



# Annual Report

2020-2021

THE YUVA EKTA FOUNDATION

# ABOUT US

The Yuva Ekta Foundation is a not-for-profit Trust based in New Delhi, India. We work at the forefront of Expressive Arts and Youth Empowerment, spanning a canvas that integrates young people from different socio-economic backgrounds, using the Arts as a means for Self-Exploration and Social Awareness.

*Over the last three years, we have worked on Emotional Intelligence and Self-Esteem, recognizing these as core competencies to be developed in young adults.*

*We have always strived to make the Arts relevant to the times we live in. During the pandemic, we worked extensively to reach out to young people from different socio-economic backgrounds and use Expressive Arts to address the emotional needs that emerged as a result of the pandemic and the lockdown.*



# Our Core values



**Arts education can instil in young people a sense of satisfaction, as they work together to create something meaningful. Through Arts we can explore different ways of expressing thoughts, feelings and experiences, that are not easily communicated through our everyday language.**

## Mission

Our Mission is simple - to engage with young minds on social issues and create **Agents for positive Social Change.**

## Vision

Our Vision is to create a society where every **individual has Dignity and Self-worth**, where every citizen is empowered to express, irrespective of any barriers or stereotypes.

## Values

We believe that we need to create safe spaces for young adults from different socio-economic backgrounds to come together for ideation and mutual co-learning, as they collectively **work towards Sustainable Change.**



## NOTE FROM OUR MANAGING TRUSTEE

This last year has been a “trial by fire”! Nothing prepared us for what the Covid 19 Pandemic would bring in its wake. When India declared its lockdown on March 23rd, one expected it to last perhaps a week? Two weeks? Maximum one month! What unfolded was gut wrenching as over 200 million migrant workers were forced into unemployment and set out on a long journey back to their Village homes, triggering the largest mass migration in Human History!

An atmosphere of Fear and Uncertainty pervaded everywhere as we struggled to comprehend this ‘dangerous virus’. Wild conspiracy theories flying around brought Life to a complete standstill. Was this really happening to us?!

In times of hardship, the resilience of the Human Spirit comes to the Fore. Forced off the running mat, we found time to reflect and introspect. Did we like the people we had become? Were there course corrections we could make? Was it time to expand the canvas of our Lives and connect more deeply with what truly mattered?

The pandemic shook us up in more ways than we could imagine. I salute this past year with a deep sense of humility and gratitude, for all our learnings as well as the love and support we have received from our fellow Trustees, friends, well wishers and volunteers.

**PUNEETA ROY**  
*Managing Trustee*



# COVID-19 AND THE ARTS

## 'Zoom' ing into the pandemic

As we entered 2020, all our on-ground, physical projects came to a complete standstill. The Covid pandemic redefined the ways in which we interacted and expressed ourselves socially. While social distancing was an unavoidable norm, it became ever so important to reach out to our loved ones and form deeper, more meaningful bonds.

In such unprecedented circumstances, we found innovative ways to keep the arts alive and make them relevant to the times we were living in. We launched new projects and altered modalities in several on-going ones, adjusting them to the online form.

What began as a year with uncertainty, ultimately strengthened our resolve and belief in the power of the Arts to heal and empower.

# Key Highlights

In the last one year, The Foundation has traversed a significant journey in order to make the Arts relevant and accessible to everyone.

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## Highlight 1

*Started a new online platform called 'Breathe' that transitioned into a full-scale workshop series*

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## Highlight 2

*Transitioned Playback Theatre and Threads of Humanity online, programs which rely specifically on physical setups*

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## Highlight 3

*Received a major grant for continuing our work with 'Children in Conflict with Law'*

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*Towards the end of the financial year, our Managing Trustee, Ms. Puneeta Roy, received a confirmation for representing India at an International Conference called 'Conference of the Birds'. Details of the same are available towards the end of this report.*



# Breathe

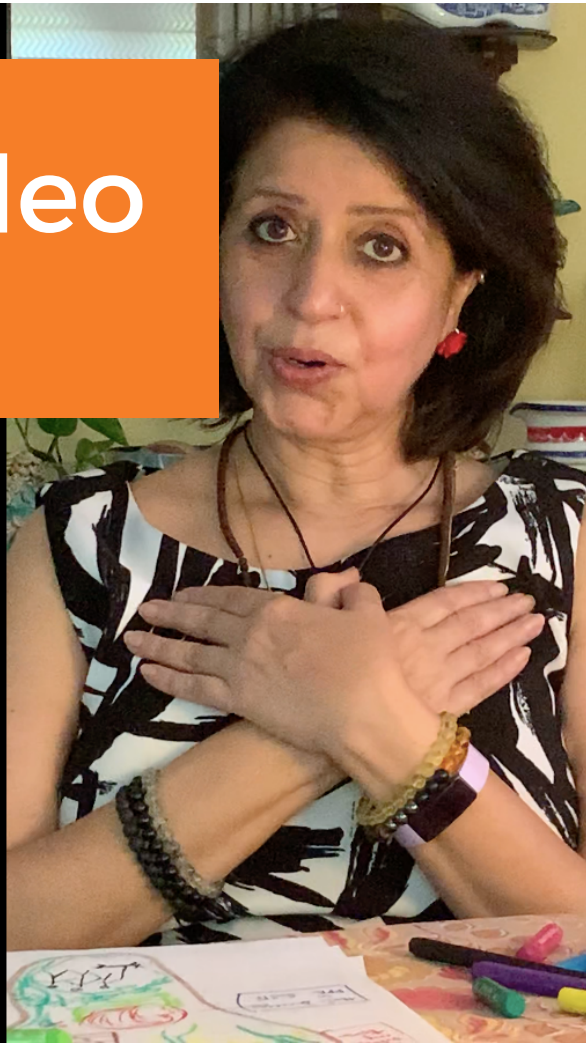
## An online interactive platform for Emotional Health and Well-Being

**'Breathe' is an online interactive platform where we shared tools of Creative Expression, and invited practitioners from different disciplines, to spread Positive Energy into our environment.**



This platform began as a video series where we published weekly videos with simple, everyday creative activities. They were designed to help people undertake a journey within, examine and release their fears and anxieties, so that they could cope better with the isolation that the lockdown enforced.

# The Video Series



**Across the year, we posted 11 episodes as part of the 'Breathe' video series.** The videos are posted across all our communication platforms including [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Youtube](#). We published our first episode on March 28, 2020, and the response was overwhelming. From then on, our reach and popularity grew organically, **as we reached out to nearly 10,000 viewers in a span of a few months.**

**From guided meditations to music as a therapeutic tool, from Art Therapy to Micro Greens,** the 'Breathe' video series covered a wide array of tools. Several Master Practitioners collaborated with us in this endeavour. Replies to our videos poured in every week through social media channels and personal groups.

