

self
ACADEMY





**Sports
Empowerment
Leadership
Freedom**

A residential 15 day leadership and skill-building academy for young girls in Jharkhand that uses sports, art, media and technology to help them realise their full potential.

15 days
50 participants
8 thematic tracks

Soccer | Art, Body and Desire
Film, Media and Representation
Comics | English | Community Radio
Computer Training | Theatre



Goal

Young girls exert greater control over their bodies, make healthy decisions and live their lives free of violence.

Vision

To enable young girls to be skilled, self-confident and self-reliant so that they can make their own decisions related to their bodies, health, career and lives.

Objectives

- Girls learn how to exert greater control over their bodies and have stronger decision-making abilities
- Strengthen leadership, skills and capacities of girls
- Build knowledge, skills and capacities of girls to enhance employability for them
- Enable girls to resist and speak out against violence, abuse and discrimination

Outcomes

- The agency and sense of equity of girls is built so that they realise their potential and self-worth
- Girls are confident to express their choices and negotiate delays in marriage
- Girls are more informed about their bodies, nutrition and health needs
- Girls demand and access information and services related to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR)
- Girls speak out against discrimination and violence in families, schools and communities
- Girls pursue higher training, learning and educational opportunities for their professional development





SELF – Sports, Empowerment, Leadership and Freedom gets its name and vision from CREA’s “It’s My Body” (IMB) programme.

IMB uses sports as a medium to bring girls together into a collective and talk about issues such as sexuality, gender, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and bodily autonomy. Through sports and trainings on gender and sexuality, girls’ sense of ‘self’ is developed: self- confidence, self-worth, self-esteem and self-expression.

Sports, as a strategy, helps to empower girls, build feminist leadership and examine social norms and expectations. The girls become more assertive in using public spaces and being comfortable with their bodies. They are able to take informed decisions about their health and lives. They learn to be a team player and develop their leadership skills.

After reaching the completion of the IMB curriculum, the girls and their families have often asked, what next? This question led CREA to respond by creating a space for girls where they could explore further opportunities, build additional skills- both vocational and life skills including decision-making and negotiation abilities.

This was translated into the design of SELF Academy. It included skill building thematic tracks, orientation and exposure to existing training, job and livelihood opportunities in their vicinity.

the girls@self

The participants included 44 girls between the age group of 17- 24 years and six female trainers from six partner organisations hailing from four districts in Jharkhand.

Most of the participants at the SELF Academy had completed ten months of IMB curriculum with 65% attendance at least and had participated in the leadership camps. In addition, they should have been able to increase the participation of their parents and families in community events such as sports day and parents' meeting. The girls underwent a rigorous selection process followed by getting parental approval and consent.

The participants were from a mix of different backgrounds. Some hailed from urban areas, others came from peri-urban and rural areas. A significant number came from underprivileged communities such as tribal, economically disadvantaged families, and religious minorities.







Finding MySelf

“My brother and I lost my parents at a very young age. We are being raised by my aunt. My aunt wants me to be happily married. She worries about finding a groom for me. Most matches want a fair and slim girl. I am fair alright but not slim.

My neighbours and other people in the community often censure me for being fat, wearing clothes like boys, for talking to boys.

I am fat for sure but I am not just fat. Through the IMB programme, I have learnt to value myself especially when I learnt to play soccer. People ridiculed me as they thought how a fat girl could play soccer. But I showed them. By playing soccer I have learnt so much about my body and my rights.

At SELF, this is something that has become stronger in me. I would love to be able to live life on my own terms. I would like to taste alcohol of various kinds because I want to know what it tastes like. I would like to pursue a career, follow my brother to be a computer engineer or do something new like being a Chartered Accountant.”

Bobby Sandi, 18 years, Jamshedpur Jharkhand

Leading the Way

“I am one of the fortunate ones who have been in the IMB programme and today are a trainer as well. I have an extremely supportive family so I never had to negotiate for freedom on a day to day basis. My challenge came from the community. I belong to a caste which is socially and educationally disadvantaged. The so called upper castes look down upon my community.

