

**Name of the Project:** Small Voices, Small Victories: A Pathway to Amplify the Voice of Youth Civic Engagement

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## **Table of Contents**

1. Introduction
2. The Grounding of the Project
3. Objectives
  - 3.1 Overall Objective
  - 3.2 Specific Objective
4. Project Highlights
5. Project Outcomes
  - 5.1 Project Contributions to the field
  - 5.2 Importance of project
  - 5.3 Key Scientific Findings
  - 5.4 What occurred as a result of the project
  - 5.5 Intended vs actual results and unintended outcomes
  - 5.6 Project contributions to knowledge and innovation for large scale positive change
6. Research Outputs
7. Lessons and observations about IDRC processes
8. Final thoughts/conclusions

## 1. Introduction

In India, a systematic police surveillance of people considered to be suspicious, either because of their identities or activities, is part of the colonial legacy that has been left behind by the British. It provides for the surveillance of a) Persons who “may be defined as a goonda or rowdy and includes a hooligan, rough, vagabond or any person who is dangerous to the public peace or tranquility”. The definition also provides for inclusion of “novices, who are budding goondas”; and b) Bad Characters and Suspicious Individuals who consist of all those “who are known or are believed to be addicted to or aid or abet the commission of criminal offences”. Mere suspicion or apprehension that the individual would commit a crime or be an inconvenience to the police was sufficient ground to warrant an entry into what is now known as a “history-sheet”. Present day policing methods largely continue these above-mentioned practices.

There are many people in the age group of 20 to 30 (As per Hyderabad Police records, in 2016 there were total 1251 people on whom ‘rowdy sheets’ were being maintained. And more than 50% of the offenders were youth (20-30yrs) and high school dropouts across all 5 zones (east, west, north, south and central) of the city) who are on the history sheets maintained by the police. And the fact of their being on it is the single biggest factor affecting their lives. What are the options available to people who find themselves in this situation? They can either walk the straight and narrow path and face a long and arduous journey before they can get back into the mainstream. Or they can reinforce their delinquent behaviour: join gangs which are active in the land mafia; become tough men in political parties; become drug peddlers. etc. – and, over a period of time, they become hardened criminals. Yugantar tried to find a third way.

This discovery led us to our research question as to

*“Why do a section of young people placed in certain contexts respond in a way that makes them vulnerable to being “criminalised”? And can increased self-awareness and participation in youth-centric civic- engagement activities better facilitate their social recovery?”*

This Action Research Project, conducted over 24 months attempted to answer this question ,fill some gaps in the knowledge about this group and their issues.

## **2. The Grounding of the Project**

The project was commissioned in October 2018 and this was two months before the State elections that were scheduled in the first week of December 2018. During this time, we approached Mr. Amber Kishore Jha, Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP),South Zone specifically to explain the idea and the intent of the research besides requesting for collaboration and cooperation. The DCP was interested and keen on this project and was in principle supportive of the project. However, he suggested that it would be better to commence after the elections since most of the police were deployed for election duty. The DCP suggested that we start with one police station which was the Hussain-i-Alam police station. In this meeting, the DCP also explained that there are various lists such as the History sheets, suspect lists and Rowdy sheets. We thereafter approached the ACP of Santosh Nagar police station for the list. While he was not positive about the program, he suggested we meet him after the elections.

Post elections, when we met with the police, they suggested that they would mobilize the group for the first workshop which was organized on 29<sup>th</sup> Dec 2018. About 93 participants were mobilized by the police and Dr. Lalita Iyer was the key facilitator for the workshop. The mobilization was done haphazardly by the police constables. There was a lot of confusion among the participants pertaining to the proceedings of the workshop. Some were told that they would get out of the rowdy sheet, some others were told that there is a job mela and other job-related opportunities for attending this workshop. While we were happy to commence the project, we realized that we need to clearly explain the idea and the intent of the programme and request for voluntary participation of the individuals who are on the rowdy sheets.

