A Year of Community Care and Unexpected Growth
Annual Report 2021-22
Our work aims to give people of marginalised genders and sexualities access to greater power, autonomy, and voice to use digital spaces for a range of expression. A lot of this involves building digital skills, capacities, understanding, and knowledge around digital rights, harassment, violence, security, and resistance.

The last year was hard. COVID and the lockdowns hindered our work and affected our lives, like everyone else’s. Like many other organisations, we were trying to survive. Now we look back with a sense of wonder that we managed to achieve as much as we did, given the circumstances.
We held our team—and community—close.

The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns deeply impacted the marginalised communities we work with. They faced increased vulnerability and restricted access, including health crises, lack of access to basic essentials (food, healthcare, education, etc.), loss of livelihood, vaccine inequity, and increased domestic and digital violence.
We contributed to building resilience in the communities we work with.

We worked with 22 partners across 15 states to provide relief grants to nearly 2,000 people. This helped to provide ration kits, hygiene and sanitisation kits, medicines and medical support, menstrual hygiene products, and other basic essentials. The recipients included Muslim women and single women in low-income communities who had lost earning capacity and/or lost the primary earner of their family, adolescent girls (Uttar Pradesh), low-income and marginalised adolescent girls and domestic workers (West Bengal), LGBTQIA+ people (Manipur, Gujarat, Telangana, Delhi), women and trans sex workers, informal workers facing loss of livelihood, sanitation workers, daily-wage migrant workers, people living with HIV, and a Lavani dancer undergoing treatment for cancer (Maharashtra).

We dealt with personal loss.

Our beloved board member, Sonali Ojha, passed away last year. She ran Dreamcatchers Foundation, a non-profit based in Mumbai that focuses on the social and emotional needs of children and young people. She is deeply missed.

Our team struggled too.

Like everyone else, members of the POV team also dealt with illness, mental health struggles, personal losses, caregiving responsibilities, and isolation. When we couldn’t meet in person, we kept meeting online to share and learn about each other’s lives. We ensured remote deliveries of birthday care packages. We checked in with each other. And through all this we emerged with a stronger sense of belonging and community.
We solidified our work online.

When the pandemic made on-ground events impossible, we found ways to move our grassroots work online. We moved our focus to training potential trainers, so we could have much more impact.

Digital resilience builds financial resilience.

As part of our Internet In My Hands project, we trained 18 women domestic workers in Kolkata, most of whom had been deeply affected by a loss of livelihood. These digital literacy and security workshops were conducted in Bengali with our partner Parichiti from December 2020 to August 2021.
One of the most significant impacts of the project was that enhanced digital resilience meant greater financial resilience for the domestic workers, as online payments became the norm during COVID. They now have more autonomy over their earnings and are able to carry out transactions and receive salaries from their employers independently. Our project also directly contributed to their financial resilience during the pandemic by paying them stipends for their role as community trainers.

Using the skills and capabilities that they built in the course of the trainings, some of the domestic workers participated in and spoke at public virtual meetings and webinars organized by Parichiti on the impact of COVID-19 on domestic workers’ lives and livelihoods. These were live streamed on social media and amplified their lived experiences as a community.

In the second phase of Internet In My Hands from September 2021 to March 2022, we partnered with Vikalp in Gujarat to train 9 queer activists on digital rights, security, and skills; they in turn trained 50 other queer persons.

What workshop participants said

❤️ Now I feel confident and am not intimidated by the phone anymore. I can freely participate in online meetings and voice my opinions, which I couldn’t have imagined a few months back.

❤️ I was worried that people would get to know my private information if I used WhatsApp or social media, that the phone would hang or things would get deleted or shared without my consent. I was afraid of using Google Pay – what if my money gets deducted? But now I am using the phone freely as I know how to protect myself.

❤️ I helped my employer’s children to attend online classes during COVID. I receive a lot of appreciation from my employer, my family, and my community members for being digitally independent, which motivates me and boosts my confidence.

