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BASIC INCOME & CARE FOR TRANSGENDER PERSONS



Anveshi
RESEARCH CENTRE FOR WOMEN'S STUDIES



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ABOUT THE PROJECT

Basic Income and Care for Transgender Persons' project was jointly launched by Anveshi Research Centre for Women's Studies and India Network for Basic Income (INBI Foundation) in January 2023 with the transgender community in Hyderabad. The objective was to pilot unconditional basic income with the transgender community as a radical social policy intervention.

Ten transgender persons were provided a Universal Basic Income (UBI) of Rs 7000 per month for a period of 12 months. Additionally, Care workshops were also conducted, that aimed to create spaces of connection, solidarity and care between and amongst participants. Although the program was imagined as a **Cash plus Care** intervention, the cash payment was not conditional on attendance. Six such comprehensive care workshops were facilitated by the project team during the project period, five in-person and one online. The project was implemented with the financial support of American Jewish World Service (AJWS). The Basic Income Earth Network's Asia Pacific hub has collaborated with the project on the research advocacy front in view of advocating intervention on a global scale.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

The announcement of the project was through social media channels in the city of Hyderabad. Self-selection (whoever identifies themselves as a transgender person) was the criterion for applying for the project. The team received sixty applications while the funds were limited to be sufficient for only 10 persons. The selection of participants was done through a public lottery on Zoom, in the presence of some senior members of the transgender community in Hyderabad. This avoided any arbitrary or a priori 'selection' criteria.



We believe that self-selection ought to be the principle that even governments should adopt in the case of transgender persons since that is the most honorable and respectful way of designing and implementing any welfare policy.

This project envisions a movement towards a Caring Society, of which a UBI forms a key part. We posit that we are all fundamentally interdependent beings, across our life cycles. Across our lives, each person receives and provides care for other living beings and the planet as a whole. Therefore, the wider rules and institutions governing our society must centre around the core values of care, trust, reciprocity and solidarity.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

A UBI is a key component of any caring society. As an unconditional, and ideally universal, cash transfer, it recognises that each person has needs, that they are diverse and that they need to be met meaningfully. As the universal medium of exchange, cash can provide each person with the ability and dignity to meet their needs in the manner they deem most fit.

In this project, we aimed to combine the UBI with intentionally created spaces of relationality, solidarity and care. We imagined these facilitated participatory 'workshops' as generating values and skills where participants feel safe, connected and provide the support to each other, and get resourced to provide it to their wider networks.



'My mother gave her golden earrings as a gift at my cousin's wedding, and since then, she hasn't had any. I saved the money I received and used it to buy new earrings for her. It made me feel better as her child to do that. My parents were also very happy when I bought the earrings.'

