



Report:
The 3rd Online Regional Youth Advocacy Institute
(Mongolia)

27th March to 24th April, 2021

Index

Sl. No.	Content	Page
1.	Introduction	3
2.	Week 1	3
3.	Week 2	7
4.	Week 3	10
5.	Week 4	13
6.	Week 5	16
7.	Annexure 1 – Agenda	20

Introduction:

The 3rd Online Regional Youth Advocacy Institute (YAI) was organized by Asia Safe Abortion Partnership (ASAP) over 5 weekends between 27th March and 24th April, 2021.

Even though the institute was organized online, it was 'hosted' in Mongolia to locate it in an offline or on-ground context. We had one participant from Mongolia who presented about the country with an introduction to its geography, heritage and culture. Overall, we had 26 participants from Bhutan, India, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines and Sri Lanka who took part in this institute.

The objectives of the Institute:

1. To create a community of trained and sensitized youth champions who have an understanding of access to health care as a gender, sexual and reproductive rights, as well as human rights issue.
2. To facilitate the utilization of social media and other community level networking and communication by the youth champions through capacity building and ongoing mentoring.
3. To support the ongoing engagement of the youth champions, within and outside their community to ensure implementation of the above strategies in order to advocate effectively for improved access to health care services, including medical abortion.

Week 1

Day 1

Introduction

Dr. Suchitra Dalvie, Coordinator, ASAP, welcomed everyone and started the round of introductions through a memory game. Participants were requested to say their names along with an animal they identified but after they had repeated the names and the animals chosen by the others before them. The exercise was also linked with a later session that was scheduled to be held after a few weeks. This was a fun way to start the weekend sessions that slowly delved into deeper conversations towards building an understanding of safe abortion rights from a gender perspective. The ground rules were set for the next few weeks and the participant from Mongolia was requested to host the session to set the context for the institute.

Gender, sexuality and patriarchy

Dr. Manisha Gupte facilitated the opening session on gender, power, and patriarchy. Dr. Gupte shared that natural or biological traits were not designed to discriminate. However, the social norms around the biological traits that places certain values on certain characteristics and divides us hierarchically. Therefore, as activists we are trying to address this problem of unjust social norms. As soon as one is born and even when the body is not visibly male or female, there are social markers that are used to differentiate the babies as either male or

female (for e.g., pink swaddle for girls and blue swaddle for boys, and even the toys given to them are different).

Social differences create disadvantage and discrimination

- What is biological sex? How many 'sexes' do you think there are?
- Gender assignment at birth by parents and society– what happens to intersex children? From religious to legal to medical interpretations.
- Nature creates diversity – we create discrimination, disparity and disadvantage. Give examples. Gender as social construction.
- Gender roles define who is masculine and who is feminine. Can you give examples of what it is to be masculine and feminine in your culture?
- Gender identity is your own feeling about whether you are male, female, both or someone else.

The institutions of the family, the community, the market, the State, religion, culture, media, law, medicine and so on perpetuate gender inequality.

Dr. Gupte also spoke about the range of gender and diversity that is still being explored. She spoke of those who do not fit into the binary and those who challenge heteronormativity (or the norms associated with being heterosexual and cis gendered people). Society often brands them as abnormal, perceive their difference as a personal failure and something that threatens the social and religious fabric, and therefore stigmatizes such identities and expressions. State and all its institutions, such as, education, law, and so on perpetuate these discriminatory practices and maintain the hierarchical order. She also engaged the participants in a vibrant discussion around the idea of “normal”, and how to question it and even challenge it if it becomes extremely exclusive and unjust.

Day 2

Recap

- Learning about gender, transgender, intersex, masculinity and femininity etc. was new and interesting.
- Some participants tried working on the home-work which was to find out their mother's mother's mother's maiden name and found it difficult.
- Social construction of normalcy was a new idea for some participants. Those who don't fit in the social constructions of normalcy and do not follow the norms are considered unethical or not normal.
- The concept of heteronormativity was new for some participants – how marriage between an older man and a younger woman is extremely normal and any deviance from it is not encouraged. Or how children are trained with their gender roles from the time they are born through gender specific toys – for e.g., kitchen set for girls and guns for boys.

- They shared that the institute opened their mind to understand these concepts/ideas (heteronormativity, norms etc.) and they are now questioning them. Understanding how the gender roles are indoctrinated, how we internalize the gender-based biases, and challenging our own patriarchy.

Gender and mass media

What are stereotypes?

Stereotypes are beliefs or expectations people have from a gender, community, religion etc. They are different from 'roles', because the latter is what duties are 'expected' from them, rather than how they should behave or act, but more often that not they are equally regressive and are used interchangeably.(E.g- If you're a woman you're expected to get married early and your role would be to take care of your husband and his family).

These stereotypes are all around us everywhere even today and are not just limited to mass media, however the entertainment or advertisement industry reinforces/reflects these stereotypes.

