



Covid-19 Relief Report

May 2021- September 2021

Message From the Nazariya Team

The second wave of COVID 19 was tough for the entire team. Most of us lost family members and close friends, even as we battled the illness. While we had been working towards making queer and trans* lives visible and heard, we faced the distress that the second wave brought to our lives.

We miss our family members and friends who have left us because of COVID 19.

Alongside our personal battles with COVID, we, as Human Rights Defenders, ensured that the community we work with was not bereft of the crucial support they required. We therefore, created various avenues through which we could provide economic, emotional, mental and material relief to the people from the LGBT*QIA+ community.

This report is about the work we did during the second wave of COVID 19 in India.

However much we try, we cannot find words to express the immeasurable gratitude we have for all the people who put their faith in us and donated towards the well-being of LGBT*QIA+ community.

***A young school student who is also an entrepreneur wrote to us that she wanted to contribute to our COVID relief work!**

***A trans-man from the community volunteered with us to identify trans persons who required aid and then ensured that funds and rations reached them timely.**

Snapshot of work done

Initiatives	Impact
Helpline	35 calls
Counselling service	505 (Sessions)
Listening Circles	4
Grief and Loss circle	1
Expressive HeArt Circles	4
D&I meetings with corporates	2
Workshop on D&I	1
Financial Aid	5,27,500/- INR
Ration Kit	5

HOW THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC HAS HIT LGBTQIA+ COMMUNITY

After the first lockdown on 22 March 2020, where the LGBTQIA+ community was pushed further into the margins of society, the second lockdown in the month of May 2021 made it even worse. The community faced isolation, violence in addition to losing jobs and livelihoods. Mental health was also deeply impacted because of the lockdown and its associated issues. While there was a push from various agencies to provide ration to marginalised communities, we wanted to provide them with financial aid because we believe that queer and trans* people can decide for themselves on how they want to utilize the financial support. Apart from this, the demands were also diverse; while some required money for their transition medicines, some wanted money for their rent and some to buy medicines for their families.

To address these challenges, Nazariya raised funds and distributed financial aid across India. We also distributed ration kits to those trans* persons who wanted ration for their survival. We also organised virtual meet-ups and listening circles for queer and trans* persons in addition to regularly providing them with professional mental health support.

Helpline Number for Peer Counselling and Crisis Intervention:

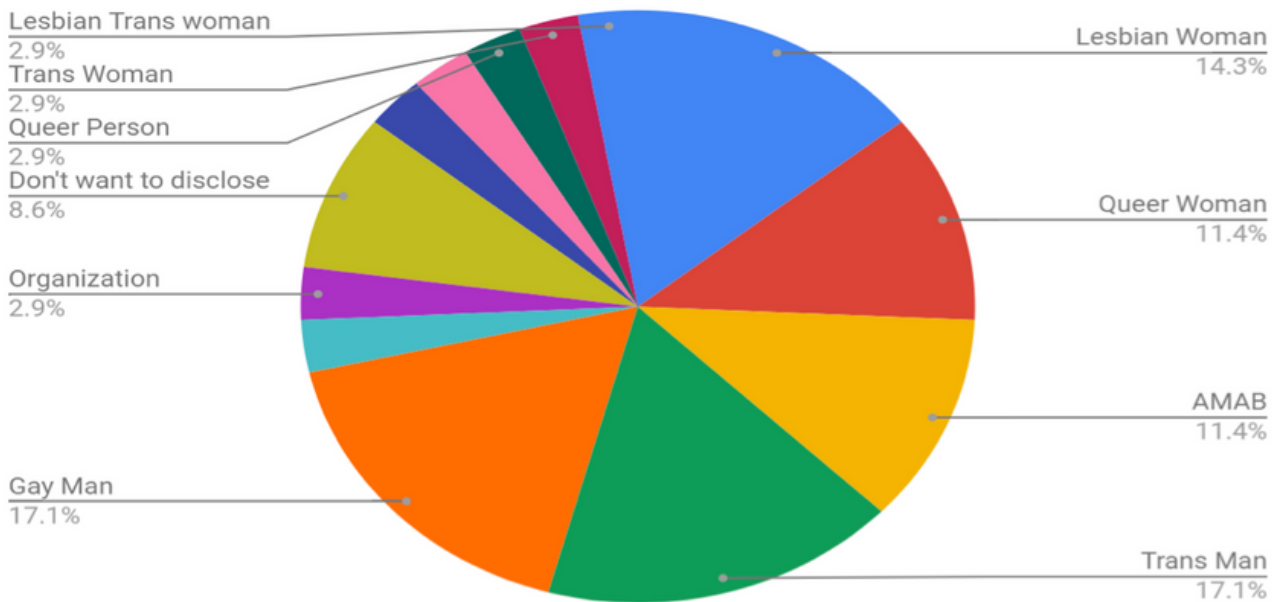
Our peer-run helpline was active from Monday to Saturday from 10 am to 6 pm. The nature of calls received on the helpline was mostly on gender-based violence, mental health issues, the pressure of getting married and queries about Gender & Sexual Identities. 35 helpline calls were received in the months of June and July. The issues which were addressed in these calls were:

- Lesbian married women faced physical violence by their husbands.
- Parents were forcing their children to go through conversion therapy
- Partners of queer persons informed us that their partners are under house arrest because their parents got to know about their gender identity.
- Transmen were thrown out of their houses because of their non-conformity.
- Transgender persons and gender non-conforming persons were not able to wear gender affirmative clothing which lead to feeling suffocated at their own homes.
- Trans* persons felt unsafe and feared physical violence at home because of their gender identity.
- Queer women were facing the pressure of forced marriage.
- Calls for professional mental health counselling sessions.

Helpline data analysis

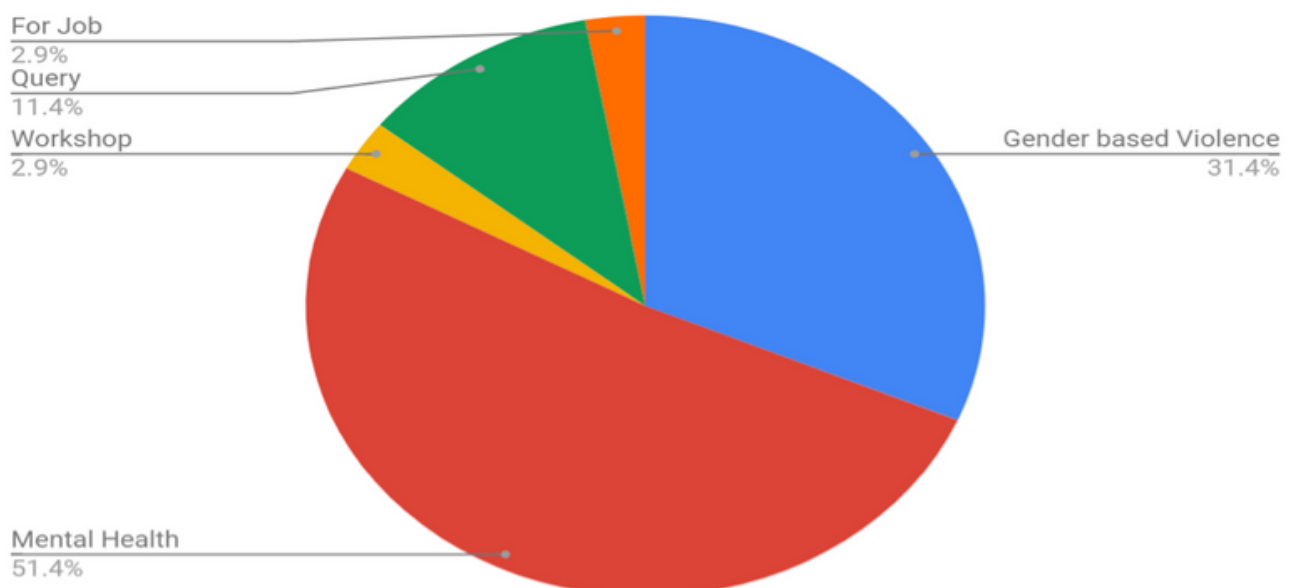
Gender identity and sexual orientation wise representation of the helpline calls

