

# FAIZA RUKSAR ARIF



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Bangalore, India



Embrace: The Gender Lab



ORCID



PORTFOLIO

## EDUCATION

### DEGREE & COURSES

#### AZIM PREMJI UNIVERSITY, INDIA

Post Graduate (Diploma) in Research for Social Action, 2023-2024

CPA: 8

#### TATA INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, INDIA

##### Master of Arts in Women's Studies, 2016-2018

CGPA: 8.6 (A) Graduated Magnum Cum Laude with a silver medal.

#### TATA INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, INDIA

##### Bachelor of Social Sciences, 2013-2016

CGPA: 7.6 (A-)

Majored in Psychology, Economics & Political Science.

## FELLOWSHIPS, GRANTS & AWARDS

#### SAMYA PVT LTD

Recipient of the "Exemplary Award" for Gender Champions 2024 by Samya Development Resources Pvt Ltd.

#### CREA

##### Feminist Leadership, Movement Building and Rights Institute-South Asia (2024)

Residential program to strengthen feminist solidarity, leadership, advocacy, and strategies for collective social transformation.

#### NGUVU COLLECTIVE | Launchpad

##### She Creates Change 2023-2024

A fellowship on building digital advocacy & campaigning for social change.

#### BUMBLE & VITAL VOICES

##### Bumble Next Movers Program, 2022-2023

One of seven women changemakers selected and awarded a 15000 USD grant.

#### VITAL VOICES & RELIANCE FOUNDATION

##### Women Lead India Fellowship, 2022-2023

Build transformation leadership in women.

## SKILLS

### PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

- Organisational Strategy + Culture Building
- Quantitative & Qualitative Research
- Program Design
- MEL & Impact Assessment
- Content & Curriculum Development
- Project Management & Leadership
- Grant & Proposal writing
- Design & Graphics, Illustrations
- Strategic Planning
- Stakeholder Partnerships & Fundraising
- Comms & Social Media Management

I'm a gender specialist and feminist researcher committed to normalising and mainstreaming gender conversations through a multidimensional and intersectional approach. My work spans education, healthcare, and livelihoods, and is grounded in close, long-term engagement with diverse marginalised communities — including adolescents, rural women, LGBTQ+ individuals, and grassroots facilitators and trainers. I work across the full arc of organisational impact — from program and curriculum design to training, monitoring and evaluation, framework development, and research-to-policy linkages. Backed by formal training in Gender Studies and Social Action Research, I bring both systems thinking and field experience into every stage of design and implementation.

As the founder of Embrace: The Gender Collective, I co-create grassroots curricula, facilitate inclusive trainings, and support NGOs, schools, and corporates in integrating gender equity meaningfully into their systems and strategies. I've built programs and tools with organisations like Aditya Birla Trust, One Billion Literates Foundation, Oscar Foundation, Vacha, and Periferry, and contributed to inclusive workplace policies at Dr. Reddy's and Dot Dash Meredith. My research explores minority identity politics, labour rights, the care economy, and transgender accessibility to healthcare, guided by a commitment to centring lived experiences to unsettle normative frameworks, question structural norms, and co-create solutions rooted in context and care. At the heart of my work is a belief that gender cannot remain a siloed conversation — and that integration must be thoughtful, community-led, and rooted in respect. I design not for communities, but with them — ensuring they are seen not just as beneficiaries, but as stakeholders, knowledge-holders, and co-creators in the process of change.

## WORK EXPERIENCE

### Founder | Embrace

The Grassroots Gender Lab | Bangalore, India  
2023 - Present (Operating Independently)

The grassroots gender lab, Embrace, aims to normalize and mainstream gender conversations by offering program design, training, and skilling for stakeholders and organizations, alongside research and advocacy efforts. It serves as a collective for gender facilitators to come together, exchange pedagogies, engage in dialogue, and collaborate. As an independent consultant, I work closely with various organizations and companies to integrate gender perspectives into their existing programs, helping them create more inclusive and equitable frameworks.