Today we will be looking at some examples of these but before that what are some stereotypes we can think of ?

Ayesha Bashir, Communications and Networking Officer at Asia Safe Abortion Partnership (ASAP) facilitated the session on gender stereotypes in mass media. Ayesha shared how these stereotypes in advertisement revolved around and explored different examples with the participants:

- Participants shared examples from Nepal where women are presented as slim, beautiful, homely and loyal. While, men are presented as strong and lack emotions (never cry) and so on.
- Men are mocked for sharing a softer and emotional side, supporting women and Ayesha shared a new popular slang '*Simp*' to describe for a man who is perceived as feminist or supporting women.
- A participant from Pakistan shared that during the pandemic when even many men were working from home, they refused to share the domestic chores as it is perceived to be 'women's work'.
- The advertisements use these tropes to perpetuate patriarchal notions, misogyny, and sexism, promote anti-women messages in popular culture, such as, marketing products specifically for men because they should not use women's products which may make them appear feminine.
- Misleading ads such as the one on vaginal tightening cream because it perpetuates patriarchal notions about the female body and its role to provide pleasure to the man. However, even if scientifically such a cream won't work, it feeds on insecurity of women about their body and vagina.

The session was well received, led to a rich discussion and raised many pertinent questions that challenged patriarchy.

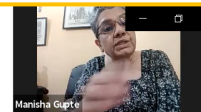
Understanding power and patriarchy

Dr. Manisha Gupte continued with her session on patriarchy – she asked why is it important for the systems/structures to continue the concepts of gender with all its inequalities and discrimination?

- To control individuals.
- To maintain the power, authority, and the status-quo.
- To prevent gender equality to become a reality as that would mean the end of patriarchy.

She discussed the meaning of patriarchy – the word itself means the rule of the father (patri or father + archy or rule) and implies male superiority, power, and domination. It is a hierarchical system in which men are placed above women. However, it is interesting that by and large women accepted and even perpetuated the hegemony and their own subjugation for centuries. Patriarchy controls women's bodies as they are the vessel or the womb where the seed or the sperm is planted to ideally reproduce the male progeny who will carry forward the family. Therefore, as per heteronormative values heterosexual sexuality within marriage is celebrated as it leads to socially sanctioned procreation – for e.g., a child born outside of marriage is considered illegitimate but after marriage reproducing a child is seen as a duty. But as the woman's womb is the vessel and through her the male seed is passed, her virginity is extremely important in a patriarchal society, and this leads to the control and suppression of female sexuality.

Patriarchal control through the institution of the family



- The inevitability of marriage and formation of a patriarchal family abet the passage of property from fathers to sons. Women are vehicles to carry forward the male seed from one generation to another within this family.
- Virginity at the time of and marriage forced monogamy thereafter for women are meant to ensure that children born to women are 'legitimate', and for power and resources to be passed on through a unbroken line of male children within a heteronormative family.
- **The control is not only material, but also ideological, creating a hegemonic acceptance of patriarchy, not only by men but also by women.**
- This hegemony is then policed through violence, whereby patriarchal norms and structures are maintained through the physical control of women's bodies and lives.

Dr. Gupte also talked about the '**multiple patriarchies**' and the various forms of patriarchy such as, neo-liberal economic policies and capitalism, religious fundamentalism and the rise of right-wing politics, cultural nationalism or fascism, militarization, privatization of health and education and rapidly shrinking of democratic spaces.

She explained that patriarchy stands for an unequal system and it manifests in various ways – it is interconnected with other forms of unequal systems and strengthen each other. Therefore, we cannot have gender equality in an unequal world. However, identity, culture

and gender are fluid and they change over time as society itself changes – this what as activists we have to relentlessly work towards.

Week 2

Day 3

Recap

- Participants shared that the gender representations and reproduction of regressive and narrow gender roles in advertisements was very thought provoking for them.
- Representation is important and there is a need to represent issues or identities in a more positive way such as, representation and normalizing of contraceptives, abortions, or queer and trans people.
- Learning about the idea of cultural hegemony was an interesting for some participants – how the dominant group's culture overpowers cultural diversity and establishes itself as the superior and only option.
- The idea that that our goal is gender equality and not replacing patriarchy with matriarchy.
- The concept of multiple patriarchies was very thought provoking for some participants.
- Participants also shared their thoughts on the movie, Dirty Dancing that was a part of their home-work. The movie made them think and reflect on parts that they agreed with and the ones that they didn't; for example, the women and their personalities, the role of class and so on.
- Participants also shared that the discussions also made them introspect their own internalized patriarchy and challenge themselves.

Understanding power and patriarchy (continued)

Dr. Gupte went on to explore patriarchy and how it manifests itself. Unequal distribution of property where the eldest male gets the majority of the share and women are often denied. She asked if families can be expanded beyond caste, community and so on, and reminded that even in inter-community marriages the woman carries on the husband's identity. Therefore, even after entering an inter-community marriage there is a need to challenge and reject it even after the marriage.