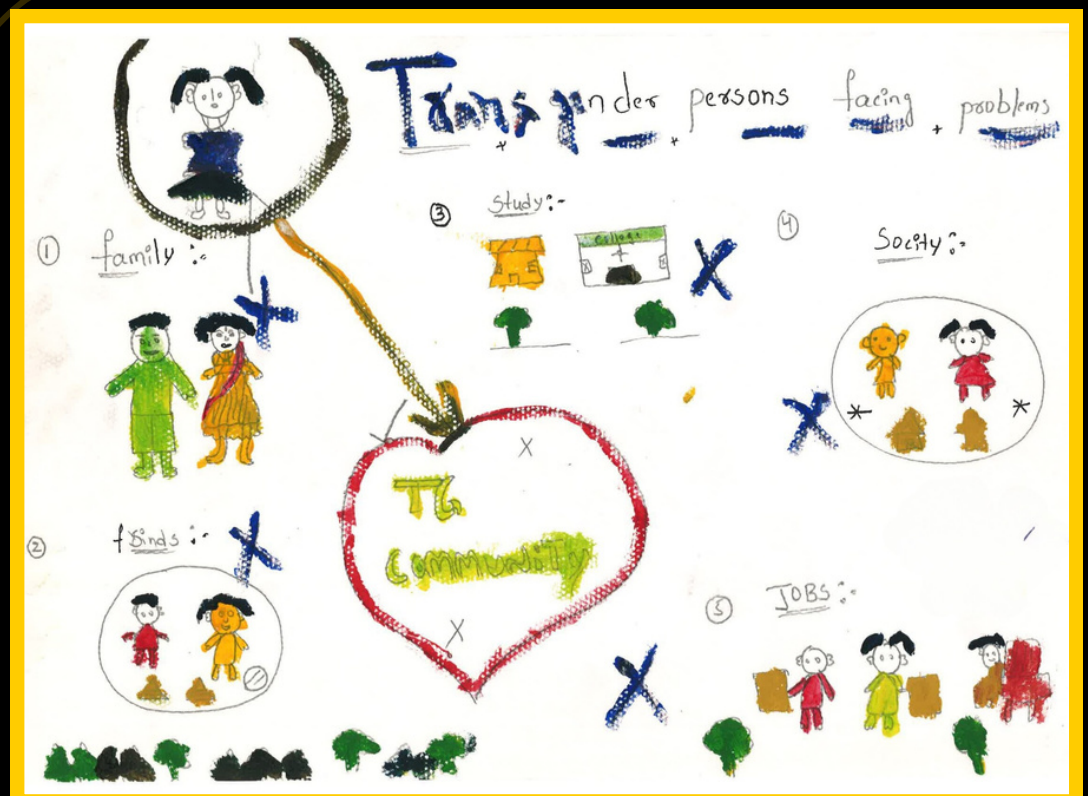
'In the care workshops, we discovered the benefits of meditation, which gave us valuable time for self-reflection. These workshops transformed us into a family, bringing us closer together in a short period of time.'

- Participant X about the Project

WHY TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY?



Transgender persons face extreme marginalisation from the heteronormative society that segregates people strictly into women and men attaching gender-specific qualities one has to conform to. Much of the society is ignorant of the gender-diverse possibilities, and therefore views a transgender person as a deviant which becomes the foundation of the brutality meted out to them. A transgender person is stigmatised, ostracised, ridiculed, and thus pushed to the margins or beneath the surface. It is in such a brutalised space that a transgender person lives and survives. It takes a huge amount of moral and other resources for a transgender person to assert one's identity, and make a place for oneself in this society.

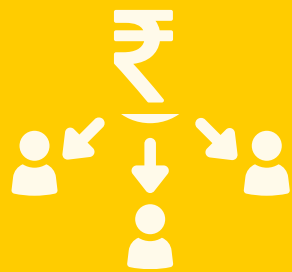


WHY TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY?

This marginalisation operates at different levels in different social and personal spaces in the form of transphobia, sexism, casteism, economic exclusion and so on, resulting in the denial of safe housing, dignity of labour, agency to make informed choices, expression of oneself and leisure. This leads to the degradation of the emotional and physical well-being of transgender persons. The net result is that the choices available to them at different stages in their life cycle with respect to their childhood, education, employment, housing, community and social life, etc., are extremely reduced. This brutal curtailment of freedom which is akin to the life of a slave is the real issue that we are facing with respect to the lives of transgender persons in our society.

In recent years, we have witnessed several initiatives addressing the transgender community both by the state as well as by the civil society such as legal recognition, health care services, welfare schemes, etc. Welcome as these efforts are, they do not reach out to the specificity of the marginalisation mentioned above that transgender persons face in the society. Fostering principles of Care is what we feel is missing in their approach. It is only through Care that we can rebuild solidarity and co-create safe space.

WHAT IS UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME AND WHY IN THIS PROJECT?

