This research was carried out in September and October 2018 in collaboration with IT For Change, a Bengaluru based NGO, as part of a capability-building programme to address the social and cultural roots of gender-based violence. It aimed to collaboratively conceive multimedia artefacts to stimulate critical conversations and possible ways to facilitate alternative imaginations about masculinities among adolescent boys and young adults. Our main insights from the research - that the lack of a conversation around anger management and conflict resolution contributed to negative imaginaries of masculine behaviour - were synthesised to inform the design of our proposed interventions.

We used design-led participatory approaches and theories from feminist HCI and Queer HCI to understand the imaginaries around masculinity held among rural youth. Cultural Probes were used as a design tool to elicit inspirational responses from our participants. Participatory activities were found to be especially helpful in understanding how aggression and emotional events manifested in ways that were situated in time and space. While the participants needed a little time to overcome initial shyness and hesitation, with time they were able to engage enthusiastically with our activities.

Over multiple sessions, the boys engaged in various participatory activities that focused on understanding their emotional and social worlds, inquiring what they felt, when they felt and where they felt? These included activities like ‘a day in a life’, ‘making comic strips’, ‘co-created neighbourhood maps’ and ‘role playing scenarios of aggression’. The probes provided insight into how the adolescents expressed emotions through drawn images. Through these activities, we were able to incite responses from our participants that revealed their implicit perceptions around gender, and aggressive behaviour in their everyday lives.

As a response to the context, we developed two interventions - an ‘emotion curriculum’ consisting of various participatory activities to foster emotional self-awareness and “Co-Solve” - a participatory card-based game to help students role-play conflict resolution scenarios. We tested both of these with our participants at the site, refined them based on feedback we gathered both from seeing the students interact with them, then handed them over to IT for Change along with a documentation of our activities and our research findings for them to disseminate and use further.