

**The Roshni Program**

What happened when a pilot program took the ideals of the Indian Constitution to young community leaders in the state of Bihar

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**The Power of Stories**

How image and text, empathy and imagination, can take stories from the margins into the mainstream. News from our Storytelling Initiative 2.0

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At renew: South Asia Sex Workers' Summit, Nepal, we reaffirmed old loyalties and pledged anew to keep the support coming

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As our Emerging Leaders Initiative draws to a close, we asked this cohort of feminists to tell us about the past year. Plus, all the faces at CREA

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**Changing for Good**

A selection of snapshots from the ground of lives that improved because of our interventions. Plus, the year in numbers

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**LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS**

Twenty-five years ago, CREA was founded with a simple but radical vision—to challenge power, push boundaries, and reimagine justice. What started as a small but bold initiative has grown into something of a global force, if we do say so ourselves, shaped by the communities we stand with. This past year, we have seen feminist movements under attack, rights questioned, and justice delayed. But we have also seen resistance, creativity, and solidarity in action. As we work on our strategic plan for 2026-2030, we are setting the stage for even greater impact.

We are also in the thick of creating the next edition of reconference (allies and friends will remember recon 2019), scheduled to be held in December 2025 in Kathmandu. As we invite movement actors from around the world to participate, it will also serve as an opportunity for us to take stock as well as take forward our work. The next 25 years will doubtless demand bolder imagination, greater courage, deeper accountability, and stronger collective action – and CREA is ready to meet that challenge.

We began our 25th year by transitioning to a model of shared leadership: CREA Global being led by Geetanjali Misra and CREA India by Anuradha Chatterji. We also went through a restructuring with separate teams for some functions and shared for others.

Thank you for standing in solidarity with us. Here's to what comes next.

GEETANJALI MISRA &  
ANURADHA CHATTERJI



# When they GO LOW...

...WENT THE ADVICE, WE GO HIGH. (But we all know how that ended.) Instead, in a world roiled by war and cruelty and bitter divisions, CREA acted counterintuitively at the 15<sup>th</sup> AWID Forum held in Bangkok (December 2-5, 2024).

Our first initiative was a simple invitation to 'show some love'. At one lounge, we put up no slogans, distributed no brochures, uttered no high-minded words. Instead, we invited people to show some love in a time of hate. Against a colorful backdrop dedicated to all humans, CREA's 'A Love Letter for...' initiative presented an alternative call to action. The response was astounding. Visitors wrote 'love notes' to persons they were thinking of, missing, loving. Many wept

as they wrote. We stuck each note on to our backdrop. Finally, there was no space; note was stuck upon note, the whole backdrop bristling with notes filled with emotion. We carefully peeled each off and carried the precious cargo back (634 notes, in multiple languages). The project hasn't ended.

At the 'Platform Accountability Lab', CREA and Point of View urged folks to rethink how data misuse affects structurally excluded communities. Elsewhere, at the sex workers' gallery, visitors left their thumbprint on the 'tree of solidarity' for the Kathmandu Declaration created at Renew (see pg. 4).

We held multiple events. One titled 'Shrinking Spaces or Invisible Spaces?' was a hybrid-format



activity for women with disabilities, co-created by CREA, Rising Flame and Women's Fund Asia. Under the Our Voices, Our Futures consortium, we hosted a reception to launch The Full Picture Campaign on misinformation/disinformation. At a workshop co-created by Amnesty, CREA,

Resurj, IWRAP and Intersecta, participants reflected on punitive responses to gender-based violence. And we were at 'Practising Disability Justice in GBV Responses: What Feminists Need to Understand and Do Better', organized by Women Gaining Ground partner, Akili Dada.

## Gifts that *Keep on Giving*

Generosity travels deep into minds and hearts and communities to effect big change

**THANK YOU, DONORS!**

Agence Française de Développement	Global Labor Justice-International Labor Rights Forum
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation	ILGA World
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Foundation for a Just Society	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands
Ford Foundation	Open Society Foundations
Girls Not Brides	United Nations Population Fund
Global Fund for Women	Wellspring Philanthropic Fund

Three of the four consortiums we are a part of – Our Voices, Our Futures; Women Gaining Ground; and Count Me In! – entered their penultimate year in 2024. Special thanks to the generosity of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, which supported much of this work. And farewell, Wellspring, it was a privilege.

INDIA PROGRAMS



SELF ACADEMY

Two Storytelling, Expression, Leadership and Freedom academies were held this year. In June 2024, 27 young women from sanitation worker families participated, most affiliated with Safai Karamchari Aandolan, Centre for Dalit Rights (Jaipur) and Sanmaan Society (Bhopal). The second, held in Delhi in August 2024, trained 33 young women from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Jharkhand in computer literacy, gender, sexuality, digital safety, and consent.