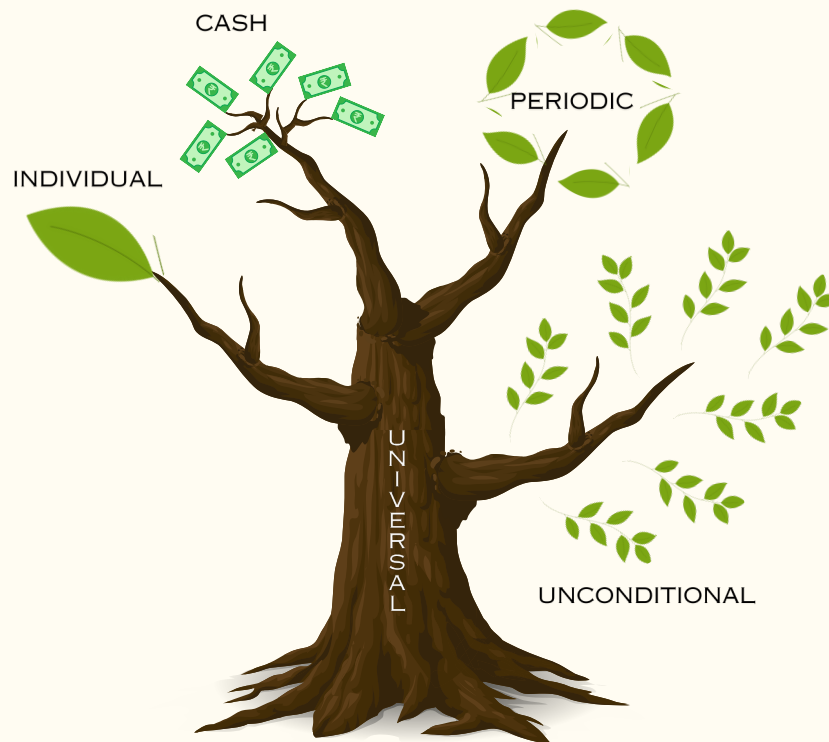


UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME

Basic income is cash paid to every person (including children) individually, unconditionally, and every month in any given political community. It is a simple idea, but indeed a radical new paradigm. It has five core elements that distinguish it from the conventional modes of welfarism. Here are the characteristics:

- **cash** as opposed to in-kind transfers
- paid to **individual** as opposed to head of the household
- **monthly** as opposed to one-time grants
- **universal** as opposed to targeted
- **unconditional** as opposed to conditional

While the first four elements are more common, the most radical element in the basic income paradigm is 'unconditional'. It is an entitlement and a right. One need not provide evidence that one is deserving or qualified to receive a basic income; nor is one asked to demonstrate certain outcomes in order to continue receiving it. It is as unconditional and as universal as the air we breathe and rain we receive.



'Its universal nature rests on a solidarity-based ethos that can further social cohesion and collectivise the spirit of 'care' to and amongst all.'

'As an unconditional transfer it respects the diversity of each person's lives, needs and aspirations. People do not need to fit their lives into narrow predefined boxes or deal with stigmatizing and uncaring bureaucracies.'

Cited in Barber et al., 2022: 25

A Caring Society is one that operates on trust and creates safety to all its members. UBI offers each person recognition of their identity, of their needs and the fact that they matter. It can also give them the Power to say 'NO' to exploitative relationships, and 'YES' to opportunities which help the life-projects they desire. A universal basic income and the periodicity of it act not just as a cash transfer but also as a transfer of trust which lays a foundation for creating such a safe space and therefore, a Caring Society.

