



# **ETHICS OF SOLIDARITY, CARE & PROTECTION**

**Youth Meet  
13-16 March 2022  
Darjeeling, India**

**A Report**

Calcutta Research Group & the Institute for  
Human Sciences, Vienna

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**Youth Meet**  
**‘Ethics of Solidarity, Care, and Protection’**  
**13-16 March 2022**  
**Darjeeling, India**  
**In collaboration with the Institute for Human Sciences (IWM), Vienna**

**A Report**

*“Solidarity is a life question, but one of life at its limit. Solidarity reflects the bio-political nature of the collective at the time of crisis, life in crisis; yet what is paradoxical is that it is through the acts of solidarity that a collective comes into being.”*

*Ranabir Samaddar, Layers of Solidarity*

The Covid pandemic and the ensued migrant crisis in India since 2020 made visible the caveats or the fault lines inherent in the public health management systems operating in India and at the same time the very event of the pandemic produced a high level of solidarity among various sections of society. The surge of solidarity has been chronicled by journalists, diarists, commentators, news portals, and photographers. Solidarity activists have emerged from all walks of life. They have mobilised and provided food, money, shelter, medical treatment, and passage assistance to migrant workers returning home, and in general to all those in need of urgent medical assistance. The solidarity activists have provided strength to the migrant workers who faced odds in face of various lockdown restrictions all over the country. In the wake of the internal and international borders being tightly controlled to arrest the spread of Covid-19 and an overwhelming public perception that migrants were among the deadliest carriers of the virus, the unprecedented solidarity assumed exceptional significance. In this background, the Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group (CRG) decided to organise a four-day Youth Meet to exchange, discuss, and deepen ideas and experiences of solidarity as part of ethics of care and protection. The Youth Meet was organised in collaboration with and funded by the Institute for Human Sciences, Vienna under its Europe-Asia Research Platform on Forced Migration Programme as part of CRG’s ongoing programmes supported by Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, IWM, and several other universities and institutions in India. The theme of the meet was ‘Ethics of Solidarity, Care, and Protection’. The event was designed to be held from 22 to 26 January 2022 in Darjeeling, India. But in view of the deteriorating health crisis due to the sudden threat from the Omicron virus, CRG in the bigger interest of the nation and its commitment to conduct the event in a safe and healthy atmosphere decided to postpone the event to 13-16 March 2022. The Meet aimed at bringing together from various backgrounds experts and solidarity activists who would share their experiences during group sessions, film screening, book discussion, and panel discussions on different aspects of solidarity, and protection. There were around 25 participants in the Youth Meet. The Youth Meet became a forum of diverse global representation from India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Austria, and Czech Republic. The event was meant to be a platform for voices to be heard and hence an equal representation of the women’s voices was pre-decided for the event with almost fifty percent of invitees being women. Two fellows joined the event as part of the BABSEACLE fellowship from ‘Beyond Refuge’ Summer School organised in collaboration with CRG in August 2021. Fellows also joined the event as part of the CRG-IWM fellowship for participants from Europe. The event received representation from different organisations and institutes like ActionAid, GeFont, WOREC, Solidar Suisse, Praticchi Trust, PUKAR, Rashtriya Hamal Panchayat, Wildlife Protection Society of India, CEHDF, IDSK, TISS, Central European University, Kingston University London, University of Vienna, The Sanskrit College and University, independent artists, filmmaker, trade union activists and poets. The Youth Meet was designed as a discussionary platform where invitees could share their experiences of working on issues of care and protection. Expressions of solidarity were not limited to the active participation of the civil society or organisations but were conceptualised as an expansive summation that included within its sceptre personal experiences of living on the margins of the society to artistic expressions. The event started with the inaugural lecture of Prof Manish Kumar Jha (TISS-Mumbai, India). The four-day event was divided into four themes:- (1)The Ethics of Solidarity, (2) Layers of Protection, (3) Layers of Solidarity, (4) Ethics of Care. The focus of the sessions was to connect the self with the issues of working in solidarity and how layered in reality solidarity is in its operational mechanisms. The limitations of working conditions of solidarity were more visible as participants shared their personal narratives of living through the pandemic and how community identity forecloses all receivable dialogues of solidarity. During the field trip ‘Tracking Darjeeling’ participants had scope to interact with the returnee migrants in Darjeeling. Throughout the four day different exercises connected how the concept of home, migration, experiences, compassion and risk play a definitive role in creating the ethics of solidarity and multi-scalar dimensions. The closing session ended with the valedictory lecture by Prof. Rajesh Kharat (Mumbai University, India).

**Programme Schedule**  
**“Ethics of Solidarity, Care, and Protection”**  
**13-16 March 2022, Darjeeling**

**Day 1: 13.03.2022: The Solidarity Meet**

- 6:00-6:30 PM: Tea and Registration**
- 6:30-6:45 PM: Welcome Address**  
Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhuri (Rabindra Bharati University & CRG, India)
- 6:45-7:00 PM: Introduction to the Youth Meet**  
Anwesha Sengupta (Institute of Development Studies Kolkata, India)
- 7:00-7:30 PM: Introductions by Participants**
- 7:30-8:00 PM: Keynote Address**  
Manish Kumar Jha (Tata Institute of Social Sciences-Mumbai, India)
- 8:00 PM: Dinner**

**Day 2: 14.03.2022: Layers of Protection**

- 10:00-11:30 AM: Gender and Migration: Why Women Migrants are Vulnerable?**  
Discussion Initiators: Renu Adhikari (National Alliance of Women Human Rights Defenders, Nepal), Binda Pandey (GEFONT, Nepal), Vijiliya Antony (ActionAid-Tamil Nadu, India)
- 11:30 AM-12:00 PM: Tea**
- 12:00-1:00 PM: Migration & Vulnerabilities**  
Discussion Initiator: Natasha Israt Kabir (Bridge Foundation & Solidar Suisse, Bangladesh), Nileema Ambekar (PUKAR-Mumbai, India)
- 1:00-2:00 PM: Lunch**
- 2:00-5:00 PM: Tracking Darjeeling [Field Visit]**
- 7:30 PM: Dinner**

**Day 3: 15.03.2022: Layers of Solidarity**

- 9:30-11:00 AM: Storytelling Session!**  
Discussion Initiator: Sabir Ahamed (Pratichi Trust, India) & Anwesha Sengupta (Institute of Development Studies Kolkata, India)  
Discussion Participants: Anil Mistry (Bali Nature and Conservation of Wildlife Society & Wildlife Protection Society of India-Sundarbans, India), Jinat Rehana Islam (Raghunath Ganj High School-Murshidabad, India), Natasha Israt Kabir (Bridge Foundation & Solidar Suisse, Bangladesh), Heather Marina Saenz (University of Vienna, Austria), Sheema Fatima (Tata Institute of Social Sciences-Mumbai, India)
- 11:00-11:