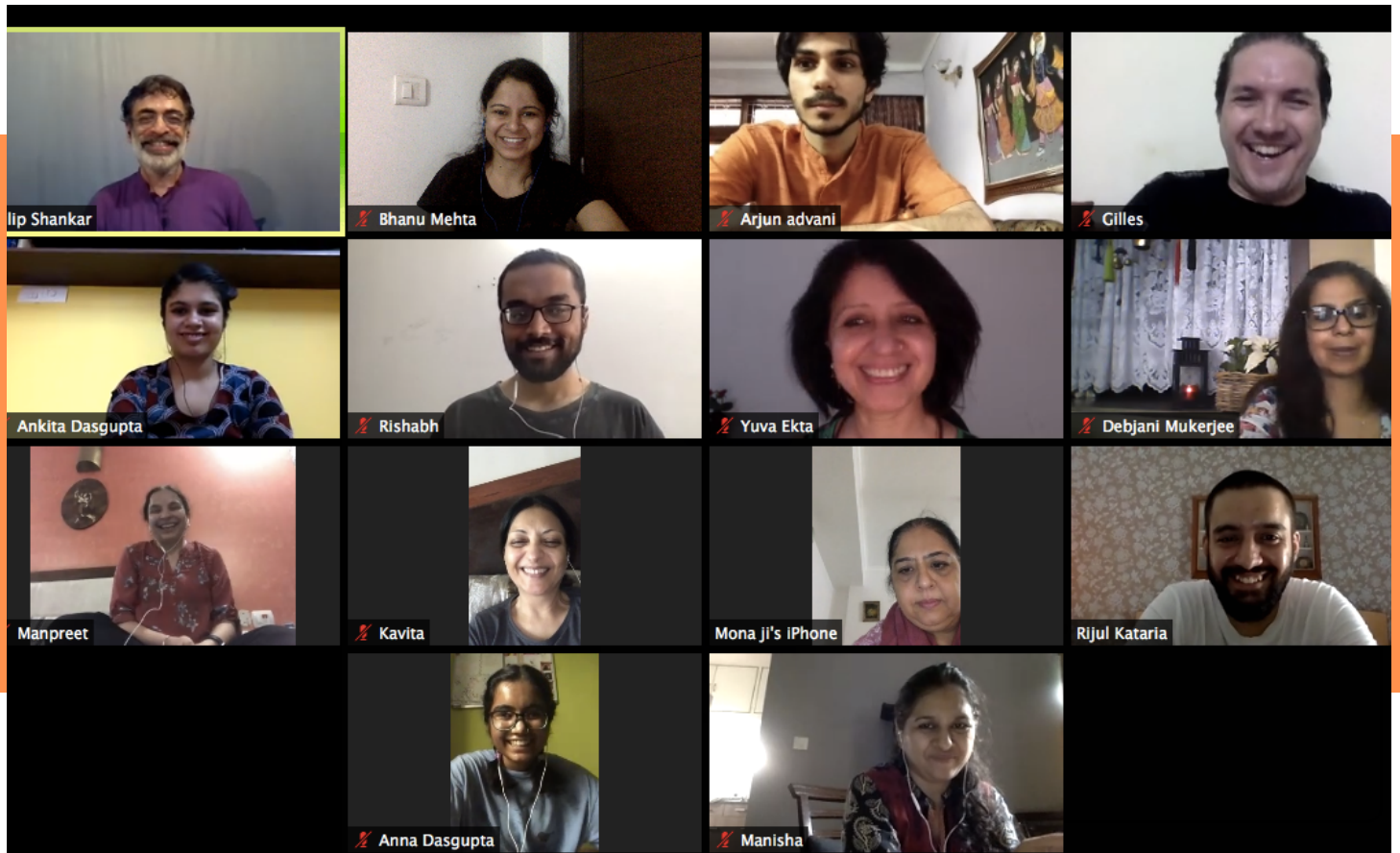


# THE WORKSHOP SERIES

Based on the responses, we expanded 'Breathe' into a full-fledged interactive platform, wherein we conducted Online Expressive Arts workshops every fortnight.

**On April 25th, 2020, we launched the first workshop 'Stories and Connections' – an interactive platform that brought together 27 participants from diverse walks of life. We found joy in sharing our childhood memories, exploring connections and building new stories with each other.**

'Breathe' organically expanded into two complete workshop series titled '**Journeys**' and '**Reflections**', resulting in 11 workshops with over 150 registrations, as participants made deep human connections, albeit digitally.



## RESPONSES TO THE SERIES

**Our BREATHE series earned plaudits from several viewers and participants**

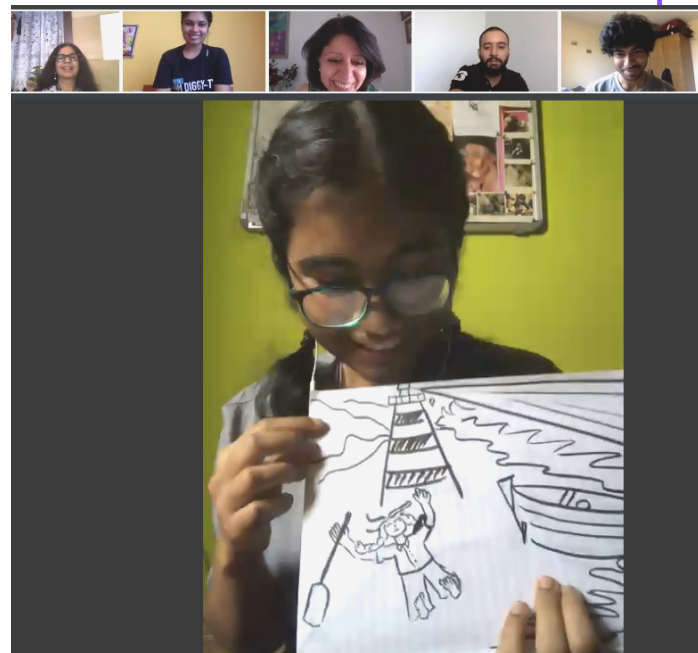
*"The Breathe series, for me, has been an important and gentle reminder to remember, in a sense my own vision for myself. Sometimes we understand the value of a practice like meditation or connecting with oneself, but forget in the humdrum of everyday how enriched we felt while we kept up with it. Hearing Puneeta breathe with us and alert us to the spaces of gratitude and love within all of us... allowed me to remember to practice what I cherish."*

- Gauri Saxena, participant

**At a time when it felt like everything was about to end and regular, everyday tasks started to feel 20 times more difficult, 'Breathe' felt like a grappling hook to what a new 'normal' might be.**