There was internal deliberation on whether it would be a better idea to have a residence programme. Dr. Lalita Iyer suggested that a residential programme will be more impactful. We

called every interested individual and set up meetings in order to convince them personally about our project. We interacted one on one with 55 individuals for feedback and their interest in the counseling programme. While they agreed in person unfortunately only 8 people turned up for the next meeting. This is when we realized that we need to get community leaders and other vocal members to help with the mobilization. After approaching the local community leaders, we realized that they wanted something for themselves in return (some form of rent seeking) for the mobilization which could not be done. Sincere attempts were also undertaken to find ways to undertake job mela/ placement mela that was requested/ demanded by the community leaders. Yugantar reached out to Tech Mahindra group for support in this regard. However, even after this, the response from the community members was not very encouraging. There was a lot of secrecy and gate-keeping in introducing us to the youth and allowing us to interact with them.

Having gone through the above-mentioned process and reaching an impasse, we realized that voluntary engagement and participation from community leaders is not working and we will definitely need the support of the police for this programme to be successful. The team met with the DCP once again and explained the process that unfolded. He was empathetic and was willing to lend the much-needed support. We requested him to share with us the list of persons in the Rowdy sheet in the age group of 18-35 years from the South Zone. There were about 120 people on the list. We shortlisted 64 persons based on the kind of offenses particularly the offenses based on passion. Those who committed crimes based on dowry and other premeditated ones were not a part of the shortlist as we opined that our intervention may not yield results on them. We shared the final list to the DCP and he circulated this to the various police stations. A location that was convenient for the participants was chosen and with the help of the police about 49 participants were mobilized for the first session of Cognitive Behavioral Training based programme. It was held in June 2019.

It is important to note that a lot of effort went in to organize the earlier programme but we hit a lot of roadblocks. Hence we were better prepared for challenges the second time when the Do Raahein program was envisioned. Dr. Balaji Utlia was brought in as the anchor for designing and conducting the training as he had expertise and experience in holding behavioral training

programs for large groups of people. A significant amount of time also went into the design of the curriculum, the planning and execution of activities in each session and the organization of the necessary materials for the activities. Other senior experts such as Vandana Jha (ISABS member), A. Ravishankar (Senior Corporate Executive), Javed Jamal (Corporate Executive) were brought in as facilitators for the program. This proficient team of experts worked closely with the participants, communicated with them in the local language, explained the tasks and objectives of various exercises that were a part of the programme, attempted to understand the responses of the participants, were empathetic and supportive alongside nurturing them to learn and partake in the program.

The police were truly instrumental in ensuring the participation of the rowdy sheeters for the initial sessions of the program. However, over time, the turnout of some of the individuals was regular and some were not. In the end, there were 20 participants (our core group) who had successfully completed the programme.

**Recently, the Commissioner of Police, Hyderabad had declared a list of people whose sheets have been closed. Its heartening to know that 25% of our core group members names have been removed from the list.**

### **3. Objectives**

#### **3.1 What were the overall objectives of the project? Were they met?**

The overall objective of the project when we set out to work was:

**To contribute to the prevention and reduction of violence amongst the youth at risk of criminalization through their participation in youth-centric civic engagement initiatives.**

We were able to meet the overall objective by employing unique methods and centering youth at the risk of criminalization and working closely with behavioral experts and the police department. Through this project, we were able to create a model that can be scaled and used by civil society organisations and government authorities.

All the activities carried out during the course of the project contributed to achieving this objective. Both through the activities conducted in the project like CBT based training program called 'Do Raahein', voluntary work, community radio, youtube channel, advocacy and the study to understand the construction of masculinity among young men, we were able to develop an understanding of the factors contributing to criminalisation of youth. We were also able to find innovative methods to reduce and prevent such criminalisation.

Activities carried by youth before and during the pandemic in providing relief and volunteering has further helped the cause by changing the societal view of the youth from miscreants to contributing members of the society.

