Movie Screening & Reflection Session On Gender-Based Violence With School Students

PRIA, Martha Farrell Foundation, Embassy of The Netherlands in India
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Background
As part of #16DaysOfActivism, a global campaign to end violence against women, the Martha Farrell Foundation and PRIA partnered with the Embassy of the Netherlands in India for a special film screening of the Dutch film “Fight Girl” (2018). Directed by Johan Timmers, the award winning film tells the story of 12-year-old Bo, her parents’ messy divorce, and her newfound passion for kickboxing. The film touches on many themes like power, violence, and gender.

Participants
Trainers from the Martha Farrell Foundation facilitated the participation of adolescent viewers from approximately 300 schools. We were joined by students from several schools in Darjeeling and Kalimpong; Tibetan students mobilised by the Central Tibetan Administration (the Tibetal Government in Exile); and adolescent cohorts from the Martha Farrell Foundation’s Kadam Badhate Chalo Fellowship.

The aim of the screening was to use its themes to familiarise adolescents with the campaign against gender-based violence and the structures that support and perpetuate it. Participants engaged enthusiastically with the film during a series of ‘Reflection Sessions’.

Group Reflection Session: Kadam Badhate Chalo
Our interactions with children attached to the Kadam Badhate Chalo programme yielded many interesting insights. After watching the film, we asked the KBC Fellows to analyse two of the movie’s characters — protagonist Bo and her older brother Dani. They offered up the following descriptions:
Apart from noting that the two characters were very different from each other, the KBC Fellows also discussed which words are typically used to describe girls and which are used for boys. For many in the Reflection Session, Bo’s character was starkly different from the girls they knew, and Dani’s was different from the boys they knew. They analysed how gender dynamics percolated into both language and behaviours and began to relate the film’s themes to incidents in their own lives. Here are some of their reflections:

**Komal, 15, Haryana, KBC Fellow:**
In our society girls are not allowed to act or play like boys. I wanted to play kabaddi but my parents didn’t allow me to play and also stopped my studies.

**Khadeeja, 15, Bhubaneshwar, KBC Fellow:**
Society always suppresses the courage of girls. They always judge girls for their choices and restrict them to a few things.

During the discussion one of the participants expressed her thoughts about the ways in which children are raised, how society imposes gender norms, and the frustration that they (the girls) have to deal with as a result.
Why are girls kept hidden? Why don’t parents say, “Go Fight”? Girls are told to keep their heads low. Why aren’t boys told not to harass girls?

Interestingly, while this young audience was impressed with how the female protagonist was breaking gender stereotypes, they also investigated the balance of power during the film’s biggest moment of conflict: when Bo confronts three boys who were bullying her mild-mannered brother, using her kickboxing skills to subdue them.

_Ayesha, 16, Bhubaneswar, KB Fellow:_

*Violence by any gender is not acceptable; one should use their potential for good cause in a positive way. The way Bo uses her kickboxing tactics was not okay at all.*

Having discussed the nuances of gender, power, and violence, all adolescents who viewed the film and participated enthusiastically in the Reflection Sessions also learned more about the 16 Days of Activism campaign. They found that its central message aligned with their own ideas about gender justice. They shared their aspirations for a better quality of life for not just women, but people of all genders.

Inspired by the film, these young participants promised to use their voices to take forward the message of ending gender-based violence in their communities and peer-groups. They expressed their interest in joining the global campaign through these small actions at the individual level, and also began to make social media posts, art works, and videos.

**Reflection Sessions: Tibetan Students**

Collaborating with the Women’s Empowerment Desk of the Central Tibetan administration, 30 Tibetan school students participated in a similar online session. With a healthy mix of boys and girls in the group, the students quickly began sharing their observations from their own gendered positions. This helped each of them appreciate different perspectives on gender, power, and violence.

The activity of describing Bo and Dani was recreated with this group, yielding results that were both similar to and different from the KBC Fellows'. The list of words the group came up with are as follows:
Reflection Sessions: Individual

Individual students were asked to collect their thoughts about the film and share their reflections in any format of their choice. As their contributions to the #16DaysOfActivism campaign, school students wrote notes, essays, blog posts, and tapped into their creativity.

_That was a very wonderful movie really enjoyed it 😊 I’m really thankful that you decided to share such an amazing movie with us. By this movie I learnt some few things and one of them were to think and act accordingly, never let anger take full advantage of you and many more. Thank you so much ma’am 😊 I watched it with my family and they enjoyed it as much as I did._

_— Kalista Pradhan, Class 10, Gyanoday Niketan, Darjeeling_

_I really thank you for telling us about this interesting movie The Fight Girl.I watched the full movie and I liked the movie, it was very good. I enjoyed watching it and my parents too watched it and they too liked the film. I thank you once again for telling about the film._

_— Pari Kumar Shaw, Class 6, Gyanoday Niketan, Darjeeling_
I am really inspired by this movie❤️ I loved this movie very much 👍 The characters in this movie have played an amazing role.

— You dang Tamand, Class 8, Gyanodaya Niketan, Darjeeling

Twelve-year-old Bo is a talented but hot-tempered kick boxer. However, Bo is distracted by her fighting parents who are in the middle of a divorce. Bo needs to learn how to control her emotions and at the same time accept the fact she can't control everything. I enjoyed watching the movie it was very motivating!

— Drishti Mukhia, Class 9, Gyanodaya Niketan, Darjeeling

“Why the Difference??” — Blog post on gender stereotypes

— Nissel, Class 9, Camellia School, Darjeeling
Essay on Fight Girl - EFA Young Audience Award

2019

Wielding a volcanic character and paying far more attention to her gut than her head this impulsive younger regularly finds herself shouting, smashing plates, throwing telephones out of windows, railing herself onto the school’s highest gymnastic beam for no apparent reason.

Of even availong herself of a leaf blower and using it to defend kids harassed by their peers, “I have to contain myself... it’s the only thing my parents agree on,” but Bo’s family situation is the very thing which stokes the fire burning within her. Her mother Esther (Hilde de Braeckelaere)

And her father Alex (Ali ben Horsting) have recently separated and are arguing non-stop with Bo and her brother Dani (16 years old a classical guitarist secretly in love with music, diabetic and ultra-shy to boot, played by Bas Keizer).

— Mingma Lhamu Sherpa, Class 7, Gyanoday Niketan, Darjeeling
Today, I saw a very nice movie. The movie name was "Fight Girl." It was posted by our school principal. It is based on a girl who became a kickboxer. Her name was Bodil, which means "warrior." She was a brave girl and taught me to become brave in any situation. Firstly, she can't control her anger, but after she joined the fighting (kickboxing) club, she learned and can control her anger. Thus, taught me if we practice and learn we can control our bad habits. I wanted to thank my principal for posting such an inspirational movie.

— Binimika Chettri, Class 6, Gyanoday Niketan, Darjeeling
— Smriti Sharma, Class 6, Gyanoday Niketan, Darjeeling
NEVER GIVE UP
— Trishna Rai, Class 6, Camellia School, Darjeeling:
— Swaroop, Class 8, Camellia School, Darjeeling