*Coming across new tools to help ease my anxiety and to talk about things that are unsettling or difficult helped ease a lot of tension that I felt I would not be able to. My favorite part was meeting new people in a virtual setting and talking about our worries and joys with absolute strangers. And I discovered a new creative side of myself.*

- Ankita Dasgupta, participant



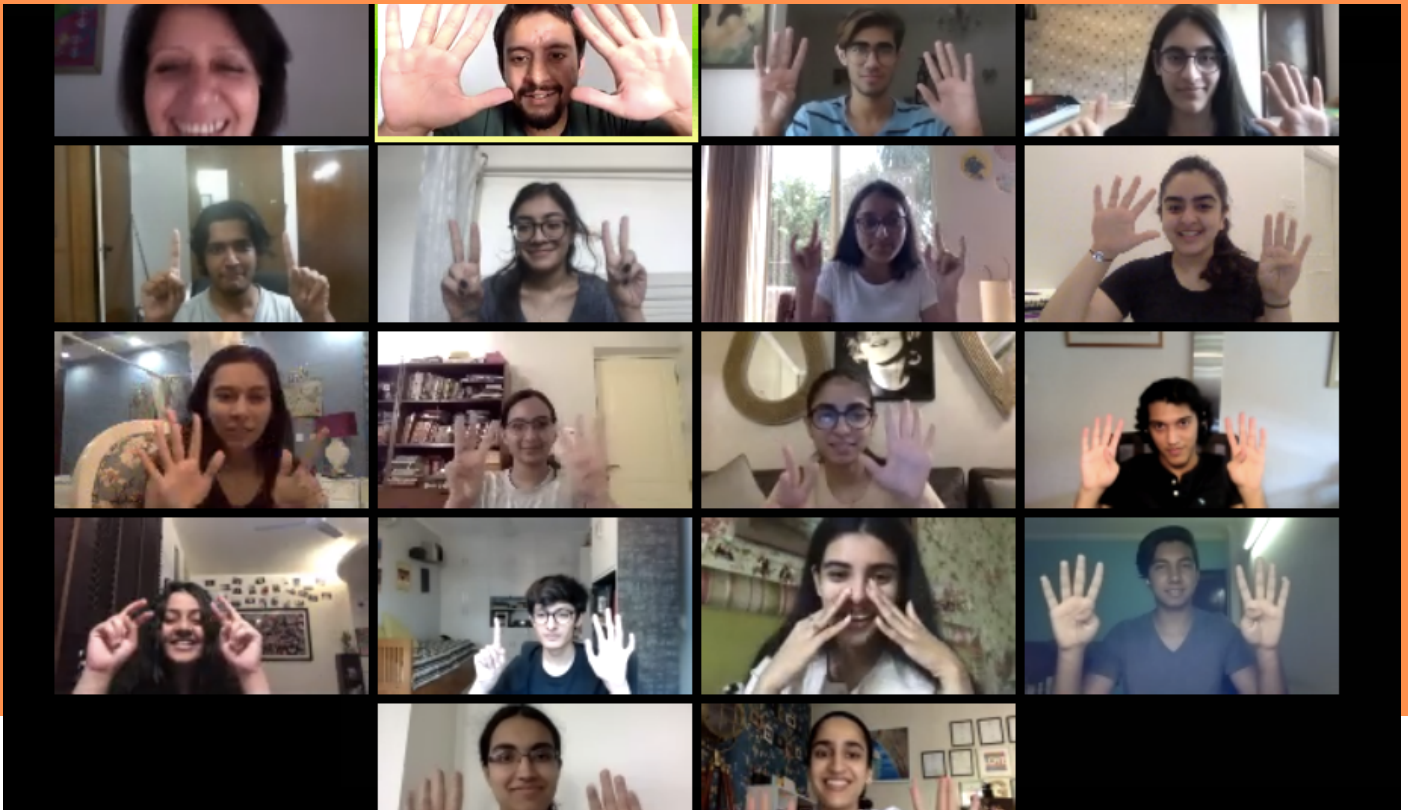


## PLAYBACK THEATRE FOR COMMUNITY BUILDING

Playback Theatre is a form of improvisational theatre in which the audience or group members tell stories from their lives and watch them enacted on the spot. Interactive and spontaneous, playback performances are carried out by a team of actors, an emcee (called the conductor), and a musician. As the show begins, audience members respond to questions from the conductor, then watch as actors and the musician create brief theatre pieces on the spot.

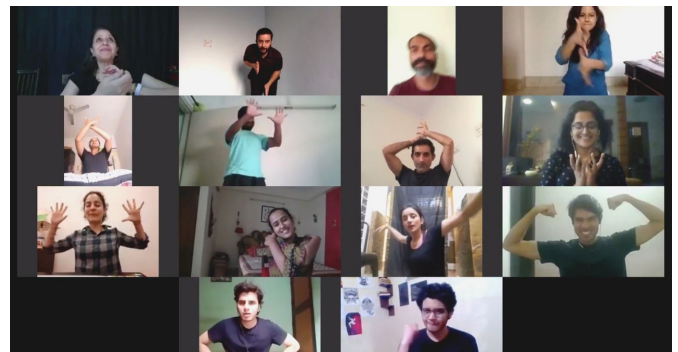
## MOVING PLAYBACK TO THE ONLINE REALM

The Yuva Ekta Playback Theatre group is a team of approximately 15 talented and dedicated artists from diverse backgrounds, who meet every week to train and explore the craft. This is the only registered Playback group in Delhi, functional for over five years. **Since the Covid pandemic began, our sessions shifted online. We explored various relevant themes that provided us with an opportunity to find 'novel' ways of telling stories to connect with one another.**



## THE IMPRINTS

On May 8, 2020, we conducted our **first public Playback Theatre performance online, titled 'The Imprints'**. Our intent through this performance was to explore powerful emotions through nostalgia, to give people strength during the pandemic. It was a very moving session, as many audience members shared stories of their childhood, acutely reliving the sense of taste, smell, and so much more. This was also an opportunity to share the collective sense of pain and helplessness felt during those times.

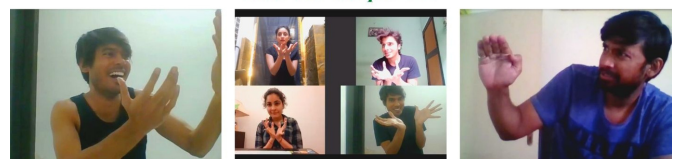


## THE IMPRINTS

An Online Playback Theatre Performance by the  
Yuva Ekta Playback Theatre Group

*Capturing Images, Emotions, Nostalgia  
and more..*

*May 8th, 2020 (Friday),  
5:00 to 7:00 pm IST*



To attend this session, get in touch with us at  
office@yuvaektafoundation.org  
9582591869/9871976485

# Towards a New Horizon

*NEW BEGINNINGS. NEW CHALLENGES.*



Several Playback sessions with the theme '**Towards a New Horizon - New beginnings. New challenges**', explored love, loss, fears, dreams and aspirations, redefined by the pandemic.