My son’s attitude towards me has changed - he now acknowledges that I am capable, learns various aspects of the smartphone from me, and doesn’t dismiss me any more.
We launched a helpline to address online gender-based violence.

Scaling up our ongoing efforts to make the internet safer, we launched TechSakhi, the first helpline that provides information on digital safety in Hindi. This helpline is meant for women, trans people, and other gender minorities – communities who are particularly vulnerable to online harassment. We had a beta launch in November 2021 with 64 completed calls.

After the public launch in February, we started getting calls to the helpline – but many of the calls were from men harassing our responders. We were taken aback by this development, which underscored the scale of the problem we are trying to solve. With tweaks to the process (changes in the IVR system and in the protocol the responders follow) and the marketing (different messaging, keywords, and so on), we made inroads into fixing this problem. Out of 112 completed calls in February, only 6 were queries about digital safety; in March the ratio had changed to 162 to 27.
What callers said

❤️ Ma’am, you have given me insightful information and explained it so well.

❤️ I am relieved after talking to you and it does not seem like I am talking to you for the first time.

❤️ You gave me very useful information.

❤️ You have given me so much time so why not, I will give you five stars.
We created a comprehensive resource on sexual well-being and disability.

Pyaar Plus, originally envisioned as a series of in-person workshops, was reimagined as a digital toolkit during the pandemic. This series of 7 booklets was created for young people with disabilities (specifically women and people of marginalised genders) and their ecosystems. The toolkit explores themes like the self, body, touch, privacy, mental health, romance, dating, and sex and sexuality. The booklets have had a total readership of over 2,000 people.
It made my heart flutter.

What readers said

❤️ This is a wonderful and much-needed resource at this time – thank you, Point of View!

❤️ The ‘our bodies are magnificent’ booklet is so life affirming and moving, too.

❤️ It’s lovely and warm and welcoming.

❤️ It’s beautiful. My friends loved it.

❤️ I just love the whole book....so much to learn so much to share...three cheers for the entire POV team for pulling this off.

❤️ The Pyaar Plus booklets are incredible and they have made me so happy since the first one. Not just because I wish I had something like this when growing up, but also because I have shared them with the young people in my life with confidence about and comfort in how affirming they are!
We empowered adolescent girls with knowledge and a sense of connection.

SMS from Priya, a text message based curriculum for adolescent girls in Tamil Nadu that we had piloted in 2018, was scaled up and delivered to 3,500 recipients in 2022. The 12-week curriculum was in Tamil and included messages that touched on COVID as well as health precautions, schools reopening, and other topical content. The character of Priya, a teenage girl, was created as the narrator of these messages, which built an emotional connection with the recipients. The girls acknowledged greater awareness and more confidence as a result of the initiative.
It feels like a close friend is talking to me.

What the girls said

❤️ I wait for Priya’s SMSes. I’ve told my parents to keep an eye on the phone at 7 pm and tell me when she messages.

❤️ Feeling confident because Priya is appreciating me for working, helping out at home, and studying.

❤️ Priya has helped me transcend stress and mental blocks. I’ve started doing breathing exercises.

❤️ If we’re harassed, we shouldn’t be ashamed - it’s not our fault… If I face any harassment or sexual abuse, I know who I can report it to.”

❤️ Priya has encouraged us to say ‘No’ when we don’t consent. This really motivated us.

❤️ I’ve learned to take care of myself during my periods. So far, I used to dry my clothes in secluded places, but from now I’ll dry them in open sunlight - it’s more hygienic. I used to skip school during period, but now I’ll follow hygiene practices and go to school.

❤️ My sister works in a spinning mill and went through a lot of problems. We’re reading the messages together and she wants to hear more.
We empowered adolescent girls to advocate for their rights.

As part of a leadership programme for girls and young women in grassroots communities in Jharkhand, we built and delivered an advocacy curriculum in conjunction with 12 on-the-ground partners. This is Udaan – the Advocacy School, attended online by 310 adolescent girls from June 2021 to June 2022. The sessions built the participants’ understanding of advocacy concepts, gender norms, methods for advocating effectively, goal setting, and building stakeholder support.