**SEXUALITY, GENDER, AND RIGHTS INSTITUTE – HINDI**  
CREA hosted the 19th edition of the Sexuality, Gender, and Rights Institute in January 2025, in Delhi, bringing together 35 participants from across India.

GENDER AND WASH

In Mumbai, we organized the Conclave on Occupational Health of Sanitation Workers in August 2024, with the Indian Institute of Human Settlements. In Patna, we partnered with the Aga Khan Foundation for a state consultation on disability-inclusive sanitation, engaging over 70 participants. In Chennai, we collaborated with Dorcas to host another state consultation, discussing sanitation access for persons with disabilities. Certificate courses were launched with the Odisha Urban Academy and the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, and conducted safety audits with SafetiPin.

MERI PANCHAYAT, MERI SHAKTI

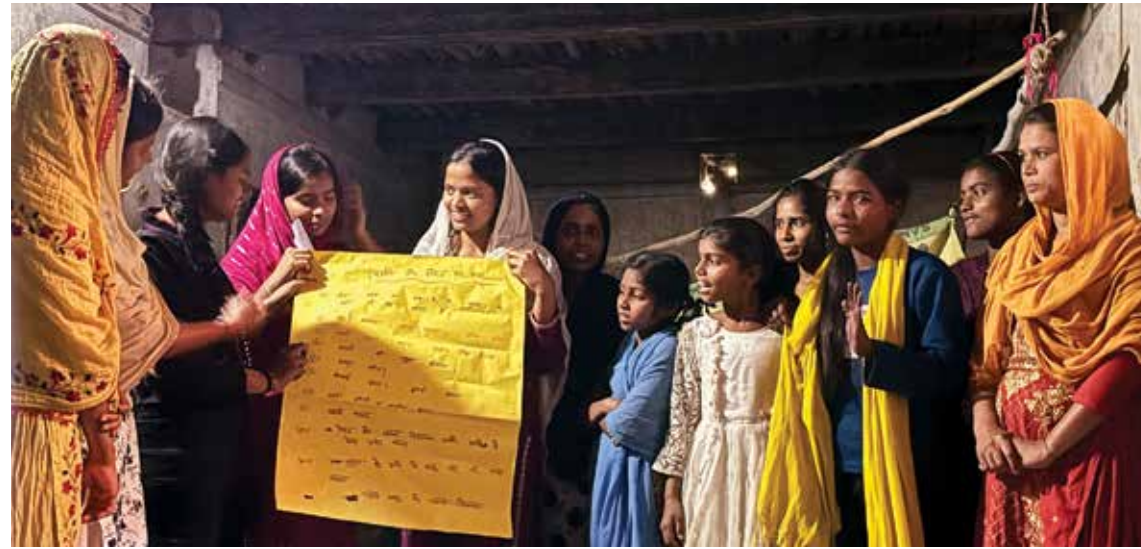
The third round of our work with elected women representatives (MPMS 3.0) in the states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar was kicked off with an orientation in February 2025. The Hindi podcast ‘Gender ka Bawandar’, on stories of girls and women under MPMS, ran for six months with 24 episodes.

IBTIDA

The network of 30 women-led grassroots organizations in the states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Jharkhand began moving towards becoming independent, with vision-building and strategy meetings held in November 2024.

# The IDEAL of India

Our new Roshni Program on Constitutional values was an idealistic, and exciting, pilot project that took us back to first principles



Once upon a time, about three-quarters of a century ago, a very important book called *The Constitution of India* was created. A group of people deeply invested in the idea of the new-born state of India debated, argued and finally agreed enough to pen a guide on how to raise the newborn with sturdy values. These ‘Constitutional values’ were respected (for the most part) and guided the governance of the growing country for some sixty years. Then, a decade ago, the Constitution became a passé document for many in India.

But some, like us, thought it important to revisit the ideals enshrined in that document and create awareness of those values, especially for young people. Thus was born the Roshni Program, in 2024, to enable young women to deepen their understanding and application of Constitutional values

– justice, equality, democracy, secularism and freedom. By engaging 15 community leaders across various locations in the state of Bihar and providing support through mentors and external experts, the program aimed to enhance civic engagement and promote Constitutional awareness at the Panchayat level.

Women aged between 21 and 35 were eligible to apply for the Roshni Program by September 2024. And 15 such young women, passionate about working on governance, creating transparency and accountability, and making a difference at the grassroots, were finally chosen. All selected participants have at least high-school education and two years of experience in community work, social change, education, law, art, theatre, journalism, human rights or development.