She emphasized on the role of the government which not only secures our rights but it must promote our rights. She cautioned that there is a very fine balance between 'state intervention' and 'state interference'. She also explained the ideas of '*public and private patriarchy*' through examples but acknowledged that they are often interconnected and overlap with other another.

She explained the equality and that it should be substantive which means that there should be equality of access. Most importantly equality will be fulfilled only when there is equity or which can be addressed through positive discrimination or affirmative action or social justice

measures. Affirmative actions are framed based on historical and present-day discriminations and therefore, affirmative actions are needed temporarily to correct historical wrongs. These three concepts of substantive equality and non-discrimination is a state obligation and form the three pillars of CEDAW.

Day 4

Recap

- Participants shared how religion being a public patriarchy controls private patriarchy such as family and other institutions.
- Another participant shared that they were moved by the discussions around discrimination and appreciated the way Dr. Gupte explained it as, “just a difference to the disadvantages of someone”.
- Participants reflected on the discussions around equal opportunity and equal access which is the path to gender equality and can be achieved through equity or social justice measures.
- Another participant shared that the equal distribution of property was also an important discussion as it is required to move towards gender equality.

LGBTQ rights and access to safe abortions

At ASAP we believe that the safe abortion movement is an inclusive movement that needs to constantly reflect and expand to include anyone who is left behind. One such movement and community of people who needs to be a part of our movement and adopt safe abortion rights in their agenda as well, is the LGBTQIA+ movement. Therefore, we invited Shane Batla from Equal Asia Foundation to conduct a session of LGBTQIA+ rights and access to safe abortions. The session reiterated earlier discussions led by Dr. Manisha Gupte – on gender, equality and discrimination. Shane challenged the mainstream society’s attempt to perpetuate very rigid and narrow ideas of gender and define it as the male and female binary. Shane reiterated the importance of including LGBTQIA+ voices in the safe abortion movement; engage with the LGBTQIA+ movement to build their awareness around safe abortion rights and include it as a part of their agenda as well.



Examples of why transgender men, non-binary and intersex people need safe abortion

- A transgender man was denied abortion after being sexually assaulted and as a result getting pregnant.
- Sexuality is different from gender identity. Many transgender men are sexually and romantically attracted to other men. Unprotected sex can lead to pregnancy.
- Some transgender individuals choose not to get hysterectomies and could get pregnant.
- Sometimes the life of the pregnant person can be in trouble, and the only way is to get an abortion.
- Not providing safe abortion services can lead to further health problems like infections

Shane's session was received very well by participants and here's some reflections they shared in their own words:

- My take away from the sessions were discussion on public and private patriarchy, their impact on access to safe abortion services. Moreover, I found Shane's presentation on LGBTQIA+ community's inaccessibility to SRHR quite enlightening and thought provoking. Shane's idea of representatives from the all the marginalised communities is something that has been proposed a lot of times, but it is hardly implemented. It is true that representation matters!
- Day 4 - we learned even more! Discovering a plethora of new terms like gender identity, gender expression, physical and romantic attraction, etc by creative methods like the Gender Unicorn was fun. The session on Transgender and Intersex inclusivity made me realise how little is known about these topics and how we continue to let it be that way, or worse, hide it further.
- Day 4 was overwhelmingly informative session. There are so many things that provoked me like, knowingly or unknowingly we tend to exclude the trans people through various ways, majorly by our language or isolating their views during discussions and many more. Specially after the session, during my assignment and work from college I was more conscious preferring the neutral terminologies like 'their' rather than his/her. Also, Shane gave us many more ideas on how we can make difference in the trans, intersex, etc. community.

Human rights and SRHR

The needs-based and rights based approaches	
Needs Based Approach	Rights Based Approach
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May or may not be met • May fluctuate, can be arbitrarily decided or withdrawn • Identified by provider – a client / patron relationship is established • May be reduced • Sense of benevolence • No consequences to the provider if not met • Non-fulfillment becomes crucial only when needs of a large section of society are affected 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enforcable by law • Not arbitrary but according to established principles and standards • Are negotiated and the bearer of rights has a say • Dynamic and open to expansion • Fulfilled because there is a 'right' • Consequences in terms of accountability to mechanisms and remedies for claiming rights • Violation of a single individual's rights is a 'wrong'

The next session was led by Dr. Manisha Gupte who discussed rights, particularly human rights and their connections with Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR). The session included videos and group work and went on to explore SRHR through the rights-based approach and human rights lens. She stressed that human rights are interdependent or inter-connected and they are not hierarchical. However, in reality human rights are not protected always and/or for all and some people's human rights are more vulnerable and more often violated. A country endorses and incorporates human rights by passing laws that ensure that right for the people in the country. However, human rights may or may not be

recognized by all countries and even if a country passes a law to protect a human right, the law may change over time; for e.g. domestic violence was decriminalized by Russia recently. Rights can also be curtailed for reasons such as, national security and so on. Therefore, we have to constantly push to protect and promote human rights starting from our own countries.

