

SAVE

SISTERS AGAINST VIOLENT EXTREMISM

# Indian Women Say No to Violent Extremism!



Part of the *Mothers for Change!* campaign

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# Introduction to the *Mother's for Change* Campaign

“There is no better school than the home and no teacher better than the mother.”

— Mahatma Gandhi

It is no secret that the family remains the soul of the Indian community and the role of the mother within the family is considered sacred. For centuries Indian women have looked no further than The Mahabharata and The Ramayana, two of ancient India's greatest epics to pick up lessons in parenting and in motherhood. Both epics are a shining mirror of both the strength and shortcomings of its female characters.

In The Mahabharata, Kunti, the mother of the eldest three of the Pandava brothers, is a testimony to tragedy as she treats some of her children better than others. In the same epic the tragedy of Gandhari's self-imposed blindness and lack of eye contact with her children becomes a symbol of a lost generation starved of humanity. The physical blindness of the mother seems to make her blind also to her children's evil ways, and she is unable to prevent war and destruction.

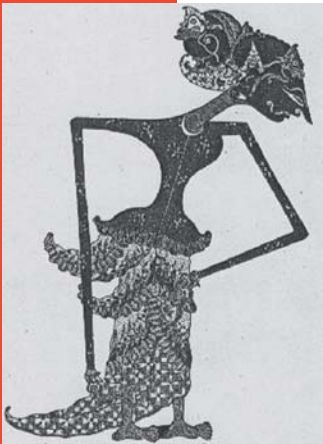
In the epic Ramayana, Keikayi is King Dasaratha's third wife. She is the mother of Bharata who makes the king exile her stepson Rama, the heir, for 14 years in the forest because wants her own flesh and blood Bharata on the thrown. Keikayi was very young when her father had banished her mother from his kingdom and Keikayi's heartless wish to see Rama exiled is said to be a result of her insecurity and distrust of kings like her father and husband. If Kaikeyi is scheming, Sumitra in The Ramayana comes across as the mother figure most beloved by all the four children of the household like Rama, Lakshmana, Bharata and Shatrughan.

The moral of the epics is crystal clear: A mother influences not just this life but eternity. As mothers, women are the first teachers of

the future generation and from their central position in the family and society are ideally positioned to promote ideas of tolerance, understanding and non-violence, and to discourage prejudice, aggression and stereotyping.

SAVE has developed a global campaign called *Mothers for Change!* to position mothers as agents of change around the world. The campaign equips women with the right tools for debate to challenge extremist thinking and trains them to advocate for alternatives to violent extremism. This groundbreaking campaign has two objectives: I. To enlighten mothers around the world to be aware of their central role in the family for the fight against terrorism, and II. To provide them with tools that will steer children back on the right path.

*Mothers for Change!* supports women by giving them skills to dialogue, debate, negotiate between and reconcile traditionally opposing factions. The long term aim of SAVE is to create a global network, bringing women together to increase the inclusion of women's voices and experiences in all debates on security also at international platforms. The voice of Indian women is an important symphony in this grand choir.



# What are the goals of the workshops?

- Help participants to realize that their voice counts – they have unique experiences and opinions that must be heard!
- Build self-confidence through games and group exercises. Encourage women to express themselves.
- Give women presentational and discussion tools: Teach women how to present their opinion or introduce a topic effectively, so that they feel confident to participate in conversations and discussions with strangers.
- Teach women about participation in civil society. Encourage them to engage in civil society as an extension of their family, teach them about decision-makers in their communities and how they can become involved in the local political process.
- Teach women about the dangers of violent extremism, and how to identify early-warning signs of radicalization. Encourage them to share experiences they may have had with prejudice, stereotyping, and aggression, and discuss ideas about how to counter these trends.
- Turn women into ambassadors for the Mothers for Change! project, by teaching them about the aims of the project and how to disseminate the message. This final goal will be aided by the achievement of the previous goals: self-confident, informed women will be more able to carry out the mission of Mothers for Change!



# Work Plan and Strategies

The workshops are split into 8 modules. This workplan outlines the content of each module and explains the strategies that will be used.

## **Week 1: Ice breakers – Who am I, Who are You?**

### **Strategy used: Icebreaker games**

Icebreaker games are getting-to-know-you activities. Participants who are not already acquainted will start to feel comfortable around each other through laughter, name games, fun facts and chatting. This module will also outline the aims of the program and introduce the *Mothers for Change!* campaign. The women will also begin to explore their own identities through exercises that ask them to think about their strengths, their goals in life and challenges they face.

## **Week 2: Confidence is Key**

### **Strategy used: Confidence-building exercises**

What is self-confidence? Why do we need it, and where does it come from? This module gets participants talking about the concept of self-confidence and how we can build self-confidence. Exercises focus on participants' positive traits and encourage them to identify aspects of their life where they are able to build self-esteem.

## **Week 3: Perfect Presentation**

### **Strategy used: Confidence-building exercises, presentation and speaking exercises**

These exercises focus on positive thinking to tackle challenging situations with confidence and pride. Participants are aided to develop a confident speaking voice and skills for debate. Participants are encouraged to think about awkward or difficult situations, and how they would deal with these situations in a confident manner.

## **Week 4: Creating the Safe Space**

### **Strategy used: Storytelling techniques**

This module introduces the idea of storytelling and creates the safe space needed for participants to be able to share their stories openly. We do this through introductory activities, laying ground rules and discussing expectations and fears with the participants.

## Week 5: Sharing Our Life Stories

### Strategy used: Storytelling techniques

Participants use exercises such as ‘Threading My Life Story’, or ‘Drawing the Milestones in My Life’ to tell their personal stories to the rest of the group. This helps them to build empathy and overcome feelings of fear and trauma.

## Week 6: Peace Starts at Home

### Strategy used: Peace and conflict education

Conflict affects everyone’s life and is often caused by intolerance and misunderstandings. This module talks about how violence occurs and how the individual can act to create a more peaceful environment. Women are encouraged to think about the roots of prejudice and consider how peace in the home can lead to a peaceful society.

## Week 7: Women Say No to Violent Extremism!

### Strategy used: *Mothers for Change!* education

How can a mother, sister, daughter or aunt have an influence on her relatives? This module asks for the participants’ feedback on what different female members of a family can do to promote tolerance. How can family member recognize aggressive tendencies, and what dialogue techniques can they use to guide relatives down a peaceful path.

## Week 8: Women Become Ambassadors for Change

### Strategy used: *Mothers for Change!* education

How can we create a network through which we disseminate the *Mothers for Change!* message? This module helps women to identify figures in the local community who they can approach with the campaign’s message. It teaches them how to effectively communicate the program’s strategies and goals through dialogue and trainings.

