



## One Billion Rising for Justice

હિંસાને નાથવા /૧૦૦ કરોડ સાથમાં

ઊઠો, જાગો, નાચો, ગાઓ, હિંસા મિટાવો, પ્રેમ ફેલાવો

## OBR FEST ON 15th February in Vadodara

*Your eyes give strange look to us,  
We know that, but can't tell you.  
You all are whispering about us,  
We know that, but can't tell you.  
You are laughing at us,  
We know that, we can't tell you  
But, today, we want to tell you something,  
Will you listen??  
We are also human beings like you,*

*Don't laugh on us.  
We want to stay with you, share with you,  
Don't laugh on us.  
We are not from another planet,  
Don't look like this,  
Will you be with us??  
Will you understand us??  
Accept us??*

*By Shera (Trans Gender)*

### WE STRIKE | DANCE | RISE TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS ONCE AND FOR ALL

The OBR campaign was launched by calling a meeting of youth of Vadodara on 1st and 2nd February, who headed or represented several youth-groups as well as youth individuals. They were not only from different organisations but also from different fields, such as music/singing, arts, designing, engineering, dance, commercial studies, etc.

In the past two weeks before 15<sup>th</sup> February, Olakh has seen overwhelming support of around 55 young volunteers coming from diverse and distinct backgrounds sharing one space and investing their time in the cause for organizing the **OBR FEST event**.



*Some of the Volunteers in front of Olakh office*

Every one had their individual reason to join OBR FEST. Rohini shares: *"I myself have experienced the differences when I was not allowed to go out of Baroda for my further studies or to work because of somebody's bad deed. Till today my mother obeys my father's order though she knows that it is wrong. But due to societal fear she doesn't fight and keep silence against the violence."*

Sanjay, a volunteer expresses his feelings about why he sticks to the campaign: *"Before joining OBR whenever I used to read newspapers or watch TV where they were showing violence against women going on in different areas by different things such as sexual harassment, domestic violence, etc.; I was feeling ashamed of being a boy because your gender is the sole reason to*



Orientation at a Boys Hostel

*that violence. I really wanted to change the system but had no clue how and where to start. Through the OBR campaign a turning point came into my life through which I got this great opportunity to change the system and now I am feeling really glad."*

These groups of youth have taken numerous responsibilities including orientation/ mobilisation of other youths, publicity of OBR, photography, videography, printing, decoration, concert planning, event organising and other works which comes on our way. Truly

overwhelming is the involvement and the commitment of especially young male volunteers to the cause. Really heart-warming is to see so many volunteers at the same time, sharing the same space and promoting and investing their time for a cause that they genuinely believe in.

It was completely a volunteer based event. Vivek, a volunteer of Olakh since last two years states *"My critical self was stunned when I saw some of the volunteers dedicate their time and energy."*

The campaign started by giving orientation in various universities, colleges and hostels in and nearby the city. **We have covered: 15 Institutions, around 2,000 youth!** Through social media, as all volunteers changed their whats-app-picture to the OBR logo for example and liked/shared our face book page **first hand information of OBR reached around 3,000 to 4000 people.**

The plan was to gather more and more youngsters to sensitize them through the event - a combination of dance, music, films and panel discussion. Local youth bands and young singers from the city have taken initiative to play the music for the cause.



Orientation in Anklav College

Ali, guitarist of 'Gunj' shares: *"Many issues of violence are never told. First as a group, I think we should bring light onto the issues of violence against women which haven't been expressed yet."*

In the two weeks before the event all of us, have done fantastic work: Various orientations about the campaign, practicing for music, singing and dance performances, invitation/handbill writing, poster designing and printing, venue booking, arranging of faraskarna, light and sound and many more planning and preparation were going on simultaneously.



During that process we were facing many challenges, for example to channelize the energy which was coming from the volunteers and to organize the productive time in the best way along with their education and exam pressers.

One major challenge we were experiencing was that we were forced to change the venue

five days before the event, when all the posters and

handbills were already printed and distributed. But nevertheless we managed to get everything ready on time, although so much work was done last minute and it had big impact on mobilization. On Thursday before the event, we held a press conference with 8 representatives of newspapers and radio.

The OBR Fest started with inspirational songs performed with acoustic guitar by a group of four young people which went along the entire evening. After a brief welcome by Priyal and Viral who anchored the whole evening, a colourful welcome dance by the 'Goonj'-Children (Olakh's youth initiative) was presented.



*Rajal, Sampeda, Rahul and Gaurav*



*Performance 'Goonj'-Children*

Then the short film on 'One Billion Rising' was shown, followed by introduction on the One Billion Rising (OBR) Campaign which was given by Sunayana Biswas, one of the main coordinators for the whole OBR event. She explained that violence against women has various forms and happens all over the world. It should concern every one of us.