Dr. Gupte explained reproductive and sexual rights through the lens of human rights – the right to decide freely whether or not want to reproduce, timing and spacing the pregnancy and the ability to decide for themselves without any coercion. She reminded that none of these rights are given but the international treaties codify them and the governments have to translate them into laws so we can enjoy these rights.

Week 3

Day 5

Recap

- Participants shared that they really enjoyed the session led by Shane as it is always a struggle to talk about LGBTQIA+ issues.
- The session helped them reflect on how to create a more inclusive society such as, ask for the pronouns of people, or demand for gender neutral sanitary and sexual health products, and so on.
- Participants reflected on CEDAW and the discussions around human rights, especially the connection with reproductive and sexual rights.
- The history of human rights, the difference between needs based and right-based approach and the importance of rights-based approach towards abortion rights was an important learning.

Values clarification

Definition of Values

- “Values are **concepts or beliefs** about **desirable** end states or **behaviors** that transcend specific situations, **guide** selection or evaluation of behavior and events and are ordered by relative importance” (Schwartz et al., 1987).
- Values are **enduring beliefs** that a specific **mode of conduct** is **personally or socially preferable** to an opposite or converse mode of conduct (Rokeach, 1973).

Dr. Gupte and Dr. Dalvie facilitated the session on values through an interactive session. Participants were asked what are values and they answered:

- Values are traditional norms.
- Values are the norms, set of rules or morality.
- Values are guided by our morals or morally guided.
- Values are considered to be some sort of rules that need to be followed.
- Values are an integral part of our life that really shapes our life in different ways.
- Value is a level or standard of behaviour morally framed by our understanding of what is good and bad/right and wrong.
- Values are standards set by the society about what is good and what is bad.

Participants were then asked who influences our values and they answered:

- Religion
- Family
- Society (which is all of us and hence we are not passive receptors but also reproduce values actively) and community
- School and teachers
- Law or the codification of the moral values of the society
- Mass media

As we go through life, we reflect on the values that were influenced by external forces and handed down to us. However, when we grow older, we might critique them and discard some, and replace them with a new set of values. The process of questioning and challenging norms, values and understanding which ones feel wrong and which ones feel right for us is a very interesting and important life process. Dr. Gupte and Dr. Dalvie facilitated a debates session where participants had to take a stand and defend a certain value; ultimately to question if the values we hold so dearly are utilitarian or instrumental (for greater good) or are they truly rights-based (to ensure the human rights and dignity of each individual).

Day 6

Recap

- Participants found the session on values very thought provoking.
- Some issues remained contentious and Dr. Dalvie reiterated the needed to think through and understand our approach to these issues – is it from a human-rights lens or a utilitarian and instrumentalist lens.
- Participants also asked questions around sex work and the difference between decriminalization and legalization of sex work.
- Participants asked questions around when abortion can be denied – when sex of the foetus is the factor and if parents should be counselled to keep foetuses with disabilities.
- Dr. Dalvie reiterated that we need to hold systems accountable and demand structural shift instead of compelling individuals. (Shift from instrumental and utilitarian to rights-based and human rights approach.)

Abortion laws and policies

Dr. Dalvie led a discussion on abortion laws and policies. Participants were asked to share the legal situation around abortion from their countries and here's what they said:

- The abortion policy in China guarantees it as a right to citizens of the country. However, there is a very high stigma attached and many people do not seek safe abortion services. The Chinese government is trying to promote it as a right and create greater awareness among people.
- In Sri Lanka abortion is guaranteed only if the mother's life is in danger and not even permissible in case of a rape.
- In Bhutan conditional abortion is allowed and the four conditions are - if the pregnant girl is below 18 years, or the pregnant girl or woman is mentally unsound, or there are foetal deformities or if it is a rape case.
- In Pakistan conditional abortion is allowed such as if there is foetal deformities or a genetic disorder before 12 weeks. After that also there are some conditions under which abortions are allowed but it is restricted and viewed as a sin/crime. Especially if the woman is unmarried, she'll be charged for two crimes - premarital sex and abortion.
- In Nepal abortion is legal up to 12 weeks and after 12 weeks there are some conditions applied. In case of rape or incest the 12 weeks is extended up to 28 weeks and also special provisions are made if the woman's life is in danger or any risks of disabilities. The woman's consent is needed for an abortion.
- In India abortion is allowed for 20 weeks. In 2017 there was an amendment and abortion was extended to 24 weeks if there is substantial danger to the pregnant woman's life. Till 20 weeks one registered medical practitioner is needed and after 20 weeks two registered medical practitioners were needed. In 2021 the law was amended again and now any woman (married or non-married) can seek abortions. The law maintains certain conditions for abortions – rape and incest, foetal anomalies, contraceptive failure and risk to the pregnant woman's physical or mental health. The upper gestational limit is not decided in case of substantial risk to the woman's life and a medical board will decide whether or not to grant abortions beyond 24 weeks.
- In Philippines abortion is restrictive and highly stigmatized.