Since November 2024, 11 young community leaders are being

mentored with capacity-building workshops and have been given access to online training modules. They are paid a monthly honorarium of Rs 20,000 over 10 months till the program ends in October 2025. The program guides participants through a journey of change that addresses nuances related to equality, discrimination, human rights, fundamental rights and citizenship rights. By applying a gender lens, we aim to deepen the conversation on these issues, ensuring a more inclusive approach to addressing systemic inequalities and fostering greater gender equality.

And by the time the pilot program ends in October, this will have been a precious opportunity for CREA to learn about transformative governance at the grassroots. As also, an opportunity for someone to fund it so that it can return, bigger and bolder.

# A Human Rights Issue

Introducing our latest effort to change hearts and minds, the first Gender and WASH Institute that focused on urban sanitation

CREA’s first Gender and WASH Institute, held in Mumbai from 18 to 22 November 2024, was a milestone in advancing an intersectional, rights-based approach in the urban sanitation sector. This five-day residential program brought together 18 WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene) practitioners and professionals from diverse identities, geographies and thematic backgrounds including sanitation, health, SRH (sexual and reproductive health) and grassroots activism.

The Institute focused on communities structurally excluded from WASH systems: women, trans persons, persons with disabilities and sanitation workers. Sessions blended conceptual grounding with practical insights, beginning with explorations of gender, sexuality and patriarchy through personal narratives, led by CREA’s Shalini Singh, to unpack power, privilege and systemic discrimination. Participants then examined how urban sanitation systems—toilet



infrastructure, waste management, policy design – are shaped by gender norms and social hierarchies. Sessions by Anjee Agrawal on disability-inclusive WASH and universal design revealed how accessibility is often an afterthought and how inclusive design benefits all users.

A powerful aspect was direct engagement with lived experiences. Panels featuring trans activists, disability rights advocates and sanitation workers challenged participants to confront structural exclusions in practice and discourse. The Institute also addressed

caste as a structural determinant, with faculty Dipta Bhog highlighting how Dalit communities – particularly Dalit women – are historically relegated to underpaid, unsafe sanitation work, including manual scavenging.

Sessions such as “Centering the Human Rights of Sanitation Workers” and “Swachh Bharat Mission through an Intersectional Lens” interrogated why sanitation continues to be framed as charity or behavioral change, rather than as a rights issue. The Institute was not just a training, but a space for learning, unlearning and reimagining.

# Tales from the MARGINS

We launched the CREA Storytelling Initiative in 2023 to offer creative feminist storytellers the opportunity to narrate stories of resilience, hope, and the power of collective action to create change. We selected five outstanding applicants and were in turn rewarded with five fascinating stories – visual, textual and graphic. We opened applications for the next iteration in July 2024 and selected eight from more than 130 applications we received. Over a period of four months, the eight were mentored by a CREA editor and an external editor, author and journalist Nisha Susan, to help them present a nuanced understanding of the issues faced by structurally excluded groups and document aspects missed in the mainstream. Here’s a full list of the selected storytellers and their projects.

ADITYA VIKRAM SHRIVASTAVA

A long-form essay titled ‘Naqli Trans: How Kothis Trouble Trans Visibility from the Margins’ documents the lives of kothis in Lucknow and their resistance in the face of oppression from the state and sister communities like the Hijras.

PAKEEZEH

A long-form essay on two displaced women in Assam and the way the legal apparatus has pushed many like them into a liminal space, making them aliens in their own land.

RINKU KUMARI

The autobiographical narrative, ‘Ironged Clothes and Spotless Shoes’, uses Godna art of Jharkhand to tell of her experience as a Dalit student at a government school.

SANIKA DHAKEPHALKAR

The trans artist created a visual essay documenting the life and death of Daina Dias, a trans woman. The essay also examines the trans community within the sociocultural landscape of Goa.

SHRUTHI MURALI

The long-form essay explores how access intimacy creates environments where the emotional and physical needs of neurodivergent people are not just acknowledged but deeply understood, respected and met without a ‘saviour complex’.

LAVA

A photo essay that aims to break free from stereotypical representations of trans-masculine individuals and documents their own experiences as a trans man.

NANGSEL SHERPA

A photo essay about the lives of three generations of Lepchakha women in the context of development and tourism in a land bordering Bhutan.



From Aindriya Baruah’s project



From Nangsel Sherpa’s project



From Rinku’s project



TOP LEFT AND ABOVE: From Sanika Dhakephalkar’s project

GLOBAL PROGRAMS

SGRI GLOBAL

In May 2024, we hosted the 13th edition of our flagship Sexuality, Gender, and Rights Institute Global in Zagreb, Croatia. This round had 29 participants from 20 countries.