### **3.2 What are the specific objectives of the project? Were they met?**

Our specific objectives of the project were:

#### **1) To develop a pathway of prevention and social recovery of youth at risk of being 'criminalised'**

We were successfully able to develop a pathway for young men to find a process to get themselves out of "rowdy sheets" that further criminalizes them through undergoing cognitive behavioral training and voluntary programs.

To achieve this objective, we built a comprehensive program that involved:

#### **a) Cognitive Behavioral Training**

We developed a 14 sessions program based on cognitive behaviour training (CBT) called "Do Raahein" with the help of behavioral experts that explained several aspects of the human mind particularly focusing on automatic thinking and how we need to be more mindful and sensitive to our thoughts, emotions and actions. This methodology sets it apart in that there is more engagement, an internal reflection and long-term impact on the persons who are in the rowdy sheet list. This is both cordial as well as cost-effective.

In implementing this cognitive behavioral training, we received a lot more co-operation and interest in the process from the police department than we originally expected. Various senior officials from the police department have expressed interest in continuing this training and expanding it to new areas in the future. About 25% of the participants who attended the training fully have been removed from rowdy sheets after a police review and more are being considered as we write this report.

### **b) Voluntary work**

The participants who underwent Do Raahein program participated in voluntary work, initially by serving food to homeless people under “free food program” run by prominent social activist Azhar Maqsusi in Hyderabad. Additionally, some of them later participated in food and ration distribution as well volunteered with primary health centres in Old City, Hyderabad to mitigate Covid. Through this work the participants were able to change the way people in their own neighborhoods and surroundings perceived them as contributing members of society instead of the miscreants they were previously regarded as. Participating in this work has also developed their social contacts and helped build positive relationships with staff in the health department and other community leaders.

The main research results discovered through the activities above while working towards developing a pathway for prevention and reduction of violence for the youth at the risk of criminalisation are as follows:

- Using CBT and other behavioral sciences techniques constitutes an effective method to help decrease recidivism. This method can be utilised by the government as a policy of reviewing rowdy sheeters in place of their existing mechanisms.
- The police department is open to experimenting and adapting to new methods of surveillance. These would also be cost effective and less intensive on their personnel.



- Voluntary activities mixed with behavioral training not only help the youth on rowdy sheets be viewed in a positive light by society, but also help build their confidence and ability to contribute to society positively.

## **2) To increase civic engagement of youth by enhancing the Youth Circle platform**

While the initial idea was to work with a one specific group called Youth circle to increase their engagement, this engagement took a much broader approach during the course of this project. The main aspects of this engagement were to help youth start media initiatives to have their voice heard. In this effort, a radio show addressing the issues faced by youth at the risk of criminalisation was conducted in a community radio channel called Radio Charminar and a youtube channel was started that covered various forms of discrimination existing in society, as well as examining how best to use rights entrusted to Indian citizens. This channel was conceived and run entirely by youth. There are plans to start a podcast to continue this effort.

Youth at risk of criminalization, who are the specific target group for our project, now see scope for getting out of the cycle of criminalization. We have made the first few steps through the project to make a pathway available to both the youth and the police to find a more humane and effective way to decrease violence and recidivism. As mentioned earlier, 25% of the participants who attended our “Do Raahein” program designed based on CBT have been removed from rowdy sheets after the completion of the program. More participants are currently under consideration for the closing down of their sheet. We designed a manual based on our program and included what we learned from our experience. This manual can be easily used by anyone who wants to work on a similar program anywhere in India.

Our project was unfortunately limited by delays caused by the elections and the Covid-19 pandemic, and we were unable to reach the potential we had hoped to. At the end of the project, senior police officials showed interest in continuing this program with another batch. We are hoping to continue to work with at least one other batch of youth once the Covid-19 restrictions relax and we can have physical sessions, again.