From June onward, we performed for in-house teams from Corporate organisations like **Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), Tattle Civic Technologies, and DENAVE.**

Additionally, we hosted Playback sessions with the senior school prefects of **Vasant Valley School (New Delhi) and Psychology students of Kamala Nehru College, University of Delhi,** uncovering layers around learning and teaching in the online world.

## THE SPACES

## IN

## BETWEEN

Titled '**The Spaces in Between**', the Yuva Ekta Playback Theatre Group hosted an evening for the members of **Aagaz Theatre Trust.** The intent was to help their Theatre facilitators explore their sense of Self and overcome barriers of anxiety and isolation, faced during the pandemic.

# Playing it Back

A scene from an online  
Performance



## Responses to our Playback performances across the year

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*"The playback workshop helped everyone take a step back and come together to recognise common struggles and anxieties. It helped us address the isolation that all of us are experiencing in lockdown as well as the mental exhaustion that comes with working on misinformation, especially in a pandemic"*

- Tarunima Prabhakar, Project Lead, Tattle Civic Technologies

*"Watching the actors reinterpret the personal stories hit me with nostalgia. The performance by Yuva Ekta made me look within & yearn for more experiences that bring me happiness."*

- Anwasha Bose, Ph.D. Student, Eindhoven, The Netherlands

*"I think it's really important to stop doing everything for a bit and just reflect on our thoughts. We need to address our mental health along with doing our work."*

*"It was comforting to see a little bit of yourself reflected in what was acted."*

- Collective responses from students of Vasant Valley School

# Yuva Ekta Playback Theatre goes International

One of the most special relationships we have formed is with **Ms Aviva Apel-Rosenthal, a Playback practitioner and Theatre Artiste-Extraordinaire from Israel.** She has helped us open new horizons when it comes to learning and performing playback online. In what has now become a synergistic relationship, we will continue to take classes from her in the future.

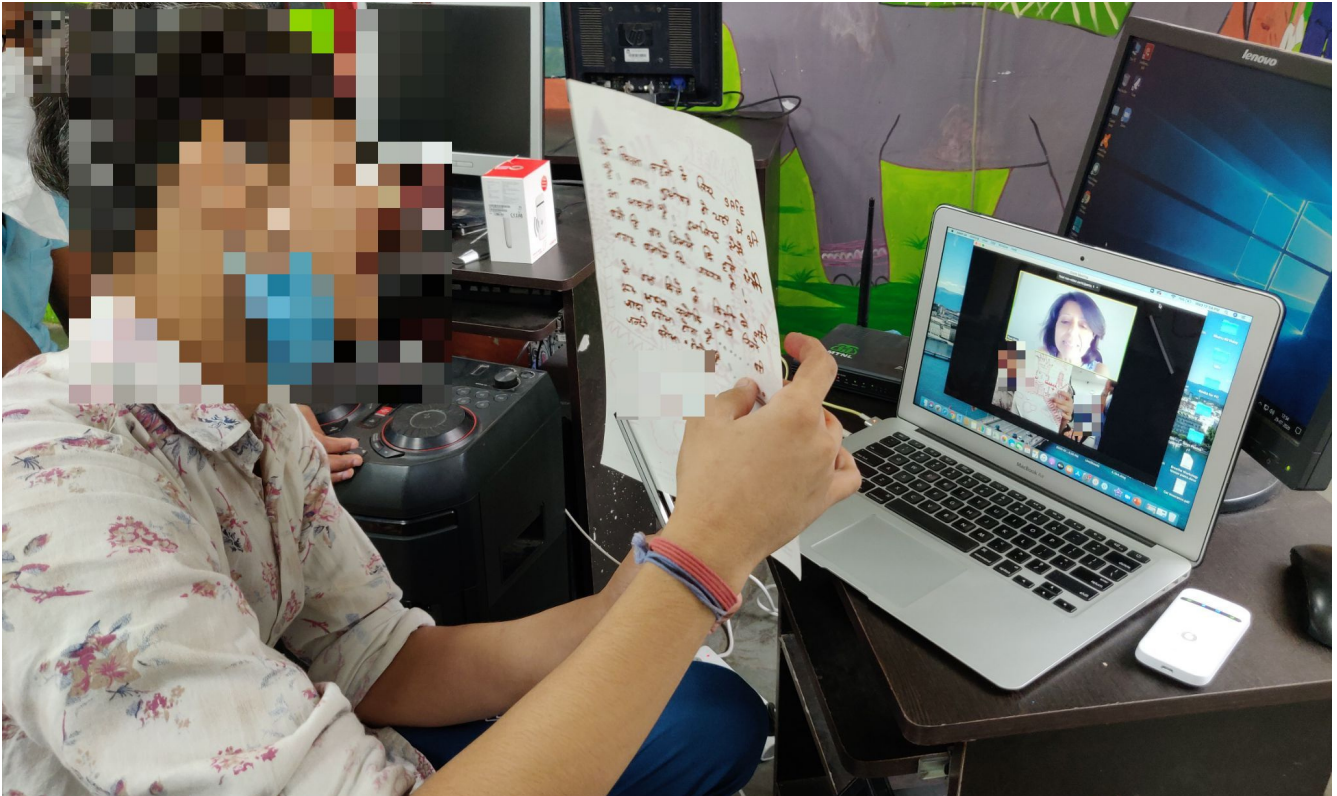
Members of the Yuva Ekta Playback Theatre Group also participated in the **1st South Asian Playback Theatre Gathering in August 2020.** A platform like this was an opportunity for our group to interact closely with other South Asian Playback groups and International trainers. Since then, our team members have been exploring collaborations with other Playbackers across the globe.



EXPLORING A NEW TECHNIQUE OF ONLINE THEATRE  
WITH MS. AVIVA

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# Working with Children in Conflict with Law (CICL)



Our flagship program, '**Threads of Humanity**' is oriented towards **marginalised and at-risk youth**. For over a decade now, we have used a foray of Expressive Arts and conducted interventions to make young people more accountable for their actions, creating safe spaces where they can express themselves without fear or judgement. We have worked extensively with CICL at Government Observation Homes in Sewa Kutir and Majnu ka Tila, Delhi.



