

# Together we can break the gender-barriers: The story of Supriya Routray

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Stereotypes are prevalent in our society and have resulted in issues like gender inequality, gender-based discrimination, and violence. Therefore, as the youth of this country, we have to come together to break gender stereotypes and move towards a gender-equal world. Supriya Routray, is one such example that wants to make India a gender-equal nation.

Supriya is a class 9th student of Beena Bharti Vidya Mandir located in the slum settlement of Bharatpur in Bhubaneswar. She has been a part of the Kadam Badhate Chalo (KBC) program, an initiative by [Martha Farrell Foundation \(MFF\)](#) in her school. MFF in collaboration with [Pro Sport Development](#) has designed gender and sports oriented programs to impart awareness on the prevalent issue of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) in the region.

Supriya describes her journey with the KBC program as full of self-discovery and growth. She recalled, “Earlier, I lacked the confidence to voice my opinions, thoughts or even doubts out loud”. However, since then Supriya has successfully managed to turn the situation around. “I’m more confident in participating in class now. I also try to focus on both my studies and sports”, said Supriya.

She further expressed, “My favourite aspect of the program is that girls and boys play together. Earlier, we used to play separately. Therefore, interacting with them was a challenge for me. But after we started playing together, I started to understand them. Their behaviour towards girls also changed positively”. In a way, Supriya has become more confident around her male and female peers.

Reminiscing her favourite memory she said, “we were the runners up of the Mixed-Gender Netball Tournament held this year. Girls and boys learned how to team up together and strategize”. She feels that working together as a team is a step towards achieving gender equality.

“The young boys and girls must bridge the gap between the genders and break stereotypes associated with them. This will happen if we interact freely with each other. It is important to understand one another”, said Supriya. Her teacher, Mr. Alok Dash said, “She is far more active in class than she was before the inception of the KBC program. She used to be reluctant to interact or sit with boys. However, now she is confident around all her peers and makes an effort to understand them. She has set an example to break the barriers between girls and boys in class”.



When asked what she aspires to be in the future, she stated, “I’d like to be a sports person. With sports, I can bring the youth together to break the gender stereotypes and free the society of gender-based discrimination and violence”. Supriya’s mother expressed, “I support her dream and know that she is capable of achieving her goals. There is nothing that could stop her”.

Adolescence is the time when young boys and girls form their perceptions of the world. Therefore, it is important to deconstruct ingrained myths about gender from the very beginning. This is one of the steps to prevent gender-based violence and discrimination. Students like Supriya are a catalyst for changing the mind set of the people on gender roles and for achieving a gender-equal society.