DSRI – EAST AFRICA

Also in May, the Disability, Sexuality and Rights Institute brought together 43 disability activists from Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda and Tanzania. The online DSROI Global took place over six weeks in October and November, with over 70 participants.

FLMBARI – EAST AFRICA

Held in Uganda in September 2024, the Feminist Leadership, Movement Building and Rights Institute had 30 participants, including from partner organizations in Kenya and Uganda, and participants from Ethiopia.

FLMBARI – SOUTH ASIA

The Feminist Leadership, Movement Building, and Rights Institute took place in February 2025 in Colombo, Sri Lanka with 30 participants. We received as many as 832 applications!

SELF ACADEMY – RWANDA

In November, the Sport, Expression, Leadership and Freedom Academy was developed with Hope for Single Mothers, the Rwanda National Assn. of Deaf Women and Afro Ark.

TECH DEEP DIVE

In November, Nishant Shah facilitated CREA's virtual deep dive on gender, sexuality and artificial intelligence, using feminist and queer pedagogies.

ILGA WORLD 2024

CREA, ILGA World and GATE co-hosted an anti-gender, anti-rights pre-conference convening in Cape Town, South Africa. Our ED Global, Geetanjali Misra, spoke at the plenary session of the conference.

ILGA ASIA 2025

CREA co-organized two pre-conference sessions in Kathmandu, Nepal with Kalavai (IPPF and ILGA World): 'Bridging Movements in Asia: Advancing LGBT Rights, SRHR, HIV & Feminism' and 'Countering Anti-Gender and Anti-Rights Mobilisations through Collective Action'.

CEDAW GR 40

In January 2025, we led a webinar under the Generation Equality Forum on the CEDAW General Recommendation 40 on Equal and Inclusive Representation.

CSW 69

The Our Voices, Our Futures consortium, of which CREA is a lead partner, held 'ARTivism for Change' at the Commission for the Status of Women 69 in New York in March 2025. CREA also supported a side event with ILGA World and ESWA.

# FRIENDS



In May 2024, CREA convened a major regional gathering titled *renew: South Asia Sex Workers' Summit*. And we achieved what we set out to do – renew our solidarities to foster some of the friendships that sustain us too



Sex worker movements in South Asia have led transformative processes of mobilization to demand rights, freedoms, justice and recognition – all the more remarkable considering the political and legal challenges, including from the anti-trafficking industry. However, the support and resources that the movements need remain inadequate and uneven. Believing that it was crucial to once again train allies' attention to this important work and reaffirm our commitment, CREA convened *renew: South Asia Sex Workers' Summit* in May 2024 in Kathmandu, Nepal, which was attended by over 200 sex workers and allies.

Over three days, old friends and new met to discuss: the reason for this summit; allyship journeys; accompaniment practices; countering harmful ideas at the United Nations Human Rights Council; sex work in an online world; rights rather than rehabilitation for sex workers; how to get the law to help with social movements; and more. These discussions took place at plenaries, round tables and workshops. The plenaries weren't all serious business, though. They also featured a screening of the acclaimed film, *Zindagi Tamasha*, by Sarmad Khoosat from Pakistan followed by a conversation between Khoosat and Jamia Millia Islamia scholar Shohini Ghosh; an illustrated talk by Ghosh on how sex workers have featured



Scenes from the summit. LEFT: Scholar Shohini Ghosh in conversation with filmmaker Sarmad Khoosat ABOVE: Photographer Anita Khemka at work

in Bombay cinema; dance performances by members of the Jagriti Mahila Maha Sangh, Nepal, a network of female sex workers, and by Komal Gandhar, the cultural wing of the Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee in Sonagachi, Kolkata, India; and theatre performances by Praja Diriyi Padanama, Sri Lanka and, finally, a sex worker-led performance curated by the Shilpee Theatre, Nepal.

A highlight – and act of solidarity – was photographer Anita Khemka's 'Photo Studio', which ran for all three days of the summit. In her words, "My earlier documentation on sex workers was a response to seeing sex work as an exploitative industry. It looked at issues related to their health and physical safety, economic exploitation, and their living and working conditions. The consent was implicit and the intent was to give them dignity and avert voyeurism which was the dominant gaze at the time. With the Photo Studio, the approach towards making the portrait is going to be collaborative. For each sitter, the intent will be to find strength, poise and aspiration in the 'moment' and see beyond their persona defined by sex work. The result will be a staged portrait with each individual directing their own performance." Scholar-filmmaker Sabeena Gadhihoke was in conversation with Khemka at a plenary too. (Watch this space for more on the subject – it'll be exciting!)

