

Antargoonj: Voices of Change

Martha Farrell Foundation
New Delhi: 22nd to 24th April 2018

Like every year, this year also Martha Farrell Foundation hosted “Antargoonj: Voices of Change” a 3 day National Workshop for the ‘Kadam Badhate Youth’ leaders from across 10 locations from 8 states in India. The locations were Bhubaneswar (Odisha), Sonipat and Panipat (Haryana), Japla (Jharkhand), Wardha and Ahmदनगर (Maharashtra), Najafgarh (Delhi), Raipur (Chhattisgarh), Siliguri (West Bengal) and Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh).

Meaning:

Antar-goonj: Inter-echoes

32 youth, both boys and girls, were nominated and selected on the basis of the inspirational work that they have been doing to stop Violence against Women and Girls (VAGW) in their communities. The main purpose of this National Workshop was:

- ✚ To allow them to deeply reflect on their experiences of being a part of KBC and what will be the future course of action.
- ✚ Learn how to communicate using arts based methods and learn new ways of advocacy and communication.

These 32 youth leaders came to Delhi and for some of them, it was the first time that they had left their homes. This experience of travelling as a group and without parents was different. Before this, whenever they have gone they have been well guarded by their parents/guardians and were dependent on them for every little thing. But this time when they travelled to Delhi for the national workshop they were on their own, they had to look after themselves and take decisions on their own. This journey for them was quite eventful as they got to experience independence, but with greater responsibility.

A night before the workshop, the youth got to know each other over dinner and. The facilitators ensures that youth from different locations speak to each other and come out of their comfort zones.



The next day, the first session that was planned was “**My New Normal: Reflections on my changed self**”. In this particular workshop, we had invited 3 young artists who first taught them how to use paint and painting brushes to bring out different textures through colour.

While the youth were playing around with colour and brushes, there were many youth who were going through an altogether different experience. Youth who had come from far-off villages and cities had never seen so many colours before.

The schools they went to didn’t have classes on painting/drawing, but here they were able to explore themselves with these colours and the outcome of those little experiments was beautiful.



An 18 year old male youth from Siliguri, Nupan Bishwakarma said "I am holding a painting brush for the very first time and it feels amazing. I can make so many things with this".

After they were familiarised with the brush and mixing of colours, they further understood the deep meaning of each colour. They used the colour red to express anger, white as used for demonstrating peace and calmness. In the same way, the youth played with the primary colours to mix and make more colours not just with painting brush but they used toothbrush, old cloth, sponges, rollers, comb and bathing loofa. The outcome was amazing and the youth really enjoyed this method of expression.



This was just the beginning of an art workshop. The youth were divided into 3 groups and all 3 of them expressed arts in a completely different and vivid manner.

The first art work is called **“The Colourful Truth”**

Through this art work, the youth wanted to express strongly the violence faced by women in their daily lives. They have depicted how the patriarchal society pressurizes women and punishes them when they try to subvert. The hands represent the sexual abuse and the other forms of violence that women face. They have also painted a long line of women holding hands together, supporting each other. Right at the bottom of the painting there is a picture of a boy and a girl loving each other, showcasing a just and free society.



The second painting is called **“The Changing World of Colours”**.

This particular piece talks about holding girls and women in confinement. The youth have used a lot of shapes of different sizes and shapes to define places of harassment. Such as the yellow coloured box which represents a sports ground where only boys are allowed. The youth also show a transition from the white triangle-square structure (which is the natal house) where the girl is happy to the deep blue house (which is the marital house) where she is upset and hurt. The pink circle which represents a running track where girls can't go. But there is a star at the top where a girl wishes to be.

“महिला हिंसा होने ना देंगे,
लोगों को है सन्देश ये देना।
रंगों से ही छुपी हुई है दुनिया,
रंगों से कुछ सीख ही लेना।
सोच से अपनी बदलनी है दुनिया,
संघर्ष करके जीत ही लेना,
नहीं है मुश्किल दुनिया की बदलना।”



The third artwork is called **“Our Society”**.

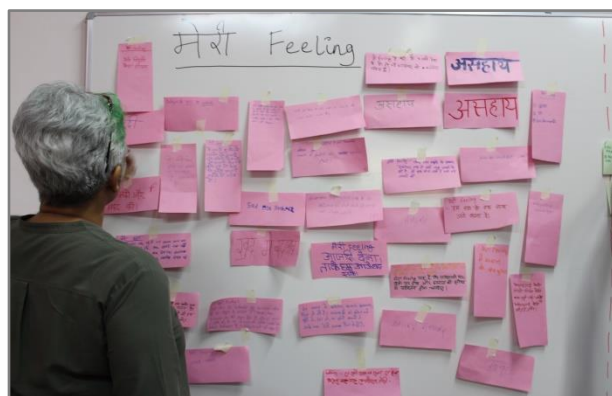
In this particular artwork the youth tried to portray the darkness that is there in a woman and girl's life. At the left side of the painting there is temple which signifies the Asifa's case where an 8 year old Muslim girl in Kathua District was raped inside the temple by a group of men (including a police officer) for hours and held captive for 4 days before thrashing her head. In the middle of the art, there is a woman who is crying and feeling helpless. But she is dream of a world where boys and girls can be together without the society questioning them. The youth have written 'equal rights' and 'freedom' but was repainted it with a darker shade to show the ongoing struggle between choice and patriarchy. Some questions which the artwork raises are:



1. ये हमारा समाज है?
2. कब तक चलेगा ऐसा?
3. क्या हमारा समाज बदल सकता है?
4. जागो समाज जागो...
5. जिम्मेदारी किसकी है?
6. बेटी बचाओ, बेटा समझाओ ”

This entire exercise of expression of art on a big canvas was reinvigorating for them. These youth have grown up with folk art around them and they never thought they can also use this method to talk about VAWG with people. They found this method to be more engaging and interesting as they get to interpret the stories in whichever way they want to spread awareness on these sensitive issues.

After lunch, the youth reflected upon what they have done so far apart in KBC. They didn't have a group discussion but they just replayed the whole experience of being in KBC. This also included their journey from their homes to Delhi (MFF office), meeting other youth from other states, listening to their ordeal and finally gathering courage to express their thoughts in front of everyone without caring about judgement. Then they focussed on 2 important things, firstly *'my feelings'* and secondly *'my step forward'*.



Some of the feelings and ideas that were expressed were:

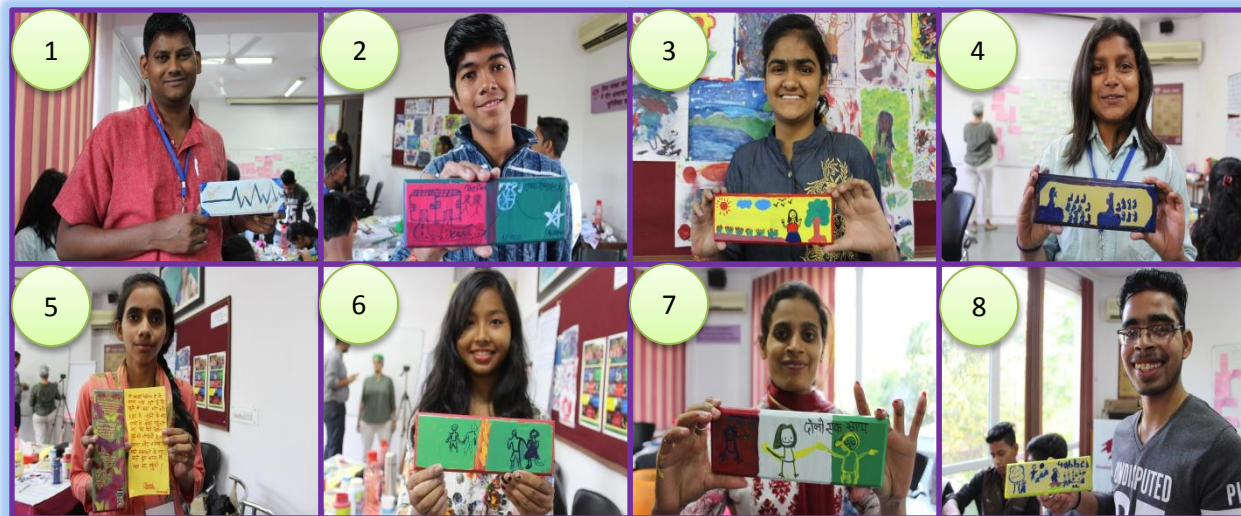
मेरी भावना:

- “खुद में बदलाव लाऊँ”
- “मेरी भावना यह है की हमें आजादी मिले ताकि हम आगे बढ़ सके”
- “युवाओं के साथ कार्य,
- “मैं असहाय महसूस कर रही हूँ”
- “मुझ में आशा है”
- “मुझे गुस्सा महसूस हो रहा है”

मेरे बढ़ते कदम :

- “सबसे पहले खुद आवाज़ उठानी है”
- “उत्तरदायी अधिकारियों को साथ में जोड़ रहे हैं व उनका सहयोग ले रहे हैं, उनके साथ हम फोटो एवं वीडियो को सांझा करते हैं”
- “खेल कूद गतिविधियों में लड़का लड़की मिल कर भाग लेते हैं”
- “बदलाव की शुरुआत घर से”
- “घर वालो को समझाना एवं शामिल करना”
- “सबसे पहले अपनी सोच को बदलना है”