- **Educational Initiatives Pvt Ltd (EI) (2025):** Evaluated Children's Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF)'s Mission Buniyaad in Rajasthan, an ed-tech government initiative, through qualitative field research and stakeholder insights.
- **"UJAAS, Aditya Birla Education Trust (2025):** Designed and developed a structured MHM training and delivery program for a multi-stakeholder initiative, engaging trainers and diverse marginalised groups (adolescent girls, boys, college youth, ICDS workers, and women & men). Created M&E framework, assessments, and facilitated trainer capacity-building to improve knowledge, attitudes, and practices.
- **Oscar Foundation, Mumbai (2022-2024):** Designed a gender-based life skills football program for children in low-income slum communities. Led capacity-building and gender training sessions for the foundation's staff, coaches, and young leaders to integrate gender perspectives into the program.
- **One Billion Literates Foundation, Bangalore (2023-onwards):** Developed and led the implementation of a gender awareness program for semi-educated rural women. Trained both women and men in gender awareness and provided them with toolkits to educate their children and peers within their communities. Currently developing a community menstrual health program.
- **Vacha Trust, Mumbai (2024 onwards):** Currently designing three gender programs for children in urban slum areas, including a gender-based adolescent leadership program, a gender and health program for adolescent girls, and a residential gender training program for trainee teachers and NGO facilitators. Conducted gender trainings for field staff.

## TECHNICAL SKILLS

- Data Documentation:  
Microsoft Excel, Word, PowerPoint
- Research and Data Analysis:  
SPSS, Multivariate Analysis, ATLAS Ti & NVIVO, Google Studio
- Illustration & Graphics:  
Adobe In Design, Illustrator, Procreate, iMovie
- Website & Social Media:  
Wordpress & Canva

## RESEARCH

### COMPLETED STUDIES

#### Published

- Arif, F.R. (2024). "The Burdened Body: Using a Well-Being Lens to Explore Lived Realities of Accessibility and Quality of Transgender Healthcare in India."  
Published in Handbook on Sex, Gender and Health, Ravindran, T.S., Sivakami, M., Bhushan, A., Rashid, S.F., Khan, K.S. (Eds.), Springer, Singapore.  
[Link to Paper](#)

*Presented the paper at the ICSSR Sponsored Two-day National Seminar: "Discussing Issues and Prospects Around the Spectrum of Gender in India (2024) by IQAC, Dikhowmukh College*

- Arif, Faiza R. (2018). "The Voice Behind the Veil: An Exploratory Study on the Identity Politics of Muslim Women and the Practice of Veiling (Hijab)." Published in ASCI Journal of Management, Vol. 47 No. 1 (Special Issue), March 2018.  
[Link to Paper](#)

*Winner of 'Session's Best Paper' at the 2nd International Conference on Gender & Sexuality, 2019, Bangkok, Thailand.*

#### Currently under Publication

- Sengupta, S., Singhal, D., & Arif, F.R. (2025). "We Nurture: The Role of Goa Institute of Management in Skilling and Decent Work Agenda"  
Currently under publication in Emerald Publishing's Book series on Higher Education and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG8)
- Sarkar K, Arif F.R, Sengupta S (2025) Invisible Labour, Visible Struggles: The Plight of Domestic Workers in Post-COVID-19 Pandemic India  
  
To be presented at XV ADAPT International Conference: "Work and Non-Work, Today" (Bergamo, 2025)
- Arif, F.R., Chakraborty, A., & Sengupta, S. (2024). "Who Cares' While Working from Home? A Gendered Exploration of Care Roles and Time-use during the Covid-19 Pandemic among IT Sector Employees."  
Currently under publication in the "In Rethinking Gender Mainstreaming (Volume 2 in Emerald Studies in Sustainable Development)"

- **Corporate Partnerships on LGBT+ Inclusion (2021 onwards):** Collaborating with corporates to foster LGBT+ inclusion through gender sensitization sessions and the development of DEI policies and frameworks. Designed Dr. Reddy's DEI trans inclusion policy and conducted training for managers, HR, and employees at Deloitte, NASCOMM, Dot Dash Meredith, Egon Zehnder, and Bangalore Airport.
- Developed and designed "**Gender Journal**" (2025) – a reflective tool for adolescents, women, and gender enthusiasts to explore gender concepts, frameworks, personal identity, and lived experiences.
- **The Dialogue: FCDO India Cyber Capacity Programme (2024-2025):** Developing toolkits and delivering workshops to combat tech-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) and promote a safer cyberspace. Predominantly managing the M&E strategy for the project while engaging with legislators, government members, and educational institutions.
- **Podcast for LGBT+ Supporters & Caregivers:** Currently developing a podcast aimed at educating parents, educators, and caregivers on topics related to gender identity, sexuality, and allyship for LGBT+ individuals.