Gender/Sexual Orientation, Data Sample: 35



Nature of calls received

Count of Type of case: 35



Professional Mental Health Support for Free

Nazariya has had professional mental counselors working with us since 2015. During last Covid, we hired more counselors to meet the demands of the LGBT*QIA+ community. During this Covid-19 lockdown, 505 sessions were provided by our counselors from the month of May to September. These sessions typically ran for 45 minutes to an hour with the objective of providing practical advice and support.

Leveraging Virtual medium for sustained mental health support

Listening Circles

During the lockdown, many queer and trans* people were stuck with their homophobic and transphobic families. A lot of them lost a safe space that they could count upon, especially during the times when they had to live with their hostile natal families. Therefore, we organized a few listening circles with a social worker who has worked on mental well-being. These sessions were held online. In each of the sessions, we talked about themes that affect the lives of queer and trans* persons in different ways. This helped people sign up for the theme they were struggling with and also gave a flow to these listening circles.

During these months we organized 4 listening circles facilitated by Dr. Yagna Nag Chowdhury.

- It was overwhelming but it was a beautiful opportunity to share and listen.
- The concept is great, I am expecting it would help build a safe space, respect being vulnerable, and prevent any kind of harm that queer and trans people are more likely to face.
- Never felt more connected with strangers. It felt like I had known them for ages. A space where I could talk my heart out and share with others.
- This was my second listening circle and many conversations that I was not prepared for happened. I am glad I got the space to reflect back on my queerness which time and again becomes stagnant. Being queer remains a journey that I am back on taking with my gender and sexual identity

Nazariya

A Queer Feminist Resource Group

Join us for the
LISTENING CIRCLE
with Yagna

25 Sep | 6-7 PM | Zoom Call



*Registration link is in the bio
Last date for registration is 23 Sep, 2021

Reflection on Grief and Loss

We lost our family members and friends during Covid-19. The grief of losing them and staying away from our loved ones was a huge one. To reflect on this grief and loss together as a community, Nazariya had Donna Baker and Dr. Yagna Nag Chowdhury as facilitators for this one-time session.

Expressive HeArt Circles

Even during pre-pandemic times, we felt the constant need to connect with each other, listen to, express our loneliness, fear, anxieties, losses and the pandemic has only exacerbated this need. Nazariya also organized Expressive HeArt Circles along with Listening Circles for queer and trans* persons to channel their thoughts and emotions through art. Since many people could not express themselves through words we organized such art-based therapy sessions. Rashmi Balakrishnan was a facilitator for these sessions and organized 4 such sessions.

- The session gave my emotions and current feelings an outlet to express. I really found the space safe and healthy. The smaller focused circle gave enough time to share and listen to each other without any constraint. I would love to be a part of another session in the future.
- It is always a magical experience to be in an Expressive HeArt circle. I really enjoy the way Rashmi organizes the events and her brain-stimulating emotional exercises. Her positive energy always uplifts my mood and makes me feel closer to myself.



We also managed to raise some funds for the mental well being of the people working with us since it was not an easy time for any of us. The funds were distributed amongst our staff for their mental health needs.

Training and Meetings

Dare to Wear Your Pink Boots

Nazariya in collaboration with The Second Act (A Human Potential Transformation Company) organised a Diversity & Inclusion workshop in August 2021 to bring out challenges and on-ground reality of the LGBT*QIA+ community in the corporate world. This 2-day virtual workshop with corporates on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion focussed on strategies and best practices to make the work place safe and inclusive of LGBT*QIA+ persons. Apart from resource persons from Nazariya, there were experts from various sectors. Some of them were Anuradha Lal, Diversity Head for Lemon Tree Hotels, Vinay Chandra, ED of Sahaya Helpline and Richa Singh - D E & I head, Max life insurance. The name of the workshop was *Dare to Wear Your Pink Boots*. The workshop was attended by around 30 persons from different corporations and organisations.