People used to make all kinds of derogatory comments when they would see me playing soccer. The comments on me were not just for being a girl, but a girl from a lower caste which was a reason for double deprivation. Initially, I used to feel very humiliated and ashamed. But I didn't stop playing. With time, many of them have stopped passing remarks. They can see how well I play and that my ability to play and even study well has nothing to do with my caste.

Over the course of IMB, I saw many changes in myself. Initially, I used to be very shy and hesitant. I used to be afraid of talking to people. But, look at me today! I am not scared of going and talking to anyone, no matter who they are. After coming to SELF, I am more vocal against preferential treatment for boys and am assertive about my rights.”

Reena Kumari, 23 years, Chatra, Jharkhand



Negotiating for Freedom

“I am the alumnus of the first batch of IMB in Jharkhand. Those days I lived a conventional life of a young girl in Jharkhand; that is getting home early before it got dark, dressing conservatively and definitely not indulging in any games. When my parents heard about the IMB programme and that it involved playing a boy’s game, soccer, they were dead against it. It took a lot of persuasion from CREA’s partner organisation to get my parents’ permission.

Even after that, my mother would scold me for staying out late like a boy. It has taken me many conversations, even loud arguments and fights at times to get my point across and to reach an agreement about staying out of home after it got dark, playing soccer, wearing clothes usually perceived to be worn by boys.



The next bit of struggle was with the boys in the village. They thought girls couldn't play soccer. I also used to think of soccer as a boys' game; I could never imagine that I would ever get to play it. But today they take us seriously. After all, I am a coach!

The next big inspiration was SELF Academy with unique exposure and opportunities in a city like Jamshedpur. During the session on making films and videography, I got to act in a film. I almost felt like a star. I also liked the painting class; the mosaic work, in which, for the first time, I got to work with glass. After going back, I will continue my studies and complete schooling. So far, there is no pressure at home to get married but I know soon there will be and that is when I will have to negotiate more, using all the skills I have now got."