An exercise was carried out where participants were divided into break-out groups and they had to decide who they would allow to have the last abortion and why. This brought about a lot of nuanced discussion around who are perceived as “deserving” of abortions, who can do without it and be subjected to an unwanted pregnancy. This also gave participants a glimpse of how policy makers decide on issues such as abortions within a limited context and how best to negotiate with them.

Week 4

Day 7

Recap

- Participants shared that the last weeks session involved a lot of self-reflection including the home-work and reading the article, Being A Feminist Gynaecologist in The Patriarchal World of Medicine by Dr. Dalvie that was assigned to them led them to reflect on their own stands.
- The discussions and the materials also gave them greater clarity towards understanding human rights and how it applies to safe abortion rights.
- Participants reflected on the deeply entrenched internal biases and patriarchy we all have, and how difficult the process of unlearning our biases and learning a rights-bases perspective is.
- Participants shared that the last week's session made them reflect and reevaluate their own stands. It helped them understand how they reproduce the patriarchal norms and challenge their own notions – pushing them to stand up against those norms in their personal sphere as well as when they occupy decision making positions.
- Participants shared that they really enjoyed watching the film, The Drop and it resonated them and reaffirmed their commitment to advocate for safe abortion rights in their respective countries and region.

Contraception and gender

Dr. Suchitra Dalvie facilitated the session by asking the participants to draw the male and female reproductive systems. She led a discussion on the reproductive system, menstruation, ovulation and pregnancy, including, how pregnancy tests work. She took us back to the first day of the institute when participants had to introduce themselves along with an animal. She asked them to share the mating and sexual behaviour of the animals that they chose and some of the responses were:

- Lions are polygamous or have multiple partners. If they are in captivity then they breed every year and in the wild they breed every two years.
- Elephants (both male and female) possess two glands and they secretions are how they mate with other another. Mating occurs during high rainfall and the gestation is about 18 to 22 months long – the longest of any mammal.
- Rabbits mature between 10 to 16 weeks and their mating process lasts about 10 to 20 seconds. Their gestation period is about 32 days and at a time she will give birth up to 16 babies. Immediately after they give birth, they can be impregnated again and reproduce every month of the year.

She then asked if they asked any contraception that animals used? She reminded them that when the animals are domesticated, humans provide them contraception. But in nature they have a mating season and do not use any contraception – they don't need contraception as sex happens only to reproduce. Very few animals, such as, dolphins, elephants, the higher

apes and humans have sex for other reasons and not only for procreation – for pleasure and power; very few animals also masturbate, such as, dolphins.

Therefore, for human's contraception is important as sex is not only about reproduction (and it is also about pleasure and power.)

The various contraceptive methods and how they work were discussed – oral contraceptive pills, condoms, copper-T, injectables and patches, and so on. Injectables may have side effects such as amenorrhea and the break in oral contraceptive pills is not needed but more to fulfil the cultural expectation to bleed every month. Copper in the Copper-T is a spermicide and condoms have spermicide as well. Patches use hormones to prevent pregnancies.

Dr. Dalvie shared that even today the responsibility of using contraception including adopting more permanent methods is disproportionately on women. For e.g., vasectomy is non invasive and does not take much time and yet in India the vasectomy rate is about 5% and 95% of the permanent methods is for women. Finally, she reminded us that even after using contraception there will still always be a need for abortions due to contraception failure or changed life circumstances.

Unsafe and safe abortion

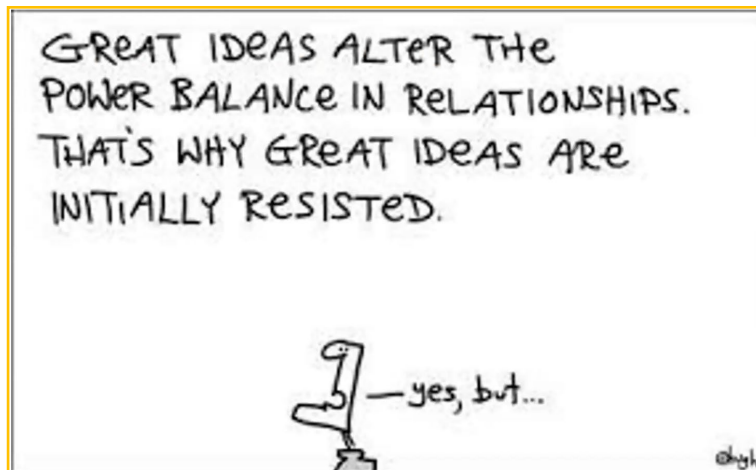
Methods for safe abortions were discussed, manual vacuum aspiration or MVA and the medical abortion or MA pills – Mifepristone and Misoprostol. The reason why unsafe abortion existed even after technological advancement is mainly due to patriarchal norms that restricts access to safe abortion services and endangers lives. Therefore, Dr. Dalvie reminded that it is important to understand abortion in the larger context - is not a standalone and does not exist in a vacuum. It exists in the context of patriarchal social norms and laws and the movement for the right to safe abortion is a part of a larger feminist struggle against such unjust norms. One of the medical abortion drugs, Misoprostol that was available to treat gastric ulcers in Brazil was discovered to be effective for terminating pregnancies by Brazilian women, given that safe abortion was highly restricted by the law.