Renew 2024 was conceived with sex workers at the center of all design – of plenaries, workshops and activities, of course, but also visual identity and space. Long-time CREA ally and designer Sherna Dastur put sex workers' voices and faces at the front and center of all material that she designed for the summit. And because the gathering brought together people who speak a vibrant variety of tongues, she wove some of the languages of the region into her design: the sex workers' words that billowed on large, light, colorful banners were translated into six languages (Bangla, Hindi, Nepali, Tamil, Sinhala and Urdu).

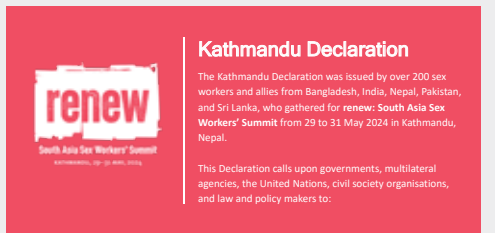
# indeed



Sex worker Ummi Baloch, Karachi Courtesy: Subrang Society, Nepal

I am that girl from the tea gardens of Assam. Whom you abduct from her thatched hut to your colonial bungalow. Where in the flickering fire of the fireplace and with inebriated eyes you gaze at her unclothed body. I am the mainstay of my family. My money buys medicines for my mother and my brother's school books. My body gets drenched with rain. As I become an umbrella, with black clouds over my head. Under my protection, my family lives happily. You... You... All of You. You have done me many favours in literature, in poetry, in rituals. You have worshipped me as Mother. Celebrated me as Nature. Then having painted my lips, you left me on the streets as the 'fallen' woman. Perhaps I am that woman, perhaps, perhaps.

Komal Gandhar's performance of 'Aami Shai Meya', excerpted from *Tales of the Night Fairies* (2002), India

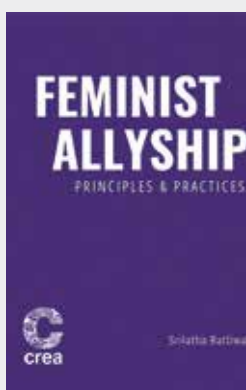


An important outcome from the event, put together by the end of three days by sex workers and allies, including CREA, was the **Kathmandu Declaration**.

The short document calls upon governments, multilateral agencies, the United Nations, civil society, and law- and policy-makers to commit to advancing sex worker rights, respect the voices of democratic movements led by sex workers and recognize sex work as work, among other fundamental demands. CREA disseminated this document at the AWID Forum in Bangkok in December 2024 and continues to circulate it to garner wider commitment to these fundamental human rights.



Sex workers march to Parliament in 2006, New Delhi, India



## How to Make Friends (and Keep Them)

Activist-scholar and trainer and senior CREA advisor, Srilatha Batliwala, has spent long years building knowledge from practice. In good time for this summit, Batliwala authored a publication titled *Feminist Allyship: Principles and Practices* that is based on a case study of the allyship between CREA and sex workers between 2008 and

2022. Over a video recording, she shared the inspiration for writing on this subject, the process of documentation, and a few key learnings around initiating, building and sustaining feminist alliances, not to mention navigating tensions and challenges. The publication was launched formally by sex worker activists at the summit.

We are **25**  
It's been a quarter-century of growing pains and gains. Here's our origin story

More than 25 years ago, Geetanjali Misra read *Pleasure and Danger*, anthropologist Carole Vance's influential book on the politics of sexuality. Misra, Pramada Menon and Radhika Chandiramani of the NGO TARSHI then attended a course Vance taught in Amsterdam. "I thought she was going to show up in black leather, but there she was, all blow-dried hair, looking very proper – and everything that came out of her mouth was totally improper! We loved her from the first minute," says Misra.

Misra and Menon were convinced that the women's movement in India was missing an essential piece. Women's rights activists mobilized against violence, sexual assault, dowry and so on, but sexuality and gender, and an intersectional understanding of these, barely figured in the discourse. And so began CREA, in 2000, to do exactly that, to fling open this whole realm of feminist thought and activism. "If you don't talk directly about sexuality, how do you deal with the forces controlling our lives and bodies?" says Shalini Singh, a team lead of programs and innovation at CREA, who has guided much of its grassroots work in India since 2004.

The organization's flagship Sexuality, Gender and Rights Institute (SGRI), launched in 2007, grew out of the pioneering Sexuality and Rights Institute (SRI) that TARSHI and CREA ran in 2002. "There had never been anything like it. It was intensive and immersive, we lived together for two weeks and read on different aspects of gender and sexuality, and watched films," says Sudipta Mukhopadhyay, who attended the first SRI in Pune, and joined CREA immediately after. Having returned to CREA as a team lead a few years ago, she says: "Looking back, I can see that CREA has always had clarity on its path."