Sushma, 15 years, Hazaribagh



Thematic tracks

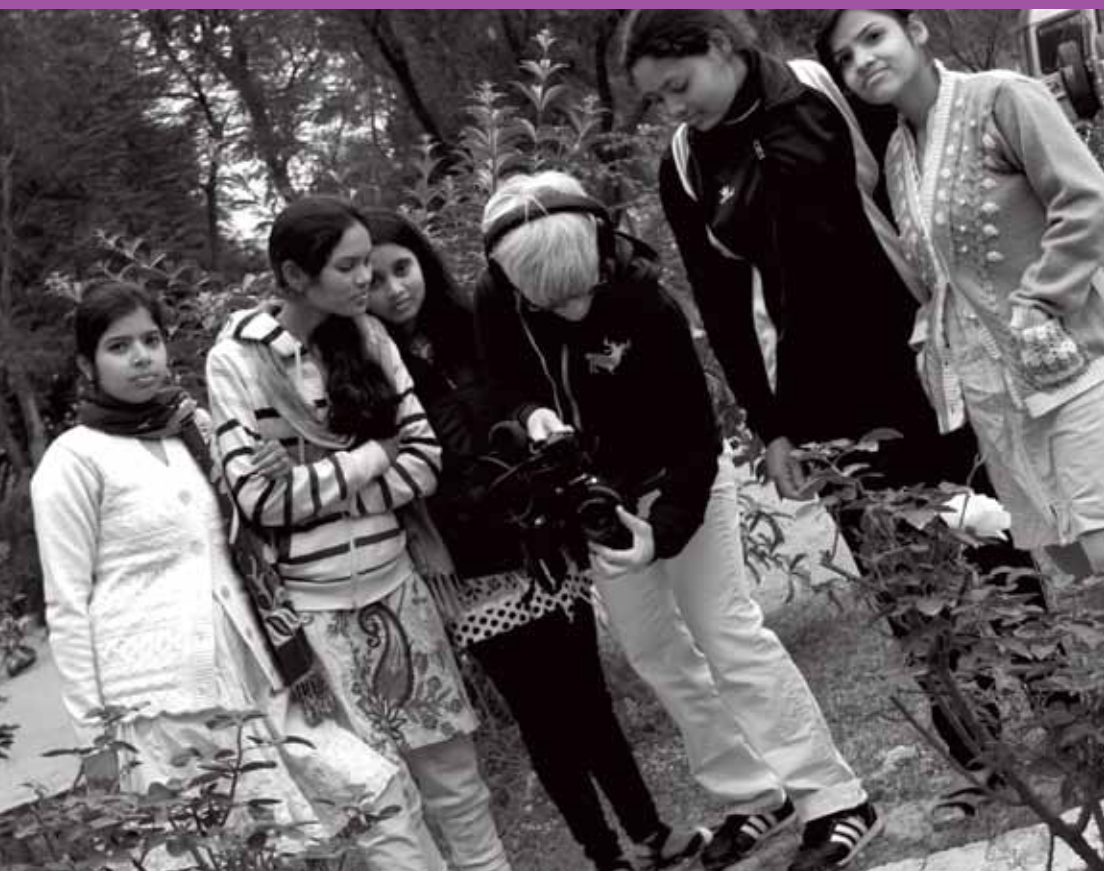


Film, Media and Representation

The track on film, media and representation focussed on the basics of photography and film making. In addition, it aimed to evoke thought on how to represent SELF through composition of selfies and self-portraits. The session led by two film makers from USA, Sandy Ciofi and Angela Bernadoni focussed on letting the girls determine how they want to be represented visually and be involved in all the processes from conceptualisation to execution.



“One of my biggest lessons from SELF was something that struck me in the videography class. I realised that there is nothing I cannot do, if I make up my mind. Initially, when I learnt that we would be working with the camera. I was very scared and hesitant. But I gradually relaxed and I feel so much more confident now even though I had never held a camera in my life before.”





Art, Body and Desire

This track initiated a process of thinking about one's body and relationship with the body, which is expressed through art. The track looked at ways in which the girls approached themselves, their bodies, their gender and sexuality. In this case, it was a combination of tribal art- Sohrai painting prevalent in Jharkhand and West Bengal, collage and a glass mosaic.

This track introduced the girls to mosaic as an art form, as a form of expression and to facilitate conversations around body, body image, perception of self and even notions of desire. The session brought forth interesting perspectives around the ways in which the girls approached themselves, their bodies and even their gender and sexuality.



“Though I want to do things that boys do such as playing soccer, staying out of the house even when it is dark, I also like to wear high heels, keep my nails long and painted and go to the beauty parlour to get my eye brows done. I want to look pretty.”





Soccer, English and Computer Training

Soccer was a continuing track from the girls' association with IMB which inspired them and filled them with enthusiasm.

The English course followed the state curriculum on grammar and language basics. Though the girls felt this was a difficult track for them, they also accepted that this track gave them the much needed boost in confidence.

The Computer track emerged as the top favourite with the girls. It was based on the curriculum prescribed under the National Digital Literacy Mission, a Government of India initiative.



“It was a once in a lifetime opportunity for me and I felt that my dream had come true. My brother would not let me touch the computer at home as I did not know how to operate it. Now when I go back home, I will know as much as him, may be a little bit more. After all I have completed a course that the Government of India recommends”