Day 8

Recap

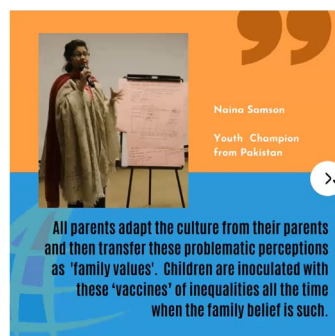
- Participants reflected on how contraception is feminist issue as the responsibility is largely on women to use them and prevent unwanted pregnancies.
- Participants also reflected in the information around abortions and the ways in which safe abortions are available.
- Participants understood that contraceptives and condoms should be readily available and accessible to all.
- Dr. Dalvie reiterated that the debate around abortion as a method of family planning is an old one. Realistically abortion is in the continuum and should be counted as a family planning method. However, strategically they are kept separate to prevent opposition against family planning (because it is clubbed with abortion as it is a much more contentious subject.)

Subversion and hegemony



After a group activity to reflect on the values and feminist principles discussed so far, Dr. Suchitra Dalvie led the session on subversion and hegemony. Hegemony or domination of the ones who are powerful over the rest of the people – for example, United States of America exerts hegemony over global politics or in South Asian communities those who are from dominant and upper castes exercise power over everyone else. Subversion is a strategy to counter hegemony. We need to find something that people already know and then twist it to convey our message which is counter hegemonic. The subversion stories often use popular folklore or legends but turn them around and portray an alternate reality. They are popular as they connect with audiences due to the familiarity and yet leave them astounded with an unexpected ending.

What does it mean to be pro-choice?



Based on the ideas and examples of subversive feminist messages, Dr. Suchitra Dalvie discussed the need to put out as many pro-choice messages out there so that these messages are easily available for everyone. She also asked to rethink the language to advocate for safe abortion rights - we often say “abortion is illegal except for...”, which focusses on the ‘illegality’ of abortion and reinforce the stigma around it. As activists and abortion rights champions we should instead say, “abortion is legal in the case of...” and normalize the idea of abortion, use the term ‘pregnant persons’ instead of mother and move towards a more sensitive and inclusive language when advocating for safe abortions.

Week 5

Day 9

Recap

- Participants shared that they felt that understanding around issues of human rights, feminism and safe abortion rights has deepened because of the institute.
- Participants shared that the institute has given them clarity by imparting knowledge and information that they needed to articulate their beliefs and advocate for safe abortion rights.
- Participants shared how the institute has enabled them with the information and strengthened their confidence to share it back in their networks and countries and take forward the safe abortion movement in their context.

Country Advocacy Network (CAN)

The CANs that shared about their work:

- The Bhutan CAN was started 4 years ago under the name, Druk-Youth Initiative of Sexual Advocacy (DYISA). Over the years the CAN has carried out many sensitization workshops both online and offline. The pandemic was a challenging time and they could not conduct as many planned offline activities. Yet the CAN successfully continued their work through innovative events like a feminist song competition around safe abortion right. Despite the challenges of working in a country which is governed by Buddhist ethos and views abortion as a sin, DYISA has reached out to various young people including, from the LGBTQIA+ and sex workers community.
- The India Safe Abortion Youth Advocates (ISAY) presented and they shared about the work that they do in India. ISAY is primarily formed by medical students and the need for such a CAN was because as medical students they understand the sexism and patriarchy within the medical curriculum and profession. They realise that these issues need to be addressed and the medical training and practice needs to be made more gender sensitive to support SRHR and safe abortion rights for all. ISAY conducts rights-based sensitization workshops for medical students and aims to create a pool of empathetic medical practitioners with a deep understanding of human rights, feminist issues and safe abortion rights.
- Youth led SRHR Advocacy Nepal (YoSHAN) conducts sensitization workshops including with women factory workers, Female Community Health Volunteers (FCHV) who are the backbone of the country's healthcare, and through a FM radio show to raise awareness on safe abortions in Nepal. YoSHAN also conducts local institutes for young people including marginalized communities such as, people with disability, LGBTQIA+ people and sex workers and strengthen safe abortion rights. YoSHAN is also a member of the Reproductive Health Rights Working Group (RHRWG) which is led by the National Women's Commission of Nepal where they work with the government to advance the safe abortion movement in the country.
- Our network member from Philippines also joined and shared the situation in the country. The current political context is extremely restrictive and challenges the safe

abortion movement. Abortion is legally restricted in the Philippines and the members in Philippines is trying to advocate against it. They also run a hotline to support abortion seekers in the country under a harm-reduction model. They also work on creating sensitivity among service providers and strengthen safe abortion rights.