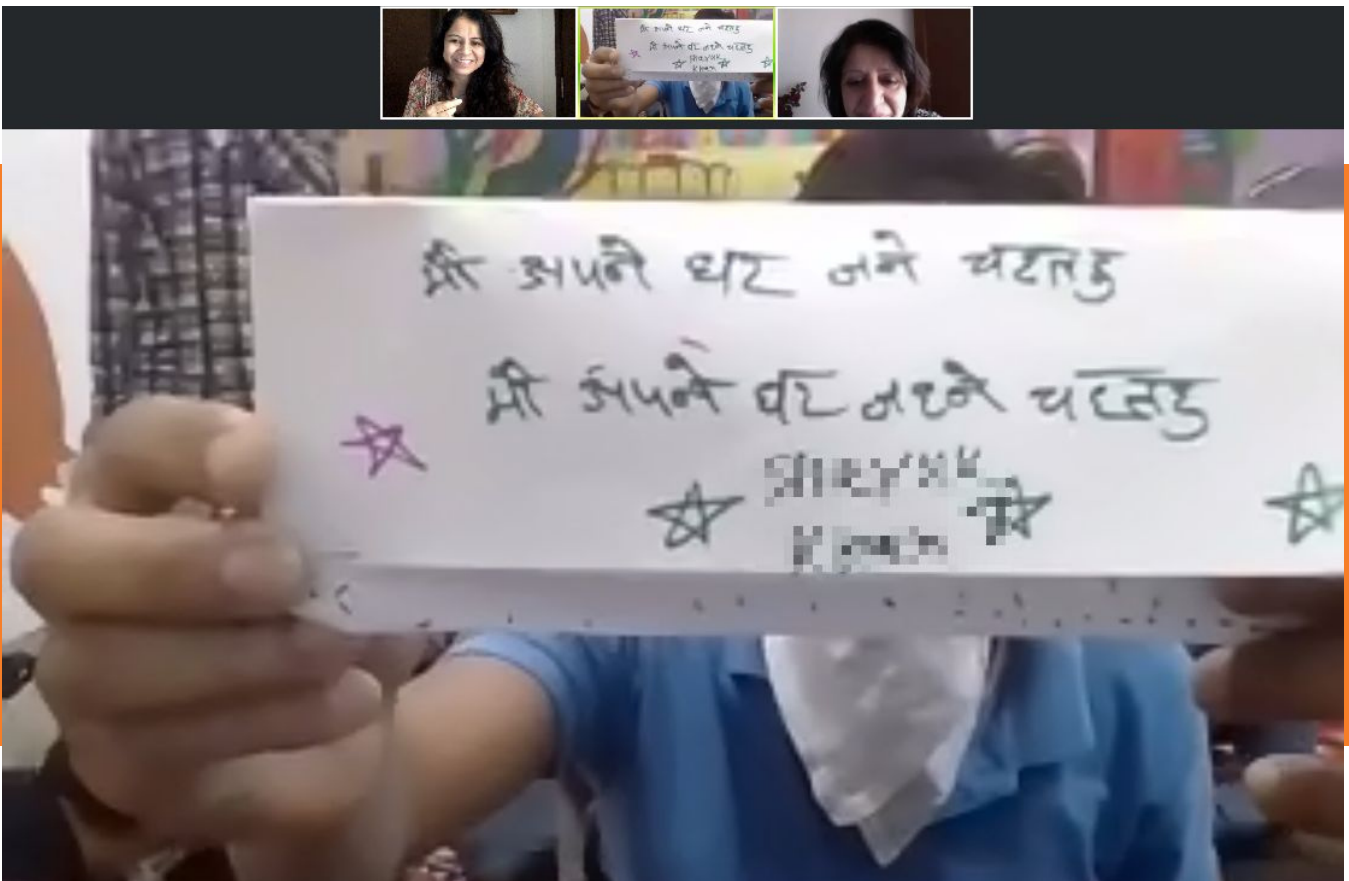


# THE EMERGENT NEED

During the lockdown, our work at the Place of Safety and Special Home for Boys, Majnu ka Tila, came to a standstill. The boys were receiving minimal counselling over the phone and could speak with their families only through video calls. Court hearings had stopped and **there was an increased sense of loneliness and isolation among the boys.**

Additionally, some of the boys we had worked with earlier had been released on early parole or bail. They were completely at a loose end as to how to occupy their time when released. **There was a distinct risk of them slipping back into old patterns of crime and addiction.**

Our first connect with the boys through a video call was possible only in the month of April. We realised that there was an **urgent need of a mentorship program that would provide the guidance and support to them during these times.**



# Two-Part Program

*Responding to the new world order*



We began a two-part program that addressed the Emotional Health and Well Being of boys inside the Home, and provided a support system to mentor the released boys. We refocused our energies and skillsets, specifically for the circumstances at hand. We reached out to the released participants individually and started meeting them online as a group, beginning conversations on how productively they could spend their time, while making choices for the future. The program was titled **'Emotional Health and Well Being of Children in Conflict with Law during Covid-19'**.

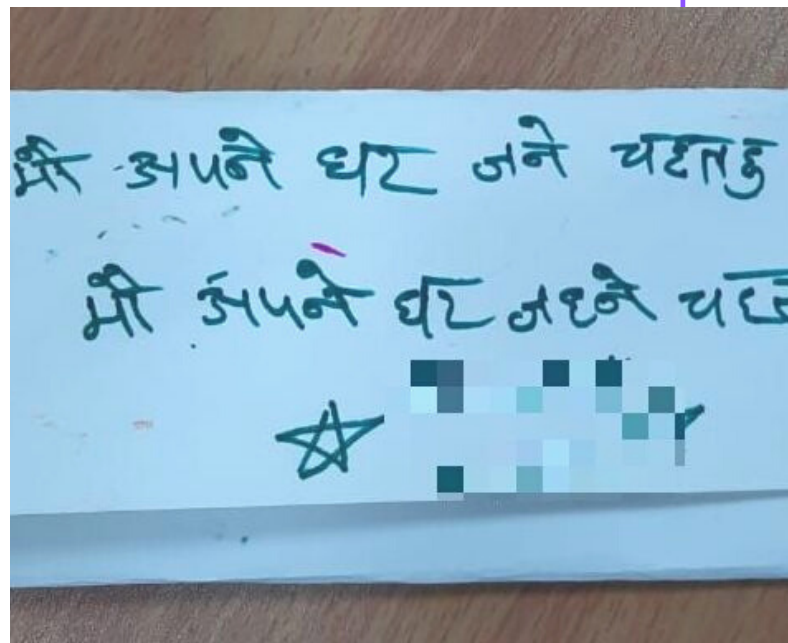
## WORK INSIDE THE HOME

### Challenges of the online world

Our activities were designed specifically to create a safe space, where the boys could openly express their anxieties, without inhibition or fear of judgement.

Working online was a tremendous challenge. Lack of an institutional setup to support an online program, coupled with poor internet connectivity at the project site, meant that effective communication with the boys was a challenge. The Staff at the Home had to usually organize the sessions from their own phones and send us the resultant artwork once the session was done.