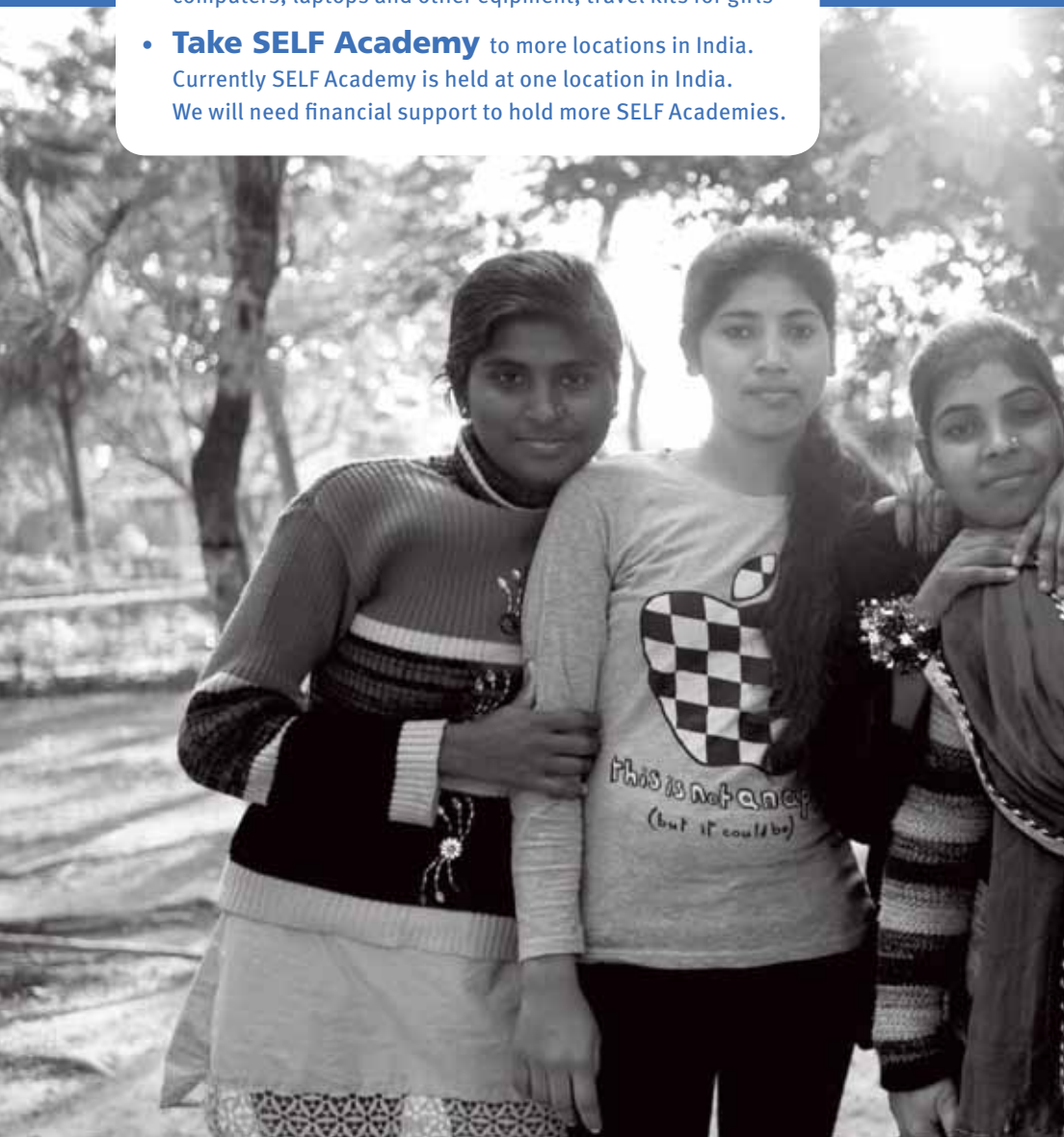






How you can help SELF

- **Skills:** Support through coaching soccer, teaching film and media studies, computer, English
- **Equipment:** Support through providing cameras, computers, laptops and other equipment, travel kits for girls
- **Take SELF Academy** to more locations in India. Currently SELF Academy is held at one location in India. We will need financial support to hold more SELF Academies.



The first SELF Academy was held in Jamshedpur, Jharkhand India from December 20, 2015 to January 4, 2016. This was made possible through generous support of Rohit D' Souza and Alba Blanco.







Founded in 2000, CREA is a feminist human rights organisation based in New Delhi, India. CREA works to advance the rights of women and girls, and the sexual and reproductive freedoms of all people. CREA advocates for positive social change through national and international fora, and provides training and learning opportunities to global activists and leaders through its Institutes. CREA is based in the Global South and works at the grassroots, national, regional, and international levels.

Vision

CREA envisions a more just and peaceful world, where everyone lives with dignity, respect, and equality.

Mission

CREA builds feminist leadership, advances women's human rights, and expands sexual and reproductive freedoms.

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