### Head of MEL & Program Design

One Billion Literates Foundation | Bangalore, India

March 2020 - May 2025

- Planned and implemented the entire M&E strategy, established data processes, and developed tools to evaluate program outcomes across all initiatives. I also track and monitor program data, develop assessments, and create databases, dashboards, and data visualizations to support evaluation and decision-making.
- Formulated the Theory of Change and created log frames for all programs.
- Lead organizational enhancements by designing interventions and optimizing operations.
- Manage stakeholder partnerships and donor reporting processes.
- Conducted research studies on the efficacy of the para-teacher model, the integrated gender and livelihood program, and the lived experiences of the Waste Picker Community (WPC).
- Designed and led the implementation of a gender program focused on Gender Awareness, Health & Wellbeing. Trained 120+ women & 20+ men.
- Developed organizational policies: POSH guidelines, the period leave policy & the maternity & parental leave policy.

Previously, as **Lead, Academic Product Development & Impact Evaluation (2020-2023), I:**

- Directed curriculum development for the Elevate education program across 100+ government schools.
- Led EdTech initiatives, managing the development of the Solve tablet-based learning program and the LEAP WhatsApp-based learning chatbot, and partnered with Solve Education and Key Education to create gamified curriculums.
- Developed training programs for community women, frontline workers, and teachers.
- Contributed to communications and social media, website management, and collateral development.

### Gender Specialist | Training & Content

Periferry, Bangalore (June 2020 - Sep 2023)

#### Corporate Gender Sensitization Training:

- Designed and led training workshops for corporate heads, HR, managers, and employees from 60+ top organizations, including Adidas, Deloitte, Siemens, JP Morgan, BNP Paribas, Walmart, Bosch, Verizon, Intel, Bayers, Goldman Sachs, Adobe, Dr Reddy's. Trained over 30,000 individuals to build inclusivity and implement trans-friendly workplace policies.

#### E-Learning Course Design - 'Allies for Change' (Infosys India):

- Conceptualized and developed an online gender training course hosted on Infosys' learning management system. Extended the course to all Infosys employees to raise awareness on LGBT inclusion in the workplace.

#### Master Trainer, REVIVE:

- Conducted workshops and training sessions for transgender individuals seeking employment. Developed a standardized curriculum and session plans, training fellow trainers for the REVIVE program.

### Consultant | Knowledge Management

UNDP, Karnataka, Bangalore (March 2023-July 2023)



- Arif, Faiza R. (2024). "Burdens & Bonds: Self-formation, Bodily Autonomy & Transgender Subjectivities of Motherhood in India." Currently Under publication in the Special Issue of the International Journal of Women Studies: Reproductive Justice across Disciplines and Demographics.

*Presented at the International Association of Maternal Action + Scholarship (IAMAS) Conference 2024, hosted by Boston University.*

- Arif, Faiza R. (2024). "Demystifying the Dysphoric: A Re-telling of Transgender Narratives of Gender Dysphoria and Identity Conceptualisation" Currently under review with the International Journal of Transgenderism

- Sarkar K, Arif F.R, Sengupta S, Singhal D (2025) Livelihood Opportunities for Women SHGs in Goa: Assessing Trends, Opportunities and Challenges

#### Research Associate

- Goa Institute of Management's Project: "Local Feminist Perspectives as Levers of Transformation: Study from India," funded by the German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS).

[Click here for the report](#)

Managed the gender vertical, responsible for data collection, coding, analysis, and report writing.

- Arif, Faiza R. (2024). "Breaking the Invisible Hold of Gender: An Integrated Model for Women's Skilling and Livelihood Programs."