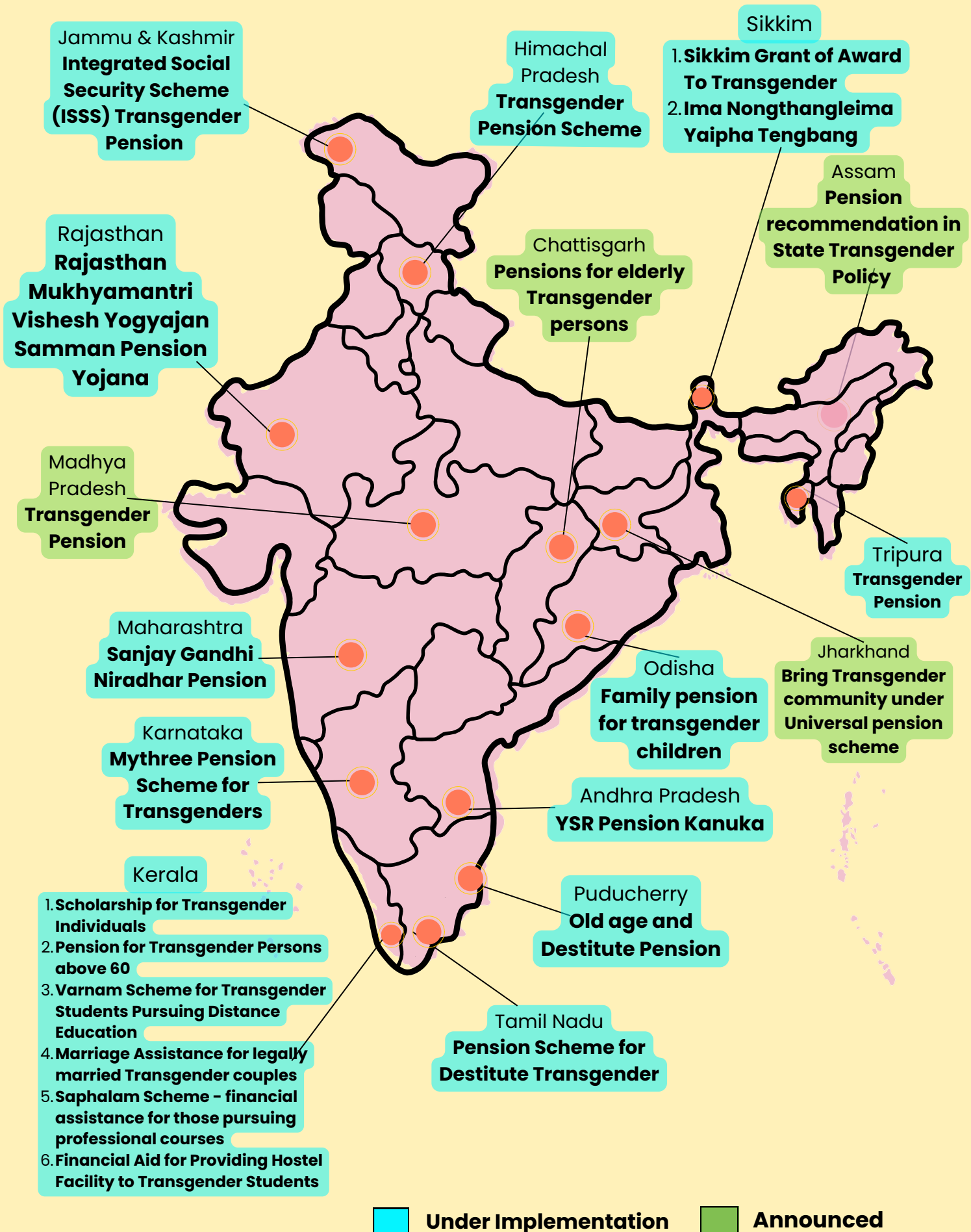
WHAT IS UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME AND WHY IN THIS PROJECT?

The belief that all human beings are reliant on, and providers of, care in some form or the other is the core of the Anveshi – INBI project. Therefore, primacy has been given to Care as the guiding value in all aspects of its design and implementation. As a society that believes and is rooted in perpetuating gender binary, any “deviance” is punitively “neutralised” and brutality inflicted upon, denying the transgender community a space of safety and Care. Therefore, Care stands as the opposite of brutality – the former symbolising life and nourishing and the latter violence and death. The lives of most transgender people are pushed into invisibilised spaces. Being members of this society, the moral responsibility is on all of us to co-create safe spaces of Care since the punishing agency is not ‘out there’ but within each of us. It is this impulse that led us to attempt at co-designing Care workshops that symbolise spaces for listening, caring, sharing and engaging in conversations.

Unconditionality is vital. It will erase the differences of caste, gender, colour, religion, and creed. Once things are unconditional without hindrances and restrictions, indirectly, all superstition will collapse and the world will become a place where flowers will blossom everywhere. For me, another word for unconditional is ‘powerful courage’.

– Participant Y on Unconditionality

CASH-BASED POLICIES IN INDIA FOR TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY





ABOUT THE CARE WORKSHOPS

The aim of the workshops was to open conversations about the possibilities of developing and designing certain Self Care and Mutual Care practices among the participants centered around taking care as a community rather than confining self-care to its capitalistic understanding of being individualistic. These were intended to create a sense and a space of trauma-informed individual-in-a-collective care.