**A lot of the artwork produced in this time reflected their growing sense of isolation. Some boys requested us to start visiting the Home soon, since they craved human contact. Their interest was growing in our activities, despite the above-mentioned challenges.**



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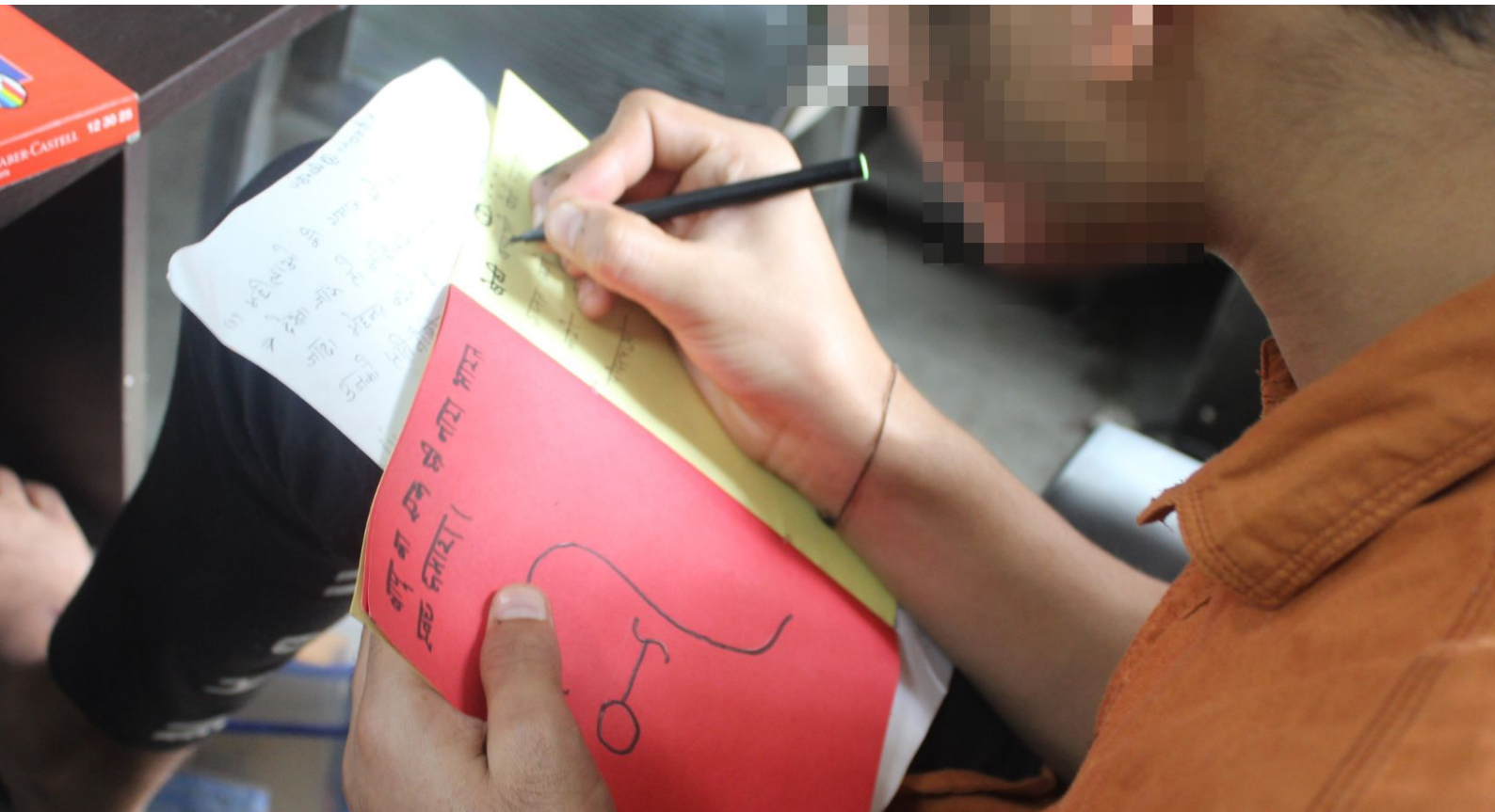
# Starting our on-ground visits

## ON-GROUND AND ONLINE



**As soon as the lockdown lifted in June, we transitioned into a part-online, part- on-ground model of working with the boys. Two facilitators from the Yuva Ekta team would be on-ground, with the Lead Facilitator joining online. Soon we also setup our own system with an internet connection at the Home, to overcome the institutional barriers in conducting our sessions.**

***WE DELVED DEEPLY INTO PHYSICAL THEATRE AND OTHER FORMS OF CREATIVE EXPRESSIONS. THE BOYS ENJOYED THE PROCESS AND OPENED UP ABOUT THEIR DREAMS AND ASPIRATIONS. THEY SHARED THEIR DESIRE TO EARN RESPECT FROM SOCIETY AND TAKE OWNERSHIP OF THEIR ACTIONS.***



## THE RESPONSES

***“I have never felt this confident in life. Before I attended these sessions, I was very shy and I never spoke to anyone. After attending Yuva Ekta’s workshops for the last six months, I have become expressive. I now talk to everyone with ease and keep my ideas forward comfortably. I wish to carry forward this confidence and learning when I step out. I would also like to be in touch with Yuva Ekta once I am out”***

- Saleem (name changed), at the closure of our Covid-specific program in December 2020.

**The staff at the Home also gave encouraging feedback about our work.**

***“Please continue these workshops all throughout Covid. When you meet these boys and work with them, they are happy all day. We also feel involved in their lives and get to know so much more about them through you.”***

