yugantar

Annual Report

2019-2020

Registered Office: 268, 5th Cross, 3rd Main,
1st Block, Koramangala
Bangalore 560034
Telephone: 040-23449193

Office Address: 3-4-142/6 Barkatpura, Hyderabad, Telangana 500027
www.yugantar.org.in

Yugantar - Annual Report 2019-20

Yugantar was founded as India's first feminist film collective in Bangalore in 1982 by friends and filmmakers Abha Bhaiya, Navroze Contractor, Deepa Dhanraj, and Meera Rao. Operating between 1980 and 1983, during a time of radical political transformation, Yugantar created four pioneering films together with existing or ensuing women's groups, including domestic workers in Pune (Molkarin, 1981), female factory workers in Nipani (Tambaku Chaakila Oob Ali / Tobacco Ember, 1982), Sri Shakhti Sanghatana, a feminist research and activist collective based in Hyderabad (Idhi Katha Matramena / Is This Just A Story?, 1983), and members of the Chipko movement (Sudesha, 1983).

Yugantar's films carved new and productive spaces for dialogue through friendships and alliances, and their vision participated in shaping a period imbued with immense energies for resistant cultural practices to expand political discourse. The significance of the group's films lies in their original collaborative practice before "participatory video work" or "community media" became familiar terms, and in being part of the Indian autonomous women's movement and radical left movements of the 1970s and 80s.

The work of Yugantar evolved and moved into the implementation of development projects in both rural and urban settings. Yugantar worked in rural areas in Bihar and Chhattisgarh in conflict resolution and in Rural Rajasthan documenting the realities of caste. In the urban setting, Yugantar has predominantly worked in Hyderabad's Old City engaging in project implementation including research, advocacy and outreach activities. Yugantar's engagement in Old City began working in skill development and gender with Mahila Sanatkar, a women's collective. Yugantar's programme 'Tightropes and Boot Straps,' studied the impact of prolonged violence on young Muslim men and women in conflict-prone neighbourhoods in Hyderabad. 'Small Voices, Small Victories' was a pioneering action research programme working to address the issues of Youth at risk of criminalisation of becoming rowdysheeters and to facilitate their rehabilitation into mainstream society – winning the ISABS Honours in applied behavioural science Institutional Practice Leadership.

Yugantar's vision is to play a role in creating a just and equitable India, inclusive of plural traditions, individual freedoms and diverse communities. And hence, in parallel to targeted funded programmes Yugantar's work includes the support of minorities in accessing their right, such work with the Transgender community, migrants, bonded labour and child labour.

Our funding is predominantly from grants from CSR foundations and institutions, our previous donors include, Ford Foundation, Action Aid, TATA Trusts, IDRC, Tech Mahindra Foundation and Ministry of Rural Development.

MEMBERS

Navroze Contractor
(President)
Cinematographer and documentary film maker

Tejaswini Madabhushi
(Secretary)
Feminist activist and Yugantar CEO

Sashi Kumar
(Treasurer)
Senior policy expert

Madan Mohan Rao
(Member)
Journalist and Ashoka Fellow

Dr. K. Lalita
(Member)
Author, feminist activist, researcher, and founder-coordinator of Anveshi Research Centre of Women Studies

Deepa Dhanraj
(Member)
Filmmaker and feminist activist

Dr. Vithal Rajan
(Member)
Development specialist and short-story writer

L. Ravi Chander
(Member)
Lawyer and journalist

ACHIEVEMENTS

Project title: YouRTI.in

Project Duration: 2018-present

Project Activities:

YouRTI.in was built with an aim to create a robust and scalable technology platform that would enable people, organizations and institutions to file RTI requests easily, speedily and if desired anonymously.

In the two years duration, we filed more than 3000 RTI requests and received over 5000 responses (as we often receive more than one RTI response from different departments for the same query). We covered a variety of relevant topics spread across many states, including electoral lists, municipal issues, anti-CAA riots, Pradhan Mantri schemes, agricultural produce and procurement details, budget details of many government projects, etc. Over the years, many students, researchers, activists, journalists and fact checkers have been consistently utilising the web portal for their research, and collaborating with our team for confuting myths and lies. Frequently, journalists have found material for their stories based on our web uploads of our RTI responses in the portal. In fact, almost all the major publications in Telangana covered issues from our RTI stories. Yugantar is also focused on spreading awareness on RTI, through a designated social media page called YouRTI across all social media platforms and is actively engaged with the users and has filed various requests from these users. We also conducted seminars with petition organisations like Jhatkaa.org to increase the website reach and visibility. Our website users are RTI activists, students and journalists.

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

Project Duration: 2018-2020

Small Voices,Small Victories is an action research project implemented by Yugantar to address the issues of youth at risk of becoming rowdysheeters and facilitate their rehabilitation into the mainstream. Yugantar conceptualized the project after receiving an RTI reply from the police department regarding rowdy sheeters and implemented the project with the support of the Hyderabad City Police. It was funded by International Development Research Centre (IDRC).

Yugantar designed a programme along with behavioural experts called ‘Do Raahein’. They also facilitated a programme which involved Cognitive Behavioural Training (CBT). Through weekly sessions, the youth were made to participate in different activities to learn about themselves, to become self-aware and to consider the risk factors in decision making. We adapted the simple course modules, based on CBT 2.0, developed by the Illinois Juvenile detention centre, and customized the practices to fit our socio-economic and cultural context. With a core group of 20 participants, we conducted 14 sessions and 10 voluntary programmes. Given the profile of the participants, we decided to use literacy friendly pedagogical tools. After the initial sessions, our core group of youth voluntarily participated

in the programme, citing that the value gained from the programme was helping them to become better individuals. The police department was also impressed with Yugantar's approach in counselling the rowdy sheeters as they attended and witnessed the evolution of these youth throughout the programme. The CBT sessions were followed by voluntary community work like clean-up drives and free food distribution. It was interesting to observe that our core group excitedly participated in and managed these activities. During the programme, we observed that rampant drug use and illiteracy were driving the youth into crime. Yugantar broadcasted a series of radio programmes with Radio Charminar, a community radio station on the effects of drugs, preventing external and internal influences towards crime and the importance of education. Yugantar assured the core group of support by providing financial linkages for their prospective careers and through documentation to enable them get out of the rowdy sheets.

THANK YOU

We wish to thank Hyderabad South Zone Police, for supporting our work with rowdysheeters and for making it possible. They came forward with a with an open perspective and willingness to change towards an issue that has remained since colonised India. Specific thank you goes to DCP Amber Kishore Jha who was instrumental in organising his officers and rowdysheeters to engage in the programme. He was also instrumental in our success in getting many youth removed from the rowdysheets.

Sushil Kambampati for his inspirational idea and continued, voluntary support in YouRTI. Making it the successful platform it is today – making RTI applications easy and accessible, supporting the transparency of information.

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