Today, CREA has six Institutes, focusing variously on feminist leadership, sexuality, disability, gender, bodily autonomy, and rights, conducted in English and Hindi. The Ibtida program to build grassroots networks in India has rippled out and strengthened feminist leadership, and CREA also works with elected women leaders in North India. In 2011, it launched Count Me In!, a campaign that addressed sex preference, which led to It's My Body, a program to empower adolescent girls through sports.

CREA programs have always been open and accessible right down to the bones. Translating everything into Hindi was essential, not as a favor but a right, says Singh. CREA's translations effectively grew the feminist vocabulary in Hindi – for instance, using garbh samapan

(decision to end pregnancy) rather than garbhpat (termination) to reinforce agency and dignity. Words like 'queer', 'consent', 'agency', or even the names of body parts, take some effort to render across contexts, she points out.

CREA has always tried to widen the feminist canopy in India and the global South. It works on consolidating alliances, allying with sex workers, working on queer and trans rights, and on the intersections between disability and sexuality. "CREA was a prominent part of Voices Against 377 in India, a coalition determined to decriminalize what the Indian Penal Code termed 'unnatural' sex. Our campaigns shaped both public discourse and legal argument," says Sunita Kujur, who worked at CREA for 16 years. Whether it is the work in Central Asia or East Africa, or hosting dialogues to work across differences, CREA has focused on building bridges and strengthening movements.

CREA's signature themes have not changed. It is rooted in sexuality, gender and rights, and still committed to building young feminist leadership. It brings theory and practice into fruitful encounter, in a way all its own, says longtime CREA associate Srilatha Batliwala: "and I can't think of any other organization doing this." "CREA has an affirmative, joyous approach, using art and storytelling," points out Anuradha Chatterji, executive director for India. "The personal is really the political for CREA. What's discussed in the institutes connects to our intimate experiences."

Even as CREA grew in many directions all at once, it has had some steady mainstays through the years. Its administrative, finance and human resources staffers share the organization's limber, learn-on-the-fly quality. Says Lukas K, the administrative assistant who joined CREA right out of high school, "I went from knowing nothing about computers to using a desktop and now doing tech troubleshooting and using accounting software."

Likewise, Rambishnu Sasmal and Diksha Dubey did everything from accounting to finance, HR to even office renovation. They are now heads of finance, global and India, respectively. Sasmal says it was a privilege to build the systems, devise forms and budgets, learn the intricacies of international taxation and policy. "Everyone knows finance is boring, I agree, but I've created some excitement out of that," he laughs.

Meanwhile, most CREA folks know that these are hard times for the feminist movement. But as Mukhopadhyay says, "We will treat this as a difficult time, and do what needs to be done."

THE POWER *within*



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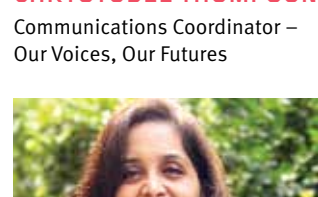
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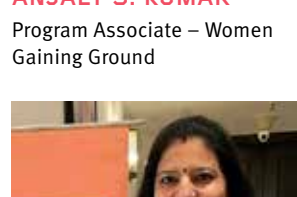
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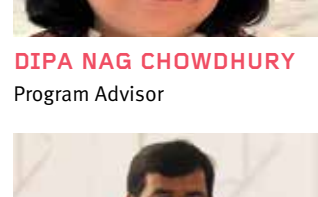
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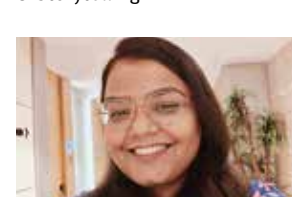
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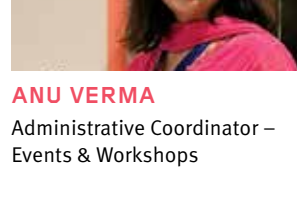
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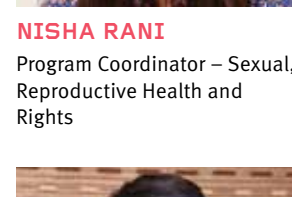
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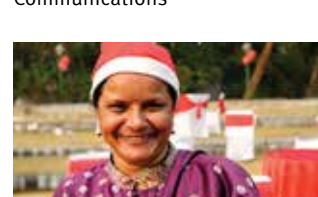
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**PADMA DEOSTHALI**  
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# Employees of the Year

Meet our all-star cast, the folks who made everything that meant anything happen over the course of an unusual year



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Trainer cum Training Coordinator



**SUSANA T FRIED**  
Advisor – Programs and Innovation



**RADHIKA SAXENA**  
Program Manager – Gender-based Violence, Well-Being, and Rights (India)



**SHALINI SINGH**  
Team Lead – Programs and Innovations



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Team Lead – Events, Workshops & Institutes



