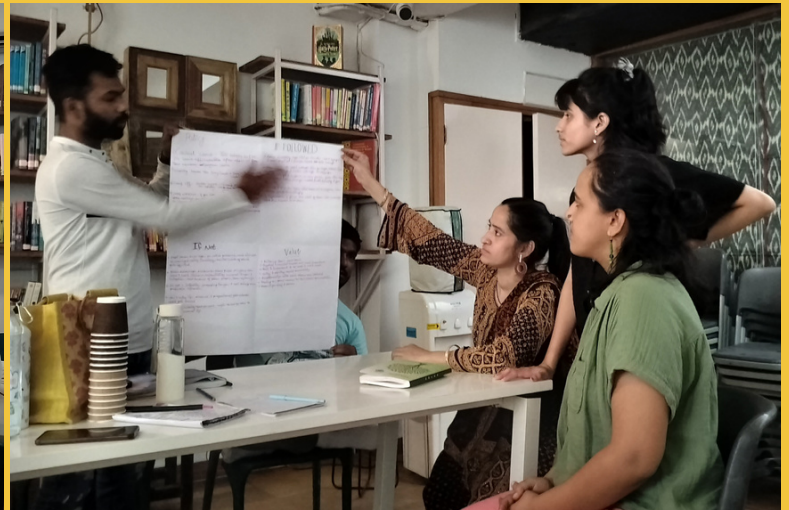
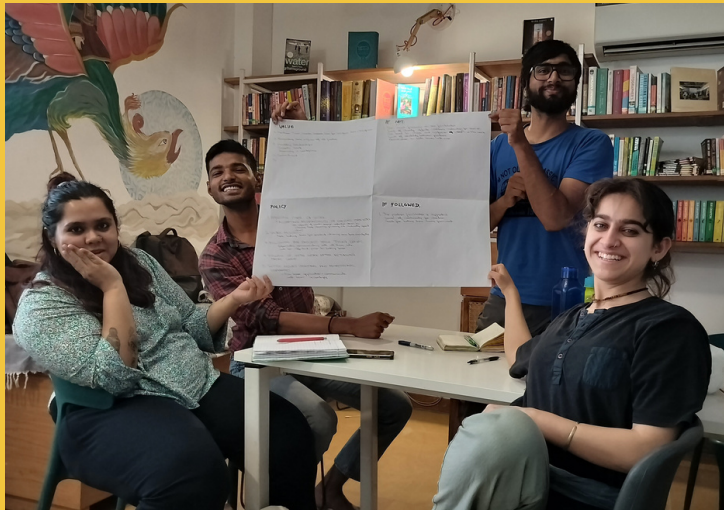


AAGAAZ THEATRE TRUST

# ANNUAL REPORT

2023-2024



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# BACKGROUND



The year that went by has been a testament of our belief in slow and deep work. So many dreams and desires that we collectively crafted over the years inched towards realisation. The team has been working hard to deepen their knowledge and skills, their relationships with the community and their artistic pursuits. Moving to a space of our dreams and establishing Khwāb Ghar has been a pivotal step in digging our feet into the ground and we are grateful for all the support that has enabled this big move.

The space comes to life with the sounds of children playing and singing - many little feet and big smiles fill Khwāb Ghar each week. Our work in the community has grown in leaps and bounds and we are looking at the year ending with almost a 150 regular participants in our work, in addition to periodic interactions with the families and the extended community in Nizamuddin through events and exhibitions. The library has become a favorite among both children and adolescents, the weekly Open Library is cherished by everyone who attends. Chai pe Gupshup with the mothers has revealed their desire for leisure and rest as well for learning.

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The repertory also reworked on and reopened our beloved "Rihla" in October, while some scattered shows of Bhagi Hui Ladkiyan also happened across the months. We also move closer to our dream of making the repertory an independent entity , as the actors have been taking on more and more production responsibilities. There is a strong desire to also direct small pieces independently, and since some of the repertory members have already been training as assistant directors, this movement only seems natural.

Another key highlight for us this year has been our fundraising campaign, we were fortunate to be a part of Danamojo's retail fundraising training and initiative and we managed to raise a significant chunk of our needs through the campaign, with support from our larger community as well as a new extended community of supporters we gathered through the campaign.



