

## **Bengaluru Safe City Police Training Programme: Active Bystanders Initiative**

With an aim of making Bengaluru a safer city for women, the National Law School of India University (NLSIU) and the Durga Foundation have joined hands to organize sessions under the Active Bystanders Initiative. The initiative which is a component of the Safe City Programme aims to impart training to individuals to become 'active bystanders' from 'passive spectators' in order to respond effectively to incidents of sexual harassment.

Through the Active Bystanders Initiative, the Durga Foundation along with NLSIU and the Bengaluru City Police aim to launch a city-wide effort to sensitise 5600 bystanders within the 112 police station limits situated in the city. The ultimate goal is to foster a culture of accountability and support so that the crime rates in the city reduce, trust in public spaces increases, and a shift in social norms towards zero tolerance for violence or harassment and women is encouraged.

### **Who are Bystanders?**

For the purposes of this initiative, bystanders are identified as individuals who are predominantly engaged in a trade or profession in a physical space that witnesses frequent access by the general public, and therefore such individuals, owing to their nature of work, observe incidents of gender-based violence and gender-based discrimination commonly in public places. Bystanders under this initiative consist of fast-food vendors, security guards in malls, shopkeepers within close proximity of educational institutions, temple flower and item sellers around places of worship, auto, bus and cab drivers, construction-site workers, food delivery personnel, garment-factory workers, pub-bouncers, and vendors situated in busy market or public places.

Evidence shows that incidents of violence against women are regularly witnessed by bystanders and in majority cases, the bystanders prefer not to intervene. By situating this phenomenon within the Bangalorean context, it is imperative to challenge norms which contribute to violence that is routinely accepted as 'normal or routine' by bystanders. By being proactive in their response, bystanders can certainly take the first step to support victims and to help them enforce their rights.



### **What are the stated goals of the Active Bystanders Initiative?**

1. To sensitise bystanders to change behavioural patterns from being passive spectators to become active bystanders by engaging in a meaningful intervention.
2. Sensitize select members of the general public to intervene to prevent, disrupt or discourage the occurrence of episodes of violence and sexual harassment.
3. Help the bystanders build skills to recognise acts that amount to violence and harassment, to be cognizant of the law and the available support systems as well as to appropriately intervene in distress situations.

### **What are the four pillars of the Active Bystanders Initiative?**

1. Recognise – All bystanders will be trained to recognise signs and risk factors contributing to violence against women.
2. Respond – All bystanders will be made aware of what measures they can adopt to respond meaningfully in order to stop the violence.
3. Refer – All bystanders will be made aware of available services and support systems in the community or society.
4. Report – All bystanders will be made aware of reporting procedures so that they can assist the survivor in reporting.



The initiative aims to cover the following themes through the training sessions –

1. What acts constitute violence against women, what are the appropriate approaches to intervene and what is the responsibility of bystanders.
2. Relevance of violence against women as a community and/or a societal issue.
3. Sexism and misogyny.
4. Challenging everyday microaggressions.

5. Cracking jokes on acts of sexual violence, rape, sexual harassment etc.
6. Victim-blaming.
7. The power of bystanders stepping in and speaking up.

The training will aim to sensitize the bystanders to respond and communicate empathetically to the survivors of gender-based violence. The focus will be on the following –

1. Not to judge or blame the victim and to allow the victim to share details about the incident when they feel comfortable and avoid asking questions if they are not ready to share the details.
2. Help them find useful information.
3. Assist them in calling or reaching out for support and care.
4. To acknowledge the emotional state of a victim of physical or sexual harassment.
5. Acknowledgement of the survivor's trauma.
6. If the bystander deems that the survivor may face further threat or danger, the local police station must be informed immediately.
7. If the survivor needs medical attention, they must be assisted to call an ambulance or reach a hospital.
8. In the process of helping a survivor, the bystander must prioritise their own safety.



### **About the Durga Foundation:**

Durga's mission is to enable gender-just public spaces that are free from sexual harassment by building the capabilities of all actors who use these spaces through the medium of 'Theatre of the Oppressed.' Based on the Foundation's previous experience and research, the

DARE (Durgas Are Real-heroes Everywhere) programme equips individuals, especially those who occupy public spaces as workplaces, to become 'active bystanders' in order to deter sexual harassment and violence. The facilitators at the Durga Foundation function on the basis of a pre-designed module which is used for identifying the active bystanders and for building a rapport with them. The facilitators regularly work with government bodies including BMTC, BBMP, Bengaluru Traffic Police as well as other communities including bus/auto/cab drivers, garment factory workers, domestic workers and teachers situated in areas such as Basavanagudi, Sarakki, Chikalasandra, Jayanagar, Banashankari, and Thyagaraja Nagar. The module is aimed at training both men and women. The aim is to involve men in the conversation around gender-based violence and women's safety and make them part of the discussion, solution and use their allyship in a way that men and women collaborate together with compassion to eliminate gender-based violence.