**SOUMYA TIWARI**  
Program Coordinator – Gender & WASH



**TARUNA PAL**  
Manager – Admin & IT



**VALLERI SHARMA**  
Program Manager – Programs and Innovations



**RAISSA PHILIP**  
Program Manager – Gender-Based Violence, Well-Being & Rights



**SSANJAY RANA**  
Team Lead – Finance and Compliance



**YAMINI PERERA**  
Project Coordinator – Feminist Opportunities Now, Sri Lanka



**SRILATHA BATLIWALA**  
Advisor – Knowledge Building



**ZEBKA KAZI**  
Associate – Communications



**ZIAYAN AHMED**  
Program Coordinator – Our Voices, Our Futures



**RAMBISHNU SASMAL**  
Director – Finance & Operations



**RUPSA MALLIK**  
Anchor – Feminist Responses to Anti-Rights, Anti-Gender Opposition



**SUNITA KUJUR**  
Advisor – SRI & HRC Process

## Young Feminists 2.0

Our second cohort of Emerging Leaders infused the organization with energy and fresh perspectives. In turn, we asked them what they received over the year, and this is what they said...



**ASHHAR SIDIQUE**  
Developing tools for programs with the MEL team pushed me to think critically. Organizing

learning sessions for fellow ELs was enriching as was engaging with experts. Most transformative were the visits to Muzaffarpur, Bihar, and representing CREA at TISS, Mumbai.



**KAVI GANGAR**  
I engaged in intersectional feminist advocacy and movement-building efforts across South

Asia and East Africa, leading the documentation to capture the journey of Count Me In! partners. I gained exposure to learning spaces hosted by other feminist and movement-building organizations.



**AFRAH ASIF**  
While one might wear armor to take on a hostile world, one must remove it at a friend's home. With the

Disability team, I removed it and settled into a warm space that is the dream of feminist disability justice. My team was meticulous, tender, had high standards while allowing for human imperfection.



**PALAK JAIN**  
With Comms, I learnt accessible communication and attention to detail. Work on the Storytelling Initiative felt

like tending to a garden! The visit to Mahoba for Meri Panchayat, Meri Shakti 3.0 exposed me to the formidable communities that women have built, challenging patriarchal power.



**AKANSHA PATIDAR**  
Gender and WASH touches every aspect of dignity, access and justice and CREA's work

in this area boldly centers those most excluded. At the Sanitation Workers Conclave in Mumbai, the stories of Dalit women working in unsafe, stigmatized conditions were both painful and galvanizing.



**RAZIA DEEBA**  
The Gender Fair in Mahoba offered valuable field exposure. I was also fortunate to participate

in CREA's Feminist Mentorship Program in Bangalore, expanding my perspective on leadership and mentoring through a feminist lens. Overall, it was a great and inspiring experience!



**DEEPA KARKI**  
The Roshni Program was very impactful for me. Working with 11 community leaders and witnessing

their journeys, from orientation to implementing social action projects, reinforced my belief in the power of grassroots leadership. I saw how sustained mentorship can lead to significant change.



**SAHANA ARVIND**  
I helped curate the agenda for the CMI! All Partners' Meet in Nepal. I also served as

rapporteur for the official event, capturing discussions, learnings and recommendations. I also supported the design of a Feminist Accountability Toolkit aimed at fostering shared understanding.



**JENITA BLESSY**  
I gained exposure to various aspects of HR work with the People & Culture Unit. Working with the

Programs team, I attended and helped coordinate sessions on gender, sexuality and intersectionality, topics that were new to me but which were empowering and inspiring.



**SOUMYA SINHA**  
My teams were spaces where I could bring my full self – curious, critical, sometimes quiet

– and be met with trust, sharp politics, and the kind of learning that stays. It's made me sharper, but also softer, more rooted in why this work matters, and more committed to doing it with care.

**THE YEAR IN NUMBERS**

**TRAINING SESSIONS**  
75  
(37 IN PERSON, 38 ONLINE)

**PEOPLE WHO ATTENDED TRAINING**  
1,727  
(1,325 IN PERSON, 402 ONLINE)

**CREA INSTITUTES**  
10  
(7 IN PERSON, 3 ONLINE)

**PEOPLE WHO ATTENDED THE INSTITUTES**  
345  
(196 IN PERSON, 149 ONLINE)

**KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTS**  
59

**IN-PERSON EVENTS ORGANIZED BY CREA**  
5

**PEOPLE WHO ATTENDED THE EVENTS**  
587

**ONLINE EVENTS ORGANIZED BY CREA**  
15

**PEOPLE WHO ATTENDED ONLINE EVENTS**  
417

**SUBGRANTS TO ORGANIZATIONS**  
82

**PROGRAMS INVOLVED IN CO-CREATION**  
44%

**SOCIAL MEDIA IMPRESSIONS AND VIEWS**  
1,537,765

**REACH THROUGH EVENTS INVOLVING CREA STAFF AS SPEAKERS**  
2,965

# The Change WE WISH TO SEE

Presenting a selection of brief case studies from the ground, also known as: why we do the work we do