# TANA BANA



2023 -24 has been a monumental year for our Applied Arts program, Tana Bana grew in many ways thanks to the possibilities our new center has offered us. Our community arts center and library, which we fondly named Khwāb Ghar is really a dream come true for all of us as well as all the children and their families who access the space. Because of how the space is we were able to

1. Create a vibrant learning environment with book shelves and black board walls in the rooms and corridors.
2. A dedicated library space where beautiful books with stories and images can be engaged with, pored over and shared.
3. Two workshop rooms and a terrace where playing freely, structured sessions, film screenings and exhibitions and performances are made possible.
4. A silent room which becomes a room for rest and leisure, for the team as well as the children.
5. A kitchen, where we can imagine creating learning experiences using kitchen science.
6. An office room where people can take meetings and work on documentation in peace (well somewhat, Khwāb Ghar is always full of people and sounds)

# TANA BANA - CAPACITY BUILDING



At the heart of a building an organisation led by people from the community is capacity building in programmatic work as organisational development. Over 240 hours were devoted to building the capacities of our team. to lead programmatic elements this year. Zainab and Jasmine now lead the Library Programme and Nagina leads Community Mobilisation. All 8 of our community-based artists-facilitators - Aslam, Ismail, Jasmine, Nagina, Naghma, Shahid, Saddam, and Zainab, lead the planning, facilitation, reflection and community of each their groups.

Over this year these were areas of training:

- Critical Pedagogy
- Applying Visual Arts, Theatre, and Music to education, learning, and psychosocial support
- Developmental Psychology, Library ADministration
- Socio-emotional Learning,
- Observing children
- Early Childhood Education,
- Photography and Stop-motional Animation
- Urban Gardening
- Conducting read-alouds



We had four groups that worked regularly with their facilitators through free play and structured arts-based sessions. The aim of our work has been to try and create a safe space for children and young people for self expression, verbally and non verbally and through the medium of theatre, art, movement and music.

Early Years - Age 4-6 years,

Group Size:15

Number of sessions through the year: 124

Objective: Developing motor skills, cognitive abilities, and socio-emotional skills,  
Creating a therapeutic safe space

Children - Age 8-11 years

Group Size: 18

Number of sessions through the year: 120

Objective: Socio-emotional Learning, Creating a therapeutic safe space



Adolescent Boys - Age 10-14 years,  
Group Size: 16,  
Number of sessions through the  
year: 126

Objective: Socio-emotional learning,  
Gender and Sexuality, Masculinities,  
Creating a therapeutic space

This year we focused on community-  
building, listening, understanding  
the self and others - particularly  
others in the group and girls, being  
able to name and share our emotions  
and connect those to our thoughts,  
beliefs, and behaviours. Theatre and  
books becoming anchoring points.

Adolescent Girls - Age 13-15 years,  
Group Size: 15,  
Number of sessions through the year 39

Objective: Socio-emotional learning, Gender and Sexuality, Self defence and  
confidence building, Creating a therapeutic space

With this group too we focused on community building, naming and expressing  
emotions through the body, writing poetry on their participation in society and the  
country, building a sense of compassion for self and others. Music and conversations  
other than theatre, poetry, and movement became important anchors.

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# TANA BANA - CHAI PE GUPSHUP



Aagaaz's work is rooted in the community and centred around their needs. Khwāb Ghar only becomes the space of our dreams when people from the neighborhood - children and adolescents along with their families inhabit and own the space. Through our programs, we encourage the locals to take ownership of the space and the work, and the fact that the sessions are being facilitated and led by young people from the neighborhood, makes this access and depth much more possible.

We have regular home visits to keep in touch with the families, monthly "chai pe gupshup" meetings where we invite the mothers to a space for leisure and engagement with our work and various events curated by and for the inhabitants of the basti.

We had 10 chai pe gupshup sessions in the last year, in which the facilitators worked with the mothers exploring movements and dance, listening exercises, and conversations about parents and child relationships. We also invited the families to the Khwāb Ghar festival in August, where the children shared the work they've been doing through an art exhibition and through performances. We also invited the community for a performance by Freeda Theatre. 'Nazar ke Saamne', which is created and performed by 5 survivors of caste based and gender based violence did a show on our terrace. In February, Umesh who is a puppeteer associated with Katkatha performed a shadow theatre piece about the environment called 'Chehek'.

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# KHWAB GHAR KI LIBRARY



2023-2024 has been a formative year for our Khwāb Ghar library.

From our tentative beginnings and shifting into a new building in Feb 2023, we faced many challenges and questions- how could we grow our collection? How could we get readers into the library? What would our library look like? What would we actually do as a library?

These questions haven't gone anywhere, and our answers continue to change. But the process of discovery has been so beautiful. Over the year, we received abundant support from different libraries and organisations (shout-out to the Free Libraries Network, Bookworm's Library Mentorship Support program supported by HT Parekh, and the kind volunteers from KPMG, as well as countless individual supporters and friends of Aagaaz). We saw our collection grow from 150 books to nearly 1200 books, slowly acquired shelves to put them in, and put crucial administrative processes into place (with many tears, confusions and scary excel sheets along the way). We gained and temporarily misplaced new members, visitors, allies and wildlife.