The project can potentially be taken up by the Telangana police and other states' police departments as a formal mechanism to undergo for the consideration of removal from rowdy sheets and for other youth who are either on the suspect list or on any other police watchlist. We believe that such a policy would significantly reduce both violence and criminalisation of the disadvantaged and vulnerable youth.

#### **4. Project Highlights**

Despite the project demanding a prodigious process, as a team, Yugantar was able to fulfill the deliverables for the project. Below are the five most important outcomes of the project.

- Yugantar successfully designed, organized and conducted Do Raahein program- based on Cognitive Behavioral Training to the Muslim youth who were in the rowdy sheet. About 14 sessions program was organized in 2019 and finally 20 participants graduated from the course. Yugantar had plans to organize more sessions with other groups but could not proceed with them due to the pandemic.
- This group was unique in that they were belonging to the rowdy sheet list for committing small crimes out of passion/ anger; and they belong to Muslim community which is a minority community in Hyderabad. Due to this reason, we need to design and develop an equally unique and alternative approach where we customized the programme keeping in mind the strengths, weaknesses, limitations and opportunities to address the issues that specifically pertain to this group.
- Mind is a complex entity and understanding why the youth do what they do particularly from an angle of masculinity is interesting since it is not a well-researched area. This project focused on the aspect of masculinity and its impact on the mindset/ mentality of the people and their actions. Therefore, through masculinity research we aim to find some inroads to find variables and theory behind anti-social behaviors.
- Through this research, the police department saw some change in the persons attending this workshop. After the workshop, 5 persons (25% of the class) were removed from the rowdy sheets totally. Another 25% are being considered for the closure of their sheets.

Our workshop was instrumental in this removal and those persons can go back to leading normal lives.

- The police department is always viewed with a certain apprehension. Building ties and connections with the police department through this programme has been one of the most significant outcomes. The police department support was substantial in that we realized that this programme will not take off without their intervention. They were extremely receptive and enthusiastic of this programme. They believed that this programme has potential and contributed to a smooth execution of the same.

## **5. Project Outcomes**

### **5.1 Projects Contribution to the Field of Study**

One of the important aspects of the project is that its scope is quite wide. Ranging from behavioural sciences to criminology to political sciences, the project is truly interdisciplinary in nature. The research conducted through the project, on the construction of masculinity among the young men and its relationship with their offensive behavior combines disciplines like gender studies, behavioral sciences and criminal psychology. This research will have implications for wider understandings of masculinity, which go beyond this single project.

Young men with their names on the rowdy sheets are some of the most marginalized people among marginalized communities. Considering the biases attached to the tag 'rowdysheeteer', these men face difficulties in getting jobs, marriage alliances, future prospects and in living a decent life. The project was able to initiate a process of examining their issues and finding solutions both within their capacities and beyond (police department and law). Through our project, we tried to address the inherent biases present in both society and state towards them

### **5.2 Why do you think this was an important project?**

According to the 2011 census, more than 63% of the population is the working age group of 15-65 years and over 27% belongs to the age group of 15-29 years of age. This clearly implies that

the youth are the present and the future of this country thus making them a significant group. Besides this, the unemployment rate in India is 6.51% in 2020 and therefore making it essential to find ways to engage with youth such that they do not fall into unwanted and antisocial ways. Today, one important issue pertaining to youth is radicalization and when coupled with unemployment it makes them extremely vulnerable to fall into violent behavior, drugs and bad company. This project specifically looked at such youth that are at risk to really lose control of their lives. This project worked with the youth that are already a part of the rowdy sheet list of the police. Rowdy sheeters are those youth who have committed some crime and are under watch by the police. They need to report to the police station often and are stigmatised by the community. In several cases of rowdy sheeters, they have committed petty crimes or committed a crime out of passion or the youthful irrational anger, due to vengeance or most times are helping their friends for his vengeance. Therefore, working with this group becomes paramount in order to maintain peace in the society.