मेरे सपनों की उड़ान आस्मान तक है।
My dreams fly to the sky.
We created a comic book about girls’ access to mobile phones.

We created and published a comic book in Hindi that charts an adolescent girl’s transition into digital spaces when she gets her first mobile. Called Mera Pehla Mobile, the comic book touches on digital gender norms, discrimination, harassment, safety, and resistance in an accessible, entertaining format. The book was based on Population Council’s rich data from the UDAYA study on access, use, and consumption of digital media among adolescents, pooled with our own experience in gender and technology.

In October 2021, 2900 copies of Mera Pehla Mobile were distributed in Uttar Pradesh.
We advocated for online equality as an integral part of gender equality.

In June 2021, we launched #EqualOnline, a digital advocacy campaign that sought to explore the digital lives, bodies, and freedoms of women, trans and non-binary people. The campaign was launched to coincide with UN Women’s Generation Equality Action Coalitions and focused on three key themes:

- Digital rights and freedoms
- Gender and sexual expression online
- Technology-enabled violence
The campaign ran across major social media outlets for two months in English. Smaller versions of the campaign also ran in Hindi and Bengali in August-September, conducted by our campaign partners, Sadhavana Trust and Ebong Alap respectively.

A campaign highlight was the use of Twitter Spaces where we ran a chat called Are We Equal Online? The speaker line-up featured Bollywood actress and activist Swara Bhasker, #MeToo champion Rituparna Chattopadhyay, trans activist Grace Banu, among others, and was very well-attended due to their presence.

The campaign received over 400,000 impressions on Twitter and had a total reach of over 100,000 on Facebook. More importantly, it filled a key gap in the Action Coalition’s conceptualisation of gender-based violence as largely ‘physical-only’.
We allied with other organisations to make digital spaces more equal.

Digital spaces, platforms, and communities are increasingly responsive to the needs of diverse genders and sexualities, recognising and addressing these in their policies and practices. We continue to participate in and bring greater attention to gender, sexuality, and violence at key digital gatherings, conferences, and platforms.
In 2021, we convened a RightsCon session on ‘Reflections on digital gender-based violence in the context of COVID’ which included feminist speakers from Nepal, Pakistan, and India. We were also one of the speakers at a RightsCon session on ‘Re-imagining reporting abuse on social media’ organised by PEN America.

At the Internet Governance Forum, we convened an online session at the Dynamic Coalition on Gender and Internet Governance. The session, titled ‘Tangled like Wool: Gender, Social and Digital Inequalities’, included speakers from South Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the United States.

We spoke at the Asia Pacific Regional Internet Governance Forum (APrIGF) as part of a transnational feminist conversation about freedom of expression online. The discussion focused on how access, expression and violence on the internet are experienced by women, queer and trans people.

We contributed to Orbits: a global field guide advancing intersectional, survivor-centred and trauma-informed interventions to tackle tech-facilitated gender-based violence. This was created by Chayn and End Cyber Abuse.

We sought to influence Facebook/Meta’s understanding of and response to online violence through participation in regular consultations and expert gatherings, including with the Facebook Oversight Board.
We are building for the future.

We are already recognised as a pioneer, leader, and field-builder on looking at digital technologies through a feminist sex-positive lens. In 2021-22, we conceptualised our next four years of activity, built our management and team capacity, and piloted key activities (like our helpline TechSakhi and workshops on digital literacy and security, which we have mentioned above). Our team grew from 10 to 26 people.

We are now working on highly ambitious goals to expand our scope of work, reaching beyond our existing constituencies to become the go-to organisation for looking at digital technologies through a gendered lens.
Illustration credit

All illustrations are by Anjali Menon, except the illustration on page 14 by Vaishali Soni and on pages 15 and 17 by Kruthika NS (@theworkplacedoodler).

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