# KHWĀB GHAR KI LIBRARY

We figured out, through trial, error and more error, what we wanted our Khwāb Ghar Library to become, and are making a working (incomplete) map for how to get there.

We realised that we are and always want to be a playful, artful library. We realised that books go together very well with theatre, and with movies, and visual art, and crafts, and games, and puppets, and combinations of them all.

We discovered our purpose - to use playfulness and the arts to make an accessible and safe space that always centers the experiences and needs of our library's people, while nurturing curiosity, leisure, excitement and imagination through the books and stories we hold.

We're still figuring it out.



# DIALOGUE SESSIONS

In this year, we've tried to build a space where we can dialogue with courage to listen and articulate. Our aim is to build a culture where we are able to hold, conflict, disagreement and moments of chaos with a commitment to work it out as a community. We do this for our health, that of our community, and as citizens of a democratic society. We meet every alternate Saturday to respond to provocations or work through inter-personal or organisational challenges.

On certain Saturdays we also pick up texts that deepen our perspectives on democracy and culture. This year we began reading Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and read some sections of Roland Barthes' *Mythologies*.

# THEMATIC WORKSHOPS

In February, Nagina, Naghma and Aabshaar conducted a three day workshop using Image Theatre, Read Aloud, Letter Writing, Art and Movement with 32 women from UP, Bihar, MP and Jharkhand. The workshop held space for stories of oppression faced by women, understanding oppression through Image Theatre and Movement exercises exploring consent, resistance and uncomfortable gaze. On the last day, the women made their own puppets depicting their superwomen characters and narrated a story of the character.

# DRAMA JAMS



After online Drama Jams during covid, we started physical sessions at Khwāb Ghar from 4th June 2023. In Drama Jams we invite people from various spaces to come and play together and engage with theatre exercises and games. This year we had 13 Drama Jams from 4th June to 7th Jan. The Drama Jams at Khwāb Ghar have seen a diverse participation, including young people from within the basti and theatre practitioners from around Delhi.

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# FACILITATOR'S COLLECTIVE

Over the years Aagaaz has built a pool of reflective facilitators who have come from diverse artistic practices, who share a love and desire to work with children, adolescents, and young people through arts based methodologies. They also share a desire to deepen their practices. Currently this peer sharing group comprises of 15 such people.

On April 6th, Zainab facilitated a lovely session which began with a read aloud, after which she made us delve into some poetry writing games and exercises. On the 20th we had an Iftar Party with everyone breaking fast together with all the facilitators, followed by some fun times and singing of course! All of May we met over 4 sessions to read and embody different scripts, 3rd and 10th of May we met to read plays by the Bhasha Center's collection of scripts by indie playwrights called The Drama Library. On 17th and 24th we worked with existing stories and scripts that were adapted by the facilitators and then read by everyone together. The collective didn't meet in June.

In July, we worked on characters with our bodies, we also watched Ek Majnu Ek Ladku together at Khuli Khirkee, which is a beautiful musical tale about gender and ecology. In August, we met to plan for the Khwāb Ghar festival, which was later also supported hugely by volunteers from the collective. In September, we met to watch "All That Breathes" by Shaunak Sen together. Watching this film with the group together was a moment of deep connection and reflection. The sharing circle we ended with gave us a lot of perspective into each others' lives and beliefs and the spaces where we all have things in common.

# FACILITATOR'S COLLECTIVE

In October as the team opened Rihla for their public shows, we had two preview shows for the members of facilitators' collective to come and be a part of and share their feedback. Manishikha, alongwith Nagina, Ismail and Shahid, facilitated the children from the Goofies group to devise and perform a show about the baoli, "Sehmi sehmi baoli" was performed by the children at Sundar Nursery on 25th September. On the 26th of September, 4 members of the collective traveled together to Mumbai to facilitate a workshop with Tata Trusts.

All through October and November, the facilitators' collective supported us with the fundraising campaign, which went splendidly thanks to all the support from the friends of Aagaaz. on the 22nd of November, while we all continue to be horrified at everything that was happening in Palestine, we got together to do a reading of Gaza Monologues, to read stories from young people in Palestine. Some of us also recorded the monologues to share them publicly through Instagram.

In December, we had our annual Picnic in the Park on the 9th, we all met and played and did potluck in the sun! Members of the collective also facilitated a series of workshops at Shiv Nadar Schoool Noida, with "Duniya Sabki" by Safdar Hasmi as a point of inquiry into Diversity, Inclusion, Equity and Justice.

# FACILITATOR'S COLLECTIVE



In early January 2024, Aabshaar, Katyayini and Manishikha from the collective created and performed a play for JPAL's event on the 4th. Later in the month, while the repertory was taveling for Rihla shows, Katyayini and Aabshaar supported the programs team with keeping sessions for the chidlren running. In February and March, we didn't meet as a collective but Naghma, Manjari and Zainab began the process of applying for Maraa's Mirrors Fellowship.