- Pakistan Advocacy Network (PAN) shared that the institutes organized by ASAP are extremely important to build new safe abortion advocates who then take forward the safe abortion movement which is both a great responsibility and opportunity. The youth champions who now lead the work of PAN organize regular sensitizing workshops for young people including, people with disability and LGBTQIA+ people. PAN also uses theatre as tool for advocacy as it resonated with most people and helped engage with them about a contentious/taboo topic like safe abortion rights.
- Youth Advocacy Network Sri Lanka (YANSL) engages with young people on safe abortion rights with a diverse group of people including, LGBTQIA+ and people with disability. YANSL is currently running a SRHR programme for people with hearing disabilities and have developed a sign-language glossary for SRHR terms and concepts. They have also launched an accessible website to create awareness on rights including SRHR for people with disability. With the help of ASAP YANSL has also created a legacy video to capture the history of the safe abortion rights movement in Sri Lanka.
- Vietnam Youth Action for Choice (VYAC) shared about their work of creating awareness on safe abortion rights among young people. They conduct many interesting activities such as organizing movie nights and holding festivals to raise awareness. VYAC also runs many activities online and through their social media pages. They have created a [website](#) for people to share their abortion stories and fight the stigma against it.

All the CANs shared the challenges brought upon due to the COVID19 pandemic and the need to revise many of their activities from offline to online platforms. This enabled them to engage with a diverse group of people and go beyond the regular audience. The online work also strengthened collaborations with diverse groups and strengthened the intersectional approach.

Content creation

Finally, based on the inputs received through the sessions the participants created feminist content with subversive messages.

Blogs:

Read: [An Independent Man- The need of the hour](#) by Saraswati Palnitkar

Memes and visuals:

RDS : Modern feminists want to dominate over men.

Modern feminists fighting for reproduction rights, women in decision-making, systemic oppression :



Virgin: I'm proud of you.
Not Virgin: I respect you.
Pregnant: Enjoy your blessings as of a woman.
Abortion: You had your reason.
Miscarriage: Strong woman indeed.
Infertile: Doesn't make you any less.
Scars: You're still beautiful.
Fat/skinny: You're beautiful either way.

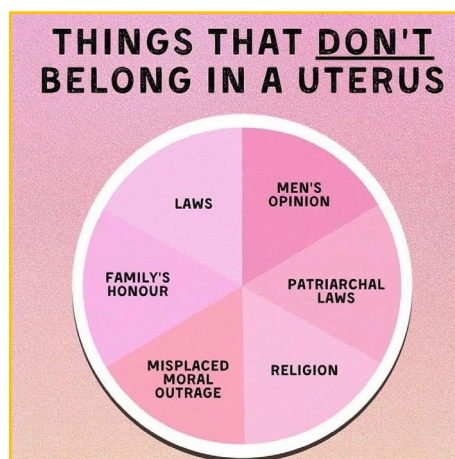
It's time to stop judging and start empowering one another. Nobody is perfect, love your imperfections. 😊

THOC

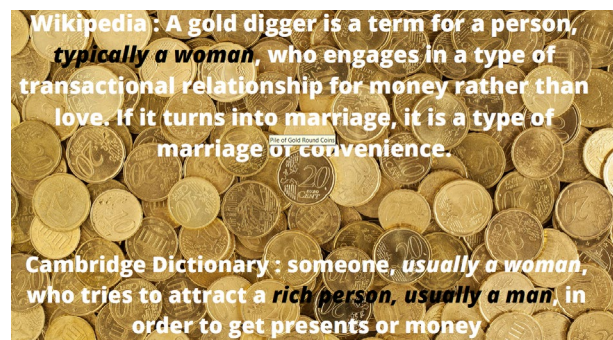
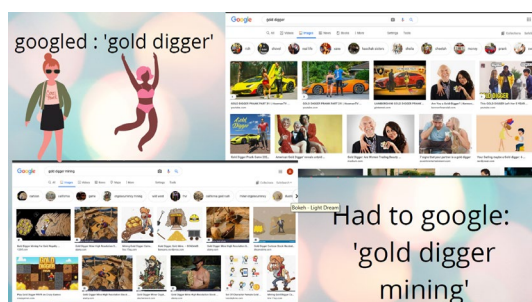
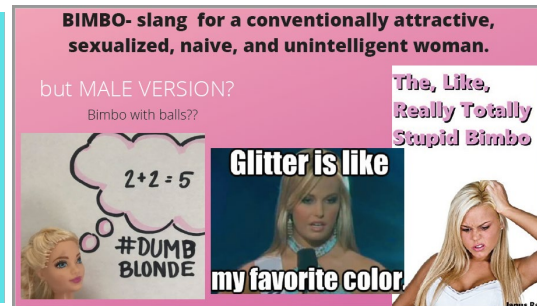
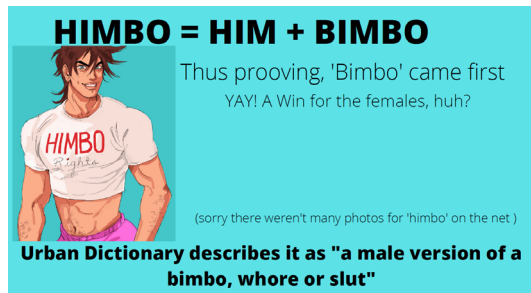