Furthermore, the methods used in this project are unprecedented. The police department has been primarily focusing on the process involved in managing and updating the rowdy sheets rather than finding ways and means to ease them back into the society. Hence, this project focuses on working with them and facilitates an internal reflection which would lead to a meaningful long-term change in the rowdy sheeters. The cognitive behavioral training (CBT) based programme that was developed and executed as a part of this project was a fourteen-week programme which explained several aspects of the human mind particularly focusing on automatic thinking and how we need to be more mindful and sensitive to our thoughts, emotions and actions. The methodology used in this project sets it apart in that there is more engagement, an internal reflection and long-term impact on the persons who are in the rowdy sheet list. This is definitely a friendlier way of dealing with this group rather than a hostile way which was being followed so far. This friendly approach is also cost effective when compared to other kinds of surveillance techniques.

Therefore, this is an important project for its target group as well as the unique methodology that evolved that led to a lasting impact on the persons. Mr. Ambar Kishore Jha, Director of police training academy in the dissemination workshop said

*“society needs more of such programmes and every person needs to relook at their behaviour and the aspect of automatic thoughts. Real change in society comes through such interventions.”*

### **5.3 Key Scientific Findings**

During the implementation process we discovered certain aspects were interesting and boosted our confidence in furthering the process. However, there were also certain issues which came to light but were left unaddressed or poorly addressed since their scope is too wide and intense for the current project. These interesting aspects and challenging issues are listed below:

1. When we approached the police department, the higher officials showed interest and curiosity in the project. They were willing to relook the issues in a different and a more friendly manner than to continue through the age old mechanism of surveillance and control. The willingness and openness of the police was one of our findings and refutes the conventional understanding of how the police department works.
2. The research conducted on the construction of the masculinity had the following two major findings
  - Positive traits ascribed to masculinity - such as loyalty to the peer group, protection to the family – when triggered in specific contexts lead to risk taking behaviour
  - In “masculinity threatened” situations such as being at the receiving end of taunts and humiliation for lack of income, lack of physique, display of “feminine” behaviour etc. there is a heightened possibility of an aggressive response.
3. Drug abuse is rampant among the young men in the Old City. Several petty crimes are reported to be committed under the effect of drugs. Medicines are easily available and there seems to be no regulatory action from the government. Due to the limited scope of the project we couldn't do much except create awareness through an awareness episode on community radio, Radio Charminar.

4. Though a thorough study hasn't been done given the conditions of pandemic, our first-hand experience shows that CBT based training has proved to be useful. In-depth interviews were conducted and a few of the successful candidates had noted an observable change in their thinking processes after they attended the program. Some reflections from the participants, facilitators and police officials help substantiate this.

**Quotes from Participants**

*"We knew we needed to change but this programme taught us how to change"*

*"I could relate to the role plays and recall incidents from my life and tried to understand my mistakes "*

**Quotes from Police**

*"We have seen a change in the way they talk and interact with us, they have become polite"*

*"Earlier they wouldn't pick up calls. But now most of them are responding to our calls"*

**Quotes from Facilitators**

*"Becoming aware of their danger zones and what triggers their actions was a journey for them. I am certain that these learnings will enable them to take new steps in their lives"*

*"The programme was successful in giving a second chance at life by providing skills to manage anger and understand the consequences of their behaviour"*

#### **5.4 What occurred as a result of this project?**

Success and failures are ingrained within the action research process itself. The process of our project was not without its share of success and failures. However, the objectives with which we started out were accomplished to a very large extent.

A few of the key advances which our team believes were made because of the implementation of the project are:

1. Young men with their names on the rowdy sheets are some of the most marginalized people among marginalized communities. The project was able to initiate a process of examining their issues. Through our project, we tried to address the inherent biases present in both society and state towards them.
2. By adopting a solution based approach in terms of Cognitive Behavioral Training, the project could assist the police department in re-considering the review procedures in sheet management and removal.
3. Recently the police department has released the list of people whose sheets have been closed and 25% of our successful candidates have been removed from the sheets. Though it is a matter of joy, we would continue to advocate for their cause and strive for the closure of more/all sheets.