Currently under publication in the 'Dialogues on Development Management (DoDM)' compendium.

- Arif, Sunadini & Ramachandran. (2024) "Enhancing Literacy and Livelihoods: A Practical Framework for Primary Education in Resource-Constrained Settings".

Currently under publication in the 'Dialogues on Development Management (DoDM)' compendium.

## ONGOING RESEARCH

- Contributing a written piece on abortion and trans inclusivity for *Growing into Ourselves: On Bodies, Rights and Abortion*, published by the **Young Activist Network for Abortion Advocacy (YANAA)** under the International Campaign for Women's Right to Safe Abortion.

#### Principal Investigator

- Study on Lived Experiences of Bangladeshi Migrant Waste Picker Workers: "Navigating Uncertainties and Conceptualizing Their Own Identity and the Notion of a Home" Currently in the data collection phase.
- Harvard Business Review Case Study on Goa Institute of Management's We-Nurture program — exploring how a higher education incubator enabled a woman-led business to scale, sustain, and create local impact.

- Proposal writing: Developed & designed proposals around Tribal welfare, waste disposal and educational counseling submitted to the Karnataka State Rural Livelihood Promotion Society and other government departments.
- Reviewed existing documentation and knowledge strategies, identified existing gaps and updated strategy with indicators. Documented/disseminated human-interest stories/ case studies emerging from the project implementation with a focus on women and the most vulnerable and poorest in accordance with the "Leave No One Behind" (LNOB) principles of the 2030 Agenda.
- Conducted capacity-building programs for the Project Team regarding effective documentation and media/communication strategies and channels. Liaised and coordinated with the partner organizations (KSRLM) and other key stakeholders to facilitate knowledge product development process and cover field impact.

## Consultant | Research & Design

Centre for Social & Behaviour Change, Ashoka | Delhi, Remote, India | (October - December 2021)

Research Studies:

#### Early Initiation to Breastfeeding and Exclusive Breastfeeding:

- Assisted in structuring and collating data sets for research on breastfeeding practices.

#### Behavioural Insights for HPV Vaccine Uptake (Adolescent Girls 9-14 yrs.):

- Contributed to data organization and collation for the study focusing on improving HPV vaccine uptake.
- Reviewed findings of ongoing studies to create detailed reports and presentation decks for funding stakeholders and implementation partners.
- Developed infographics for effective partner communications and social media dissemination.

## Research Assistant | Sayfty's PAN India Sexual Violence Toolkit

Sayfty (August - November 2019)

- Assisted in the creation of a comprehensive toolkit for survivors of sexual abuse, covering medical, legal aid, and mental health/counseling services.
- Reviewed and edited primary data and interviews, ensuring accuracy and relevance.
- Structured and collated content for the report, contributing to editing and compilation processes.

## Content & Communications Officer

Content & Communications Officer, Bangalore (April 2018 - September 2019)

#### Content Development Lead, VOICE:

- Spearheaded content development at VOICE, with a primary focus on adolescent programming in rural Telangana.
- Strategized and developed new programs, actively participating in implementation by leading on-the-ground training sessions for program implementers, and ensuring quality control during program piloting.

#### Boys4VOICE Sensitization Program:

- Spearheaded the development of 'Boys4VOICE,' a sensitization program for adolescent boys covering menstrual and sexual reproductive health, gender-based violence, gender and sexuality, and consent.
- Managed the program's implementation across 16 government schools in rural Telangana.

#### Oorja Program:

- Led the development of the Oorja program, empowering underprivileged women with modules on career building and essential knowledge on gender, menstrual health, and sexual and reproductive health.

#### IEC Materials Development and Training:

- Collaborated with the Telangana Social Welfare Residential Educational Institutions Society to create IEC materials and flipbooks on menstruation, gender-based violence, and rights.
- Trained frontline and Asha workers to conduct educational sessions using flipbooks in villages across Mahbubnagar, Telangana.

#### IBTADA's Girl Resource Centers:

- Developed educational collaterals for young underprivileged girls in IBTADA's girl resource centers in Alwar, Rajasthan.