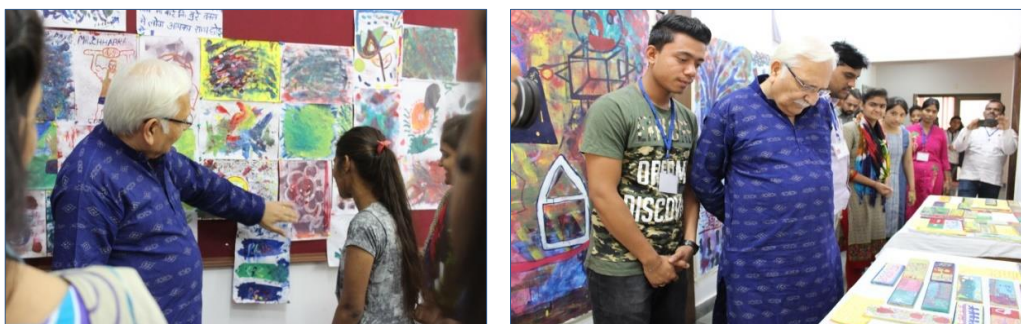
This exercise was really helpful in bringing out their thoughts and further helped them in expressing through art on small terracotta tiles. The artwork on tiles was not just painting, but their voices for the just society they all aim for. Though these tiles are of 3”X 7”, but they tell tales of the past, present and the future societies. Below are some of the glimpses of the tile artwork.



The meaning of the title artwork:

- 1) *“After KBC I feel alive”*~ Chetan Wagh (Maharashtra)
- 2) *“Before we played separately, but KBC brought us together”*~ Sunil (Bhubaneshwar)
- 3) *“I feel happy and independent”*~ Sanju (Haryana)
- 4) *“Before the society was against the girl, now the society walks with the girl”* ~ Sumitra (Haryana)
- 5) *“I have made the brick walls which I have faced like a challenge, with KBC’s support I have reached till here”* ~ Jainab (Cholhapur Varanasi)
- 6) *“Only boys could be friends with boys, but now boys can be friends with girls. There is no shame”*~ Khushi (Siliguri, urban)
- 7) *“Alone you are weak, together we are strong”*~ Naushaba (Japla)
- 8) *“Young boys and girls can play together. There is nothing to be afraid of”* ~ Mohit (Haryana)

On day 2, the youth did small recap of all the learning from day 1 and talked about their experience of doing artwork with the Founder-President of PRIA, Dr. Rajesh Tandon. He said, “You are saying what you are experiencing. Maybe there are different dialects and languages that we speak, but there is no set language of art.” Dr. Tandon also referred to the biography of MF Hussain and how his art talks about the things around us and the normality accredited to it by the society.



No matter the differences in our cultures, clothing, language, physical appearances or style of living, there is still one thing which brings all of us upon a common platform and that is gender equality. But the society in which we live, equality is coming to an extinct and there is a growing rate of inequality that we see in various forms?

It's alright if two people look different or have varied amount of resources, but how can we differentiate between the work they do. It is important to note that no work is unworthy, and the person doing such a work is not unworthy (e.g. a sweeper, a domestic worker, etc.)

The exciting session planned for day 2 was "Journalism of Courage" and this was delivered by our Martha Farrell Award (MFA) individual category winner, Ms. Nadiya Shafi. She is a video journalist from Kashmir, who is using her camera to bring out the hidden stories of Kashmiri women.

The session was designed to teach the youth about the multiple uses of a mobile phone, which can help them in telling stories of change to everyone. Nadiya gave each participant a newspaper (Hindi/English) and asked them to count the no. of reports on politics, business, sports, etc. It was found out that Indian Politics gets the maximum media attention, then comes health, then education and in the end women's safety. This exercise was helpful in knowing that the mainstream media is not interested in publishing news on women's safety because it doesn't pay much in return. News on '*Indian cricket*', '*politics*', and '*Bollywood celebrities*' keeps these media houses up and running.

After this, she taught them how to make videos and edit them on an app 'video editor' which can be easily downloaded on android or Microsoft phones. The youth took photos in and around the office to tell their stories and experiences.



Figure 1: Newspaper exercise



Figure 2: making community news

The youth learnt how news can be made using regular phones and shared on the social media and other forms of media for wider awareness.

