-18 to bring various players ranging from universities to CBOs on one platform and discussed issues that are gaining importance in the present context and needing attention for a deeper and different engagement.



Linkages of sexuality with violence against women and the role of technology in altering the lived realities of young people in urban slums are some of the discussions that were brought in the development discourse.

As a resource organization committed to promoting learning, Nirantar believes

in investing in building capacities of its own team as well. During the past year, Nirantar members have attended training programmes, workshops and consultations organized by other organizations to learn and contribute in the process of sharing and building collective knowledge. We also have a well structured and defined process of assessment for the projects as well as project teams. The individual assessment and performance evaluations are given an important place in reviewing the overall performance of the projects. These annual and bi-annual processes are also learning spaces for us to improve the quality of our work and thrive for better results.

Nirantar conducts, six monthly reviews with the whole team to evaluate the work done and plan for the coming months. The quality of work done is an important indicator for us in addition to the completion of the work on time. Thus peer review mechanism is followed very strictly where all the results produced by the team are put in the intra-team as well as an inter-team feedback process. However, it is an ongoing process as well for most of us and we also seek experts advise in the form of project advisors to strengthen the quality of our work and help us make it relevant and meaningful in the contemporary context.

As a resource organization, we are not only committed to creating new knowledge but also committed to taking our knowledge and learnings for wider sharing and dissemination to developing a culture of dialogue and debate.



**nirantar trust**  
A Centre for Gender and Education