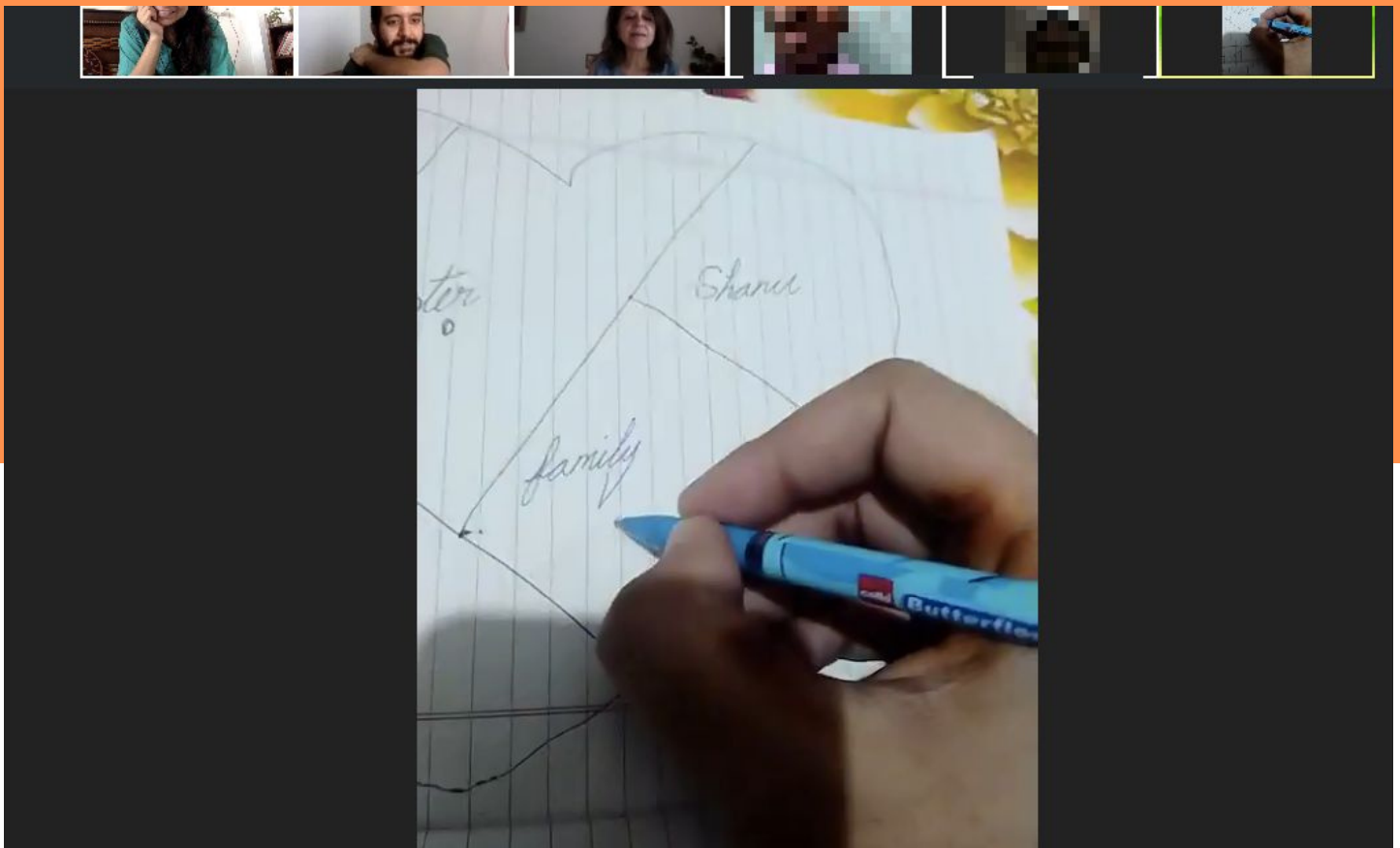
- Saurabh (name changed), a Welfare Officer who helped organize the first few sessions from his own phone.

# WORKING WITH THE BOYS OUTSIDE

*Opening a channel of communication with the boys on parole was as essential*

**Gradually, we began getting in touch with some of our released participants. A few contacted us on their own, wanting to keep the chain of communication alive. Through weeks of coordinating and connecting, we decided to keep Tuesday mornings as our workshop day. Anyone from this group who could join us, was welcome.**

Circumstances at their residence kept many of our participants away. The lack of computers and connectivity, coupled with a lack of private space, prevented many from immersing themselves in the workshop experience. Despite these challenges, we managed to get 5-6 regular participants. Even those who were unable to participate, were open to sharing their experiences and stories with us through phone calls.





# Continuing our work

We ended our Covid-specific interventions in the early days of December 2020. By this time, a lot of the participants had started getting released because the Home had to maintain social distancing norms. We created a database of the released participants and got in touch with them over phones and video calls. The transition to this space has been seamless. Many of the boys who we have worked with are now either trying to find work or have enrolled into full time employment.



## GRANT APPROVAL

We are delighted to announce that the **Azim Premji Philanthropic Initiatives (APPI)** has awarded us a three-year grant for a **‘Comprehensive Program for the Rehabilitation and Re-integration for Children in Conflict with Law’**.

This program addresses several deficits that we uncovered in our previous research study. It works on a multi-institutional approach, keeping the welfare and well-being of the child at the heart of every step we take.

***We are on the last phase of writing our Research Study that began in 2018. The first, ready-for-publishing edition will be out soon, and we are looking forward to sharing our experiences with stakeholders in the field of Juvenile Justice.***







## A New Chapter begins

**With our grant coming through in December, we began a fresh module with a new batch. Our interventions will focus on building core competencies like emotional stability, autonomy, overall adjustment levels, aspirations and the ability to make constructive choices at their time of release.**

By the end of March '21, the Foundation's Facilitation team has conducted 12 Expressive Arts sessions. We performed our first physical Playback Theatre show as part of this project. Our team is in regular communication with the released participants, which is an integral part of the program itself.

# The Stories

## 'Relationships that define me' - an opportunity to reflect

The Yuva Ekta Playback Theatre Group performed for the boys at Majnu ka Tila as part of our ongoing work at the project site. The performance provided a platform for the participants to talk about people who matter in their lives, and the emotions they elicit. We share some of these stories with you.



*"I spent most of my time with a friend in school, whose father is a sweet-shop owner. I haven't spoken with him since I've come here. I miss him a lot. He is my best friend. I am ashamed that I'm here. I want to talk to him but I don't have his number. I'm sure he remembers me too..."*



*"I befriended someone when I was in school.. and I learnt how to pick pockets. We got caught in the act and I was the one arrested. I did not take his name. I don't want him to be held back because he is studying and this might spoil his future..."*



*"In our Games period I ended up fighting with someone. In the next class he hid my book and I got a scolding from my teacher. We fought again because he deliberately sabotaged me... He was the one who spoiled my chess game in the Games period as well..."*

**March  
8, 2021**

# International Women's Day



**A COLLABORATION WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF WOMEN  
AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT (GOVT. OF NCT OF DELHI)**

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# Working on Gender Justice



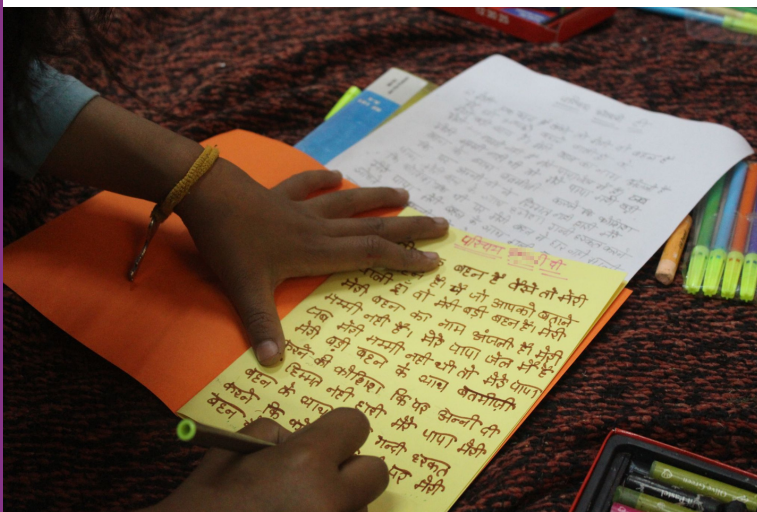
Our initial meeting with the Department focussed on portraying an exhibition on the theme '**Women in Leadership**'

We expanded this theme to Gender Justice and explored what young people thought about issues like feminism, masculinity, equality and gender roles. Through our work, we have understood that empowerment is a long, arduous process and it is important to breakdown the larger canvas of Gender Justice into everyday paradigms.