Way Forward We are collectively thinking of ways to decentralise the power of the collective and have more shared ownership for the meetings and sessions. One of things we have been meaning to do is to rename the collective and find a new identity together. We are also trying to find more ways to incorporate members from the collective into the regular programmatic work, Ritika and Aabshaar are now a part of the programs team, Pranav is a regular volunteer at the Open Library on Tuesdays, Archit is a part of our Board of Trustees, Manjari, Katyayini and Manishika regularly support us with Thematic Engagement workshops. Each facilitator contributes to making Aagaaz vibrant and exciting, supporting us in all our challenges and celebrations, and we look forward to the collective growing and finding roots in the work with the community.

# PERFORMANCE ARTS

This year we have been performing two shows, one is Bhagi hui Ladkiyan - which is our old play and Rihla - which we revised again this year and started performing, we've been travelling with it to different places like Delhi, Mumbai as well as Jaipur and Heydrabad.



## Bhagi Hui Ladkiya

- 23rd April - Popsicle, Hyderabad - 2 shows
- 17th April - Heritage, Delhi 1 show
- 18th Jan - Harkat Studio, Mumbai - 1 show
- 2nd March - JKK, Jaipur - 1 show
- 28th June
- Sweccha India, Delhi - 1 show
- Studio Safdar, Shadipur - 1 show
- NCPA Mumbai - 1 show
- Rangbhoomi Spaces, Heydrabad 2 shows



## Rihla

- Lilanoor, Delhi - 27th October to 5th November - 8 shows
- Harkat Studio, Mumbai 19th to 21st January'24 - 3 shows
- Dharmshala - 23rd to 25th February'24 - 4 shows
- JKK, Jaipur - 3rd March'24 - 1 show

# CREATIVE PRACTICE



This year we are on a journey to become an independent repertory - to start and run our own theatre company. We are all teaching each other theatre related skills that we have learnt and honed over the years - like lighting, acting, reading plays, thinking about them, and taking them to the floor.

We have been supported in our journey by our mentors - Neel Chaudhuri, Ankit Pandey, Dhvani Vij, and Urvi Vora.



# MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

At Aagaaz, mental health is as important as physical health. Through our work and with the support of partnerships and through our network of friends and supporters, we and create spaces for well-being in the form of one-one one therapy, psychiatric support, and psycho-social support meetings.

The repertory member has access to one-on-one longterm therapy with experienced and credible therapist and psychiatric support in case of referral. Dr. Alok Sarin and Dr. Jitendar Jhakar associated with Sitaram Bhartia Hospital consult voluntarily in such cases.

We have monthly group sessions with support from the Hank Nunn Institute, where we explore together. In January the group was facilitated to hold space for each other and talk about questions like why therapy is important, what do therapists do in sessions, how to hold space for each other? Curiosity, political difference in the group, gender difference, how we hold space in a group for each other?

In February we talked about attachment, human attachment, core memories, symbols, 'attachment ek bimari'. We explored many themes and talked about how good endings give hope and open possibilities, is attachment possible without disappointment, is any relationship free of disappointment, how people in groups are attached to each other in different ways, how do we relate to each other's disappointments?

Through these we are trying to learn about therapy, how we can hold space for our children with whom we work. We acknowledge we can't solve everything immediately but we can try to build a safe space for them.

## FUNDRAISING

This year, like all others, our focus was on retail fundraising. However, this year was also a first in two ways.

- We secured our first institutional partnership with Azim Premji Foundation to develop our work with young people.
- We participated in a wonderful programme on Retail Fundraising by Danamojo's Danvrddhi, which we highly recommend. As a part of it the entire team participated in a crowdfunding month and raised funds beyond any of our expectations!

Next year, our focus will be to diversify our efforts and create a robust strategy while still focusing deeply on retail funds.



# WAY FORWARD



We move into the next year with gratitude for the growth this year, with dreams to soar and grow more with our community, and with courage to take on the challenges that growth brings with it. We plan to begin working with women and youth, deepen our commitment to create spaces for leisure, healing and learning, while developing our knowledge of our rights and commitments as awakened citizens.

As we grow, it's very important for us to continue to stay and grow with the children and families we now are connected with, and so we navigate and negotiate this delicate journey, balancing between expansion and deepening - between movement and staying.

Next year, our commitment is also to begin developing systems and strategies to build an organisation that's not essentially Founder-led and dependent. Our commitment is and will remain to create an imaginative, curious and courageous community-led organisation.

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# ANNEXURE

Blog Articles:

[https://aagaaz-  
theatre.medium.com/](https://aagaaz-theatre.medium.com/)



# ANNEXURE

## Financial Report

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