Muslim Women: I cover because that's my choice

Billie Eilish: I wear baggy clothes because that's my choice



Gendered and sexist slangs: Where is the male equivalent?



Next steps and evaluation and feedback forms

The evaluation forms reflected an increase in clarity in knowledge and greater confidence to speak about safe abortion rights. The feedback forms reflected the enthusiasm of the participants and their commitment to the institute's objectives. There was an overwhelmingly shared feedback to follow up the online institute with a physical or offline meeting whenever travel will open up again.

Annexure 1 – Agenda

3rd Online Regional Youth Advocacy Institute
Asia Safe Abortion Partnership
March-April 2021

Objectives of the Institute

1. To create a community of trained and sensitized youth champions who have an understanding of access to health care as a gender, sexual and reproductive rights, as well as human rights issue.
2. To facilitate the utilization of social media and other community level networking and communication by the youth champions through capacity building and ongoing mentoring.
3. To support the ongoing engagement of the youth champions, within and outside their community to ensure implementation of the above strategies in order to advocate effectively for improved access to health care services, including medical abortion.

The alumni will be facilitated to emerge as a community with a strong voice on this discourse at local, national and regional levels and to engage with the issues on an ongoing basis through the online network as well as through participation in relevant meetings.

Agenda			
Week 1			
Day	Topics/Sessions	Learning objectives	Methodology
Day 1: Saturday 27th March 2021 6.30 to 9 pm IST	Introduction	Introductions, Host country – Mongolia	Kenna, Mongolia
	Agreements	Agreements of engagement	Dr. Suchitra Dalvie
	Gender, sexuality, patriarchy	Understand the difference between sex and gender, the social construct of gender and the role of patriarchy in perpetuating the gender inequalities.	Manisha Gupte
Day 2: Sunday 28th March 6.30 to 9 pm IST	Review and recap		Participants
	Gender and Mass Media	Gender, sexism and mass media	Ayesha Bashir
	Understanding power and	Understand the cascade effects this has on the	Manisha Gupte

	patriarchy-1	differential control over resources and decision-making powers especially with reference to healthcare systems	
Week 2			
Day 3	Review and recap		Participants
Saturday 3rd April 6.30 to 9 pm IST	Understanding power and patriarchy-2		Manisha Gupte
Day 4	Review and recap		Participants
Sunday 4th April 6.30 to 9 pm IST	Trans and non-binary people – the issues they face in the context of the safe abortion rights movement		
	Human Rights and SRHR:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the significance of the paradigm shift at the ICPD • Obtain clarity on the rights-based perspective towards safe abortion. 	Manisha Gupte
Week 3			
Day 5	Review and recap		Participants
Saturday 10th April 6.30 to 9 pm IST	Values clarifications		Manisha Gupte and Suchitra Dalvie
Day 6	Review and recap		Participants

Sunday 11th April 6.30 to 9 pm IST	Abortion laws and policies		Dr. Suchitra Dalvie
Week 4			
Day 7	Review and recap		Participants
Saturday 17th April 6.30 -9 pm IST	Contraception and gender in health		Dr. Suchitra Dalvie
	Unsafe abortion and safe abortion		Dr. Suchitra Dalvie
Day 8	Subversion and hegemony		Dr. Suchitra Dalvie
Sunday 18th April 6.30 -9 pm IST	What does it mean to be pro-choice?		Dr. Suchitra Dalvie
Week 5			
Day 9	Review and recap		Participants
Saturday 24th April 6.30-9 pm IST	CAN sharing		ISAY, PAN, YouthAID, YoSHAN, VYAC, DYISA, YONI
	Sharing of content creation		Participants
	Post evaluation and feedback forms, Next steps		ASAP