***WE WORKED WITH 6 CHILD CARE INSTITUTIONS (CCI'S) IN DELHI, AND DESIGNED ACTIVITIES ON THEMATIC AREAS AROUND GENDER JUSTICE. WE FELT IT WAS IMPERATIVE TO WORK WITH BOTH BOYS AND GIRLS, TO ALLOW CONVERSATIONS AROUND THE DIGNITY AND RESPECT OF WOMEN TO PLAY OUT WITHIN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS.***



**The boys and girls were full of emotional accounts of their mother, sister, or a closely known woman, who has given them unconditional love, support and strength. It was especially moving to hear the first-hand accounts of young girls who have been victims of sexual abuse, with each day in their lives becoming a test for survival.**





## THE FINAL EXHIBITION

Our artworks were displayed as part of the exhibition organised by the Department at their offices in the ISBT complex, Kashmiri Gate. Spread across 2 stalls, we displayed all the material we had collected over 3 days of intense workshops.

**We received plaudits from members of the Department as well as Mr. Rajendra Pal Gautam (Delhi Cabinet Minister- Social Welfare, SC & ST, Gurudwara Elections, Water and Registrar of Cooperative Societies) for an innovative and 'different' portrayal of content.**

We feel that a longer and more consistent workshop process, specifically oriented towards the needs of inmates inside the Home, can yield more meaningful rewards.

We thank Dr. Rashmi Singh (Director) and the Department of Women and Child Development for this opportunity, and hope to collaborate with them in the near future.



## **A YEAR TO RECKON WITH**

**By no stretch of imagination has 2020 been a 'normal' year.**

**The pandemic altered all our lives and forced each one of us to pause and reflect on our individual journeys.**

**Covid 19 reinforced the yawning abyss of inequitable distribution of resources, as the poor had little or no fall back to cushion them. The Climate Crises too is staring us in the face, as the next big disaster waiting to implode!**

**At The Yuva Ekta Foundation, we have always trusted in the tremendous power of the Arts to empower and heal. Our challenge last year was to not only make our activities relevant to the times we are in, but also to reach out to those who don't have access to these resources.**

**The one thing that stands out invincibly this past year, is the value people have placed in the Arts and Artists, to keep them alive and relevant. As we look back, we feel that our personal and professional strides as a team have been tremendous.**

# The Way Forward

NEW BEGINNINGS. NEW CHALLENGES

## STILL ONLINE

Our venture of exploring Playback Theatre online has reaped positive rewards, opening us up to amazing possibilities of being able to connect with practitioners and audiences across the world. We will continue to experiment with online Playback Theatre, well past the pandemic.

While our last online performance was in December 2020, we are now gearing up towards several open house Playback rehearsals and sessions.

'Breathe' too has been taking its own course. As the lockdown eased off and people's lives continued to open up alongside, 'Breathe' transitioned into a channel that can be accessed anytime. The next phase for 'Breathe' will be transitioning back into the physical world, as we open up to explore more possibilities of Expressive Arts workshops in the near future.

## CONTINUING INTERVENTIONS

Threads of Humanity has been challenging, but is now on course to becoming one of our most successful programs despite the pandemic. Our new grant ensures that our intensive engagements will continue for years to come. We hope to expand on the work already done and look forward to raising more funds to expand the scope of the workshops.

## NEW PROJECTS

The Necessary Space (a Community Arts company in Scotland, UK) has commissioned our Managing Trustee, Ms. Puneeta Roy, to run the India chapter of a global Participatory Arts Project, 'The Conference of the Birds'. It will bring together a world view of Humanity and how we grew through the pandemic.



# The Conference of the Birds

An ancient epic poem by Sufi poet Farid ud-Din Attar, the Conference of the Bird tells the story of the assembly of the birds, in a time of existential crisis. They embark on a journey and search for the “Simorgh,” a mythical majestic bird that has been likened to the phoenix. They are led by the wisest bird through seven valleys to find the Simorgh and enlightenment. Each Valley has a challenge and an exploration into who we are and what can become.

**Ms. Puneeta Roy has been invited by Simon Sharkey (Former Associate Director, National Theatre of Scotland) for this Festival that uses creative expression (song, art, food, poetry, theatre, film, dance and more) to explore our respective journeys through this moment in history.** Led by Simon along with Erica May Wood (An artist-educator from Canada), it envisages a collaborative effort inviting 7 different countries – India, Chile, Brazil, Bangladesh, Ghana, Scotland, and Canada. The project aims to have a global reach in the form of online content, installations, publications, exhibitions, 'safe live events', and performances.



P E N G U I N  C L A S S I C S

**FARID UD-DIN ATTAR**

*The Conference of the Birds*

**The captured artistic results will be curated into a digital game/book/resource for all participants and the world at large.**

# FINANCIAL REVIEW

*Despite a difficult year, The Foundation managed to keep afloat and even start new programs that helped increase our circle of influence, directly translating into financial donations. Following is the division of income collected through donations and grants.*

## Key highlights

- Received our first major grant from APPI for our work with 'Children in Conflict with Law'
- Used 'Mirror Image' and Playback Theatre as a tool to reach out to corporate stakeholders and raise funds for our Playback Group and other projects
- Started 'Breathe', which apart from being an online wellness platform, also helped us expand our circle of influence

## 74%

### DONATIONS

74% of our annual income came from donations made by individuals to the Foundation

## 26%

### GRANTS\*

26% of our income came from the APPI Grant given to the Foundation

\*APPI Grant is a Three-Year grant that began in December 2020. This is the percentage spent within this financial year till March 2021



# THANK YOU

The Yuva Ekta Foundation would like to acknowledge the support of all our donors, contributors, volunteers, Master Practitioners, and facilitators who collaborated with the Foundation this year. Our work would not have been possible without their contribution.

We started new ventures and transitioned the ongoing ones to the online realm. This journey was as challenging as it was rewarding. We hope that your continued support becomes the pillar of strength and inspiration we need, to expand on our work and continue with greater strength and determination in the years to come.

With Love,  
Puneeta, Bhanu & Rijul

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