This rendering of self-care also brings in self-awareness which highlights the much unaddressed bodily and emotional scars that structural inequalities inflict and helps in healing as individuals and as a community. Therefore, building safety, self-esteem and connection became some of the principal aims of the workshop. Connecting one to one's inner self has been facilitated through meditation, building confidence through activities based on care and building self-esteem through listening and respect.



In the current society where people are pushed into the hustle culture with self-care as only a reward for productivity, maintaining emotional hygiene demands attention. And for the communities that are vulnerable to systemic oppression like the transgender community, setting aside some part of their time for self-care becomes challenging and results in adverse mental well-being.

Taking into view the situation of deteriorating mental and physical health and the trauma that the members of the transgender community have to endure, focusing on health and well-being became a vital part of the care workshops.



WHAT DID WE LEARN FROM THE PROJECT?

Much of what we are saying here in this brochure has emerged from our conversations and sharing in the Care Workshops and subsequent interviews with some of the participants. What did we learn through this process? Most important lesson has been that it is not enough to say that a transgender person faces brutality and violence in our society. That's just the first step. The next crucial step is to unpack and comprehend what this brutality actually means, at its granular level. Only at this granular level that one can move towards remedies and relief. Intense conversations in Care Workshops brought some important pain points in the life journey of a transgender person. The suffering endured by them in these following pain points bears significant impact on choices and decisions and the possible trauma that arises out of this needs attention for healing:

- Relationship with natal family
- Education, employment and livelihood related
- Gender affirming Surgery and the Transition Process
- Chosen family, housing and community-related
- Intimate relationship and partner violence-related

My work forced me to not be left with anytime for myself. I lost myself in the journey of finding work for myself. My personal and professional life got mixed up. The care workshops, during such state, helped me trace my spirituality again. Meditation has become a bridge for my spirituality. I can say that the care workshops literally took care of me. We spoke as humans in these meetings.

– Participant Y on care workshops

Care conversations in the workshops brought out these issues extensively with seniors and juniors sharing their experiences. Each individual addresses the trauma caused by each of these situations in one's own unique way. In each one of the above situations, there are concrete choices to be made and resolutions to be sought.

We are now in the process of conducting in-depth interviews with our participants, and eventually we hope to bring out a publication based on our collective understanding of these pain points.



I used the amount I received to prepare for DSC government teacher recruitment exam, taking a break from my job for a while to focus on it. Additionally, I utilized the funds to travel from Hyderabad to my native place to visit my father during his illness. This assistance not only lifted the financial weight off my shoulders but also allowed me to pursue career aspirations while fulfilling my familial responsibilities.

– Participant Z on UBI



WHAT ARE THE POLICY IMPLICATIONS?

Our hope in this project is to bring out learnings that can be useful to make lives of transgender persons better, through interventions at all the three levels:

- **Policy Implications:** There are many ways in which government can play a role in empowering the lives of transgender persons.
- **Role, Responsibility and Interventions of the Civil Society:** How can civil society design interventions that specifically address the pain points faced by transgender persons?
- **Healing and Self-Care Practices** at the individual and community level

'In terms of finance, understanding people without any boundaries can give power to any individual. In a conversation with finance department people, I told them 'not to give a pension but to give it as a basic income for the transgender persons.' Government always tries to creatively set filters. First, they will ask ration card then some identity card with gender confirmation making a lot of the transgender community ineligible for things. That's why, I say, 'unconditional is powerful'.

– Participant Y on UBI

WHERE DO WE WANT TO GO FROM HERE?



- We would like to continue more systematic research based on our learnings so far in this project. What is needed are qualitative studies on various aspects of lives of transgender persons on the pain points mentioned - education, employment, housing, social and community life, old age, etc.
- Develop Care workshop model we began in this project and make it available to more people in the city of Hyderabad
- Design policy interventions for protecting the rights of transgender persons; and advocate unconditional basic income for transgender persons in the state of Telangana



I regularly sent money home, and fulfilling my responsibilities towards my parents made me feel better and lighter. Being able to book a Rapido instead of walking long distances meant a lot to me. The income from the project gave me room to breathe, freeing me from constantly searching for ways to cover my expenses.

-Participant Y on UBI



PEN DOWN

your notes

DOODLE
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OUR TEAM

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Note: All artworks depicted in this document are
authored by the participants of the project

**STAY IN
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