Training with SAWF IN

Nazariya also organised a few training sessions with different organisations on gender, sexuality and LGBT*QIA+ issues. One such training was for South Asia Women Fund, India (SAWF IN). The participants from SAWF IN team were given training from a queer feminist lens and presented with issues that make it important to include queer and trans* persons when talking about gender and intersectionality. The SAWF IN team has been trying to understand queer and trans* issues for their work. The training was developed to integrate aspects of their work with queer and trans* persons lives.

Meeting with Corporates

People from the LGBTQIA+ community find it difficult to get jobs. If they get employment then also a lot of times the work environment, policies and infrastructure are not in the favor of the people from our community. Hence, during this time we also contacted several corporates like Four Point by Sheraton, Swiggy, and S & P Global to advocate for D & I at the workspace and possible opportunities of employment for queer and trans* people. In the meetings, the Nazariya team shared with them the possible changes that will be required to make the hiring process inclusive of people from the LGBTQIA+ community. There were also discussions on making more job opportunities for working-class queer and trans* persons in these companies.

Covid Relief and Fund Raising Initiatives

In addition to the mental distress brought on by the pandemic, financial insecurity posed a threat too. Many trans* persons lost their jobs and moving in with one's natal family was not an easy choice for our community. For this reason, we started a Covid Relief drive to distribute financial aid and ration to people in need. Nazariya believes in the agency of the people to decide what is required by them and hence, we transferred funds to the queer and trans* persons in need. However, a few trans* persons did not have an account. Therefore, through a volunteer who worked with us to collect data, we could give 5 ration kits to trans* persons in Delhi.

While we were doing the Covid relief work in Delhi, many partner organizations and individuals got in touch with us for financial aid to queer and trans* persons in need from across the country. One of the issues we noticed was that even though a few Covid relief support was extended to queer and trans* persons, they were in the form of ration. Queer and trans* persons also require medicines, HRT medicines, and rent apart from the ration. In order to mitigate the gap, we also did a need assessment with the help of our volunteers and distributed funds accordingly.

The steps that were taken for this Covid Relief work were:

- Reached out to our friends, well-wishers, funders, and civil society partners through social media and personal contacts.
- Distributed Rs. 5,27,500/- to 134 working-class trans* persons in Delhi, West Bengal, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Bangalore, Odisha, and Bihar (via Azim Premji Philanthropic Initiatives and Individual donations).
- Gave ration kits to 5 trans* persons in Delhi.

COVID RELIEF WORK, 2021



139

Queer and trans* persons were given
COVID relief this year



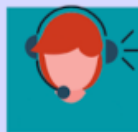
Rs. 5,27,500/-

was distributed



21

People became a part of the Listening
Circles and Expressive HeArt Circles



35

Calls received from queer and trans*
people on our helpline- June and
July 2021



505

Pro-bono counselling services -June
to September 2021

**COVID has affected LGBT*QIA+ persons due to lack
of support from natal families and loss of jobs**

Donate Now

Account Name: Nazariya Foundation
Bank: Punjab National Bank
Branch: Sarvodaya Enclave
Bank IFSC code: PUNB0063600



@nazariya.qfrg



nazariya.qfrg@gmail.com

*We can only accept contribution from Indian citizens in India or abroad

**Donation to Nazariya Foundation are exempt from income tax

To sum up we would like to reiterate that Covid 19 created havoc in the lives of queer and trans* persons. The relief support that we received during that phase had helped us to immediately mitigate the gaps that existed in the community. However, as queer and trans* we understand that we need to develop long-term sustainable avenues for working-class queer and trans* persons so that everyone is able to live a life of dignity and equality.

To get in touch with Nazariya, you may write to us at
nazariya.qfrg@gmail.com or call our helpline at 9818151707
(Monday to Friday- 10 am to 6 pm)