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Manisha Meem Nipun; two portraits of Mridula Kumari; BLAST at work; Nipun again; and Sanju Devi

**SANJU DEVI**  
An elected woman representative (EWR) from Muzaffarpur, Bihar, she received training through our Meri Panchayat, Meri Shakti program (MPMS).  
*The Change* The training boosted her confidence, empowering her to exercise her authority and resist being manipulated. She fought for a year for the local school to be upgraded from Class 8 to intermediate level, thus helping girls from the community access higher education. Sanju also went door-to-door, convincing parents to allow their daughters to continue in school. She also took on a corrupt Child Development Project Officer, reporting the matter to the District Magistrate and ensuring a deserving candidate was appointed. Sanju says, “The MPMS training gives me the courage and motivation to continue to fight for my rights as an elected woman representative.”

**MRIDULA KUMARI**  
A resident of Makdumpur Kodariya panchayat in Bihar, 24-year-old Mridula Kumari enrolled in the Roshni Program last year.  
*The Change* Kumari faced significant challenges at home, including being forced into an early marriage, which interrupted her education. After enduring violence in her in-laws’ house, she returned to her parental home and decided to pursue a college degree. She then started working with a local NGO to become financially independent. Today, enrolled in the Roshni Program and having understood the importance of being self-reliant, she has even travelled independently to Bangalore.

**PATHCHOLA’S MANISHA MEEM NIPUN**  
The Pathchola Foundation is a youth-led organization based in Dhaka, Bangladesh that supports

gender-diverse populations, which received a Feminist Opportunities Now (FON) consortium grant through CREA in August 2024 to create safe spaces for structurally excluded communities, especially for survivors of gender-based violence.  
*The Change* Both the organization and its leader have benefited from support from the FON consortium. The organization has sharpened its focus on survivor-centered care and integrated feminist principles deeply into its framework. And co-founder, trans woman Manisha Meem Nipun, attended the 2024 Commission on the Status of Women, was named among UNOPS’ ‘30 BELOW 30 to Get to 2030’, received an Asia Solidarity Lab Fellowship 2024 on empowering emerging leaders in climate justice, and recognition as a Youth Gender Advocate with the Commonwealth Youth Gender’s Equality Network.

**BLAST**  
The Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) received support from CREA through the Our Voices, Our Futures consortium (OVOF).  
*The Change* The organization has many stories to tell! Once, they came to the rescue of a Bangladeshi student studying in Canada who was ensnared by a blackmailer. In another part of the world, a woman fell prey to a man she met through a dating app. She was defrauded of cash and jewellery but BLAST helped her take him to court and have justice served. In the serene town of Patuakhali, a woman was blackmailed with threats of her intimate photos being released online. BLAST guided her to complain to the police and mediated to resolve the case. The organization also helped victims address non-consensual content on TikTok and tackled fake Facebook accounts.

## FLMBaRI-SA

What participants at the Feminist Leadership, Movement Building and Rights Institute – South Asia, Colombo, told us:



“I never really realized how ingrained power is in our lives, it seemed as if I was unlearning my own understandings of patriarchy and power.”

“The Institute broadened my perspective to see how patriarchy operates in interconnected systems; how it is not just about individual gender dynamics but is deeply ingrained in societal structures, politics, and economic systems.”

“I now realize that patriarchy functions through multiple layers of oppression, affecting various marginalized communities differently based on factors like caste, class, and access to resources.”

“Patriarchy is not just about men holding power – it is a system that operates across gender, class, ability, and caste, reinforcing hierarchies and exclusions.”

“It pushed me to reflect on how power operates within movements and the importance of deconstructing internal hierarchies.”

“The Institute reshaped my understanding of movement building by emphasizing the importance of sustainability, intersectionality, and collective leadership. I realized that successful movements are not just about mobilizing people but about nurturing trust, creating safe spaces and ensuring those directly impacted are leading the cause. It highlighted that movements must address interconnected struggles – for example, how climate justice and trans rights are intertwined – to build long-lasting change.”

“I’ve come to realize that movement building is a long-term process that involves creating networks of support and deepening solidarity. It’s about nurturing relationships and building a sense of shared purpose, rather than just organizing events or actions.”

“I learned how we can make our movements stronger digitally, as well as beyond borders and boundaries.”