To give a better impression of rising India to end violence is, we screened the short film 'India Rising' which

demonstrates how India rose in 2013. But to underscore that there is still necessity to STRIKE | DANCE | RISE to end violence against women, we displayed few short clips on sexual harassment and domestic violence as we think that it's a good way to make people understand and sensitive about the cause. *"Horrible eve-teasing took place in my college with our faculty*



teacher. It was really disturbing to see a reputed teacher to go through such level comments.", states Sampeda, youth volunteer at Olakh.

Farheen, a 12 year old student who is a regular member of 'Goonj' shares that she and her mother suffer under street harassment very frequently while her mother drops her in the evening at Olakh for Goonj's academics program (6-8pm). After the third incidence her parents didn't allow her to go out late because they felt unsafe even though they want her to continue with 'Goonj'. Farheen ask to everyone that due to sexual harassment, abuse and eve teasing we are force to remain at home, i have to drop out from Goonj. First of all we need to make the streets safer so my age girls do not need to restrict our mobility and education.



Farheen asks for support



Panel Discussion

After the clips we had a panel discussion with the representatives from various groups engaged with the program. Every one of them stated why they engaged themselves with the campaign. Nimisha (Olakh) and Trupti Shah (Sahiyar) have shared their feelings with satisfaction, that their work of the last 30 years was valuable, because youth are now more aware and taking responsibility to change the situation. Shera, a transgender activist, expressed her

feelings that society is not accepting transgender people as human beings and read a very beautiful poem to share her feelings (which you can read above).

Harish, a youth volunteer shares: "I saw in many villages, even in my own, still people are thinking that girls/women are only a machine for producing children and to care for her husband."

Bijin, another youth volunteer discloses: "As a kid I have seen my mother as a victim of domestic violence at her in-



Performance 'Gunj'



Performance 'October Octaves'

laws residence. This is so far the only experience that's still hunting me."

The youth in the panel expressed their feelings and experience with Olakh, who has given them space to work freely and to share their creativity and also allow them to take commencement.

Three local bands performed on our event: 'Gunj', 'Cornerstone' and 'December Octaves' which gave

the evening a holistic flare. At last, 'December Octaves' performed an especially written theme song on One Billion Rising in collaboration with 'Ahmon' and Baroda Strickers.

At the end of the program, all have taken pledge not to do or support violence direct or indirect, and to speak out against violence. Dhaval, who together with Naheda read the Pledge out loud on stage said: "I always was affected by the issue of violence; especially after the incidence of 16<sup>th</sup> December. I found a proper channel in OBR, that's why I joined."



Taking Pledge

After the vote of thanks to the collaborative organisations all the 75 youth volunteers came on stage and performed a dance flashmob.



Flashmob

Many of the volunteers engaged in this program want to continue the work to end violence against women and sustain their relationship with Olakh. We already had a reflection meeting on the event where we also spoke about the future direction and how we can implement our new learning further. Aditya as an



example wishes to continue with the orientation in colleges with film screening to inform about violence against women and OBR so that next year everyone knows about it.

Although lots of them are gender sensitized, there is many more to learn, so the plan is to organize a gender sensitized workshop and regular study circles with film screening on the various issues concerning to the topic. See this article on domestic violence against women, which Hozefa, one of the youth volunteers has written on his blog: <http://hozefamalek.blogspot.in/2014/02/domestic-violence-against-women.html?m=1>. It shows how much impact the campaign had on the youth and began a whole thinking process.



Here we would like to acknowledge and appreciate the amount of support and never ending energy we received from Mr Hiren Gandhi for the Venue, Mr. Viral Patel for the Banners, Sujal company for the hording space in the city, Mr. Akshay Jethi for all banners and last but not least all the volunteers who invested their various skills, time and resources.

**Collaborative Organisations :** Youth for Common Cause (works to increase the contributions of individuals/groups to charity), United Youth Organisation (World Peace), Baroda Strickers (leading environmental group), Baroda Talks (spreads news about the city), Pratibha Foundation (education for rural children), Sahiyar (Women's Group), Cornerstone Foundation (works for health and counselling of youth) and United Way of Baroda (provides funding to non-profit organizations), Olakh (Feminist Resource Center).





### OBR Theme Song

*It's time to fight, for the right and to strike*

*Now we are not alone so we will rise..*

*Ab na sahe hum, sabse kahe hum...*

*It's time to...*

*Todenge saari zanjire,*

*Payenge hum wo azaadiyan*

*Khudse hi apne takdire,*

*Likhneka ab jagayenge jazba..*

*Tode sare niyam, khauf ko kahe alvida..*

*It's time to fight, for the right and to strike*

*Now we are not alone so we will rise..*