#### **5.5 Intended versus actual results and Unintended outcomes**

During the implementation of the project certain things came as a surprise to the team and few were already anticipated. Differentiating them in terms of intended and actual results:

<b>Intended Result</b>	<b>Actual Result</b>
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Use of Community radio to raise awareness among the communities regarding the issues of young men particularly who are caught in the web of state surveillance	The program could not reach its objective since we could not gauge the reach and interests of listeners. There was also a helpline number but there were hardly any genuine calls from the youth
Optimum use of youtube platform to throw light on youth issues and build capacities of youth	Much of the team's energies were focused on design and implementation of CBT program, hardly leaving any creative mental space to think and execute youtube episodes
Scientifically establish the efficacy of CBT program in training young men, thus providing an alternative to rowdysheet management	After completing the first batch we intended to work with a second batch of participants with proper data collecting tools to scientifically provide the proof. However, the anti-CAA protests and the pandemic thwarted our efforts.

### **Unintended Outcomes:**

During the implementation process we discovered certain aspects which were interesting and boosted our confidence in furthering the process. However, there were also certain issues which came to light but were left unaddressed or poorly addressed since their scope is too wide and intense for the current project. These interesting aspects and challenging issues are listed below :

- When we approached the police department, the higher officials showed interest and curiosity in the project. Due to the project, a healthy relationship has been achieved between the organisation and the police department. This would help in gaining



acceptance and acknowledgment from the officials to continue the program with few more batches.

- Drug abuse is rampant among the young men in the Old City. Several petty crimes are reported to be committed under the effect of drugs. Medicines are easily available and there seems to be no regulatory action from the government. However, when we invited the Asst. Director, Drugs Control Department, Mr. M. Srinivasulu for the community radio episode on drug abuse, he took immediate action on the stores selling sleeping pills and other medicines without prescriptions. However, there have to be stricter regulations regarding the medicine sale particularly in Old City.
- During the program, the main facilitator suggested the participants to sing '*Hum Honge Kamyab*' at the end of each session. One of the team members picked the idea and wrote a rap song around the line *Hum Honge Kamyab* and it developed into a full fetched 3 min song. It was recorded by professional musicians. The theme of this song is based on the experiences and aspirations of the participants. The video of this song is being worked on and will be released as a music video later this year.
- Community radio episodes were designed to reach out to the community in the Old City and raise awareness regarding the issues of youth particularly the young men who are stuck on the other side of law. However, the program was not very successful. Aspects of the radio programs like the listenership, the effectiveness of the program and the desirable formats of the listener are immeasurable. Hence, we couldn't really gauge the efficacy of our program. Although an advertisement for the program was recorded, it was played only during the program. If it was played during other programs, the reach may have been better.
- A surprising consequence of our program that was not previously envisaged and that increased youth engagement was the formation of a community. Our participants formed a community or network of youth with the common goal of removing themselves from rowdy sheets through positive behavioral change. This change has a deep impact as this community constitutes youth who can influence younger boys within their communities and prevent behavior that could potentially criminalise them.

This group offers a new environment and a sense of belonging and identity. They are able to depend on each other during their crises and consult each other when faced with challenges.

### **5.6 Projects contribution to knowledge and innovation for large scale positive change**

This project's major contribution was to find a pathway for young men to find a process to get themselves out of "rowdy sheets" (that further criminalizes them) through undergoing cognitive behavioral training and voluntary programs. This attempt is in itself innovative as it gives scope for a unique, humane and cost-effective alternative to the existing systems of surveillance methods to control crime and violence among youth.