The steps that are most important before making a story are:

5W and **1H**: **when, where, who, why, whom** and **how?**

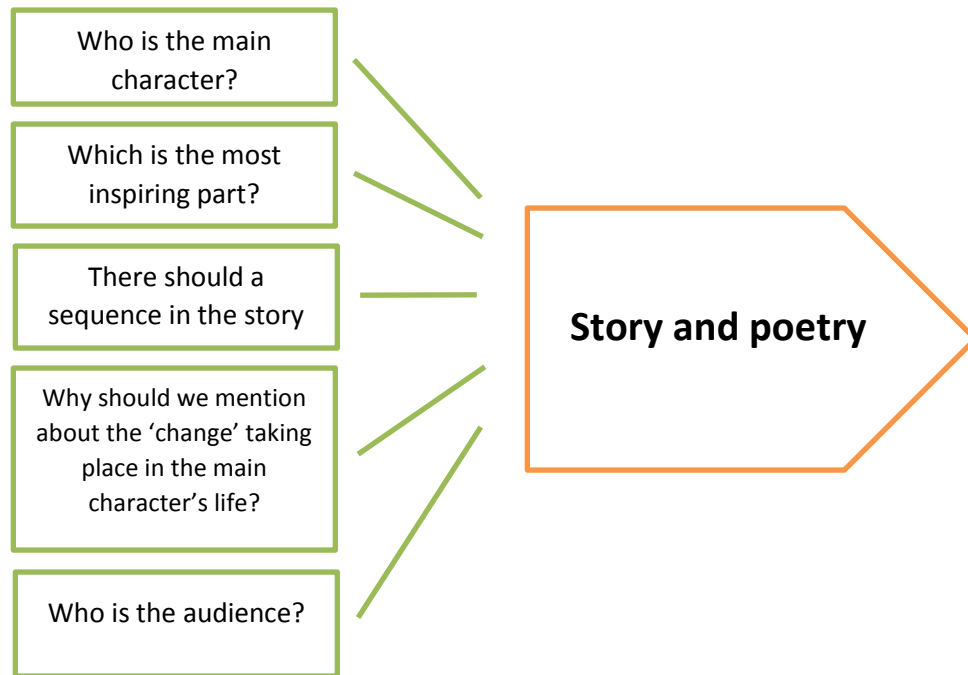
Along with this, it is important to capture photos which tell a story. There are 5 times of shots which can be used: **Extreme long shot, long shot, mid shot, close-up and extreme close up.**



On 24th April, the last day of the national level workshop, the youth had the opportunity to learn something they have grown up listening from their grandparents, i.e. stories and poems. They have all heard about the famous mythology of Mahabharata and Ramayana. In this session they all made up stories about each other.



The stories that they had prepared using the photographs and videos were used for this exercise to rebuild stories for story-telling and poetry. Some of the important things to keep in mind was the main character of the story, the change that has taken place in the main character's life, which is the most inspiring part, etc.



Finally that day ended with yet another interesting session called Asha-Tamasha. A situation was given where a girl called *Khushi* is being forced into child marriage. The participants had to play the roles of her family members, community, friends, panchayat, media and police and show what happens in the real world when a girl child is forced into a child marriage. They had to depict the kind of responses and attitudes that are found among important stakeholders. The main objective of this workshop was to understand the kind of dynamics that are present in a society and how youth can negotiate with them.



All the participants acted in the same way each of these stakeholders would have in a real life situation. *Khushi's* friends were creating pressure on the family and the police, the media also created pressure on the police and panchayat to take action. The police however took bribe from the panchayat to let go of the case to save itself from public shaming and embarrassment. On the other hand, the media took bribe and did a sting operation to bring out the culprits.

The participants who had joined us for these 3 days really had a good time and they all went back with learning various methods of advocacy and communication, be it art, music, mobile journalism, poetry, story-telling or roleplay.

This was one of a kind training experience for them, which they have used after they went back and celebrated important days such as “Menstrual hygiene Day”. The youth in Raipur had first mobilised the community and youth. They talked about menstruation and they collected photos and videos to make a video which could be shared for mass awareness.

On 25th morning, the youth had a chance to interact with Mr. Rizwan Adata, the founder of a multi-billion business conglomerate COGEF and founder of Rizwan Adata Foundation. Mr. Rizwan shared his own experiences of growing up, which was motivating for the participants as they could relate their own struggles with him. One of the female youth Khushi from Japla shared that her parents did not allow her to go to a good school or take extra classes like her elder brother. But she was determined to make a difference and worked hard. In her 10th grade, she scored 81.1% where as her brother just passed the exams. This result made her parents realise the value of daughters.

What?

Asha – Tamasha is a learning game based on the concept of roleplay. The term ‘asha’ in Hindi signifies ‘hope’, while ‘tamasha’ suggests a commotion – the game tries to recreate the chaotic nature of dialogues between interest groups, where what you hope and what you get can be poles apart, separated by a process of bargaining that is best described as chaotic.

At another level, it’s about the hope that the groups will build a consensus at some point – the hope that different groups will listen to each other’s’ points of view.