As mentioned earlier in the report, rowdysheet is a system under which people are placed under systematic police surveillance for being suspicious, either because of their identities or activities. Data shows that a lot of people entering this system are mostly young men from disadvantaged backgrounds including minorities and oppressed castes. Once a person has a rowdy sheet open on them, there are no systemic mechanisms for either police or rowdy sheeters to have them closed in a timely fashion. The existing mechanism where police review rowdy sheets and eventually close them keeps each individual on a rowdy sheet for at least a decade. The police department has been primarily focusing on the process involved in managing and updating the rowdy sheets rather than finding ways and means to ease them back into the society. Some approach courts to have their rowdy sheet closed, but it hasn't been successful for many on the list. Persons on a rowdy sheet are branded 'criminal' and 'dangerous' by the society. Many are not able to find jobs in their preferred field and face a lot of stigma that affects them and their families.

Given this background and looking at successful examples of designing methods to tackle recidivism in some other parts of the world, we developed a comprehensive program that involved a program based on Cognitive Behavioral Training (CBT) called "Do Raahein" and voluntary work. Do Raahein program designed activities followed by discussions on various topics split into three modules- Understanding oneself and one's community, understanding automatic thoughts and developing skills to change oneself to not act based on automatic

thoughts. Apart from developing these skills, the program involved youth on rowdysheeters list in community work that helped them gain confidence by contributing positively in the society and changed societal perception on them.

This approach was never tried in India before and involved employing several innovative techniques and working with behavioral experts and the police department. A major innovation of the Do Raahein program is to use participatory pedagogical tools such as experiential learning and made it accessible to semi-literate youth, while other versions of CBT are mostly accessible to literate and educated. All the activities were designed after much deliberation to fit economic and cultural contexts of youth at the risk of criminalisation in Hyderabad, India.

'Do Raahein' program was met positively by police officials who observed the program and expressed interest in continuing and scaling the program. While the number of participants who underwent this program were lower than expected as were not able to conduct as many rounds of programs (due to Covid-19 and elections causing delay), there is a potential for this model to be taken on a large scale with some advocacy. A manual designed on Do Raahein program provides a simple guide to following the techniques used by this project and can easily be adapted in different parts of India with a similar cohort.

Another important part of the project, the study on "Masculinity in Young Male Adults" is a reflection on and an analysis of an aspect of the work we have been doing over the last two years with young men who are in trouble with the law. Research both in India and globally points to the fact that initiation into "anti-social" behaviour very often takes place between late adolescence and early adulthood. It is very rare that people fall foul of the law in this manner once they cross their middle twenties.

The study enquired into the traits of masculinity that could be underpinning automatic risk-taking and contexts that could be triggering them. Data for analysis was generated through semi-structured interviews with "rowdy sheeters" covering: family background childhood and education; social life; critical incidents and reflection on their present situation.

## 6. Research Outputs

The important research outputs of the project are summarised below:

1. We conducted a total of 14 sessions CBT based program, named '*Do Raahein-Aaj ke faisle kal ke anjaam*' in a span of 4 months. At the end 20 participants successfully completed the program.
2. As a result of the program and advocacy 25% of the participants who completed the program have been removed from the rowdysheetter list.
3. At the end of the CBT program we have designed a trainer's manual consisting of 3 modules which include 19 components of various topics. The three modules are :
  - Me and My World
  - Understanding Self
  - Changing Self
4. Youth at the risk of criminalisation participated in 10 voluntary programs over a period of 3 months. This process was facilitated and supervised by Yugantar.
5. The Community Radio program was called '*Do Raahein*'. It had four 30 min episodes. We also had a helpline number to help the youth facing similar issues of criminalisation to reach out to us
6. We also started our youtube channel called '*Mana Gola*' (*Our noise*). We produced 3 episodes of MyRTI story, 3 vox populi episodes on during elections and 1 episode on mother-daughter relationship among transgender community
7. We recorded an audio song titled "*Hum Honge Kamyaab*" to raise awareness among the society regarding the issues and aspirations of young men who are on the rowdysheets
8. We also conducted a study on the construction of masculinity among these young men and how it relates to their behaviours which often push them towards offence

## 7. Lessons and Observations about IDRC process

It is extremely important to establish the circumstances in the last one year before we delve into the financial performance of the project. As mentioned earlier in several instances, the

pandemic put a stop on the activities pertaining to the project. This pandemic was like a once in a century event and has affected all aspects of life and living and in particular this project. The Cognitive behavioural training which took a lot of effort to set up in the first place could not proceed beyond the first batch of participants. The team would have ideally preferred to have undertaken at least two more batches in this project but were unable to do so due the limitation posed by the pandemic. During this period most of the financial resources were used in supporting staff who consistently worked on immediate relief provision during covid 19. Therefore, while the project took off as it should and could have, we learn that there are risks that cannot be foreseen and factored into the project. Yugantar is extremely humbled to receive the support from IDRC during this pandemic.

In so far as the IDRC processes are concerned, Yugantar found it to be reasonably expedient and smooth. Having worked with IDRC earlier, the process was systematic and familiar. However, one important aspect we would like to bring to notice is the strength of an institution such as IDRC. IDRC has ongoing projects on the same theme in multiple locations simultaneously and we perceive this to be the strength that needs a lot more leverage. The subject/ theme of youth and in particular youth with criminal background is a complex one. Any project that engages with these groups needs a high level of sensitivity and strategizing at multiple levels for it to work effectively. Experiences and learnings must be shared frequently by the myriad of persons/ organisations working on the said theme. IDRC has the potential and the opportunity to facilitate such spaces for the exchange of lessons, experiences, possibilities and things to watch out for etc. Yugantar's experience in IDRC's South Asia Regional Workshop - Giving Youth A Voice held in September 2019 at Kathmandu, Nepal was quite enriching and it was really motivating to see the various approaches undertaken by the other NGO's in the same theme. While there is a possibility of improving proposal quality and the impact of a project, there is also a possibility of finding ways to scale up a good solution or undertake collaborative work on the same theme. Therefore, we recommend that IDRC create more spaces/ opportunities for partners working on the same theme to engage with one another more often during the project period to not only learn/ share from/ with one another but also to choose implementable solutions and scale them up eventually.

## **8. Final Thoughts/ Conclusion**

The demographic dividend of India clearly indicates that the youth will be playing a central role in the development of the nation. Due to multiple reasons such as exposure to violence in media, automatic thinking that leads to risk taking, lack of confidence in self, following herd mentality and lack of proper community support and connections, the youth today are extremely vulnerable to the risk of criminalization. The risk increases many fold with youth belonging to the disadvantaged and more particularly minority communities as they face discrimination and alienation in their own land. Ensuring that we find friendly and suitable ways to engage with them becomes paramount to maintain peace and harmony in the society. This project is one such attempt of not only finding inroads to engage with youth at risk of criminalization but also finding alternative ways that impact the individual at the core of his being and bring about a long lasting change.

Through this project, Yugantar realised that strategic interventions that bring about inherent transformation is central to working with this group. Collaborations with the police department, local communities and other experts (interdisciplinary) made the implementation of the project uncomplicated. We believe that an approach of kindness and compassion towards the participants played a significant role in their growth through this project. Being sensitive to their needs, conversing with them in their local language rather than talking down at them was a better strategy that gave the participants a sense of belonging which is crucial. While these strategies seem to be intangible, they played a critical role in the success of the project. Yugantar strongly believes that the cognitive behavioral training has immense scope and potential to bring in real change in the lives of the youth at risk of criminalization. It also believes that this project has the scope for scaling up and can be implemented across the country for large scale change.

In all, the project was a successful one in that it was able to achieve its objectives and helped build good networks with the government and local community. The pandemic, timely elections did pose some challenges to the project, however, Yugantar could lay out a concrete process methodology for engaging with the youth. While the number of persons impacted might be less, there is a vivid system that is in place for easy scaling up of the project. Yugantar truly intends to find ways and means to continue this engagement with the youth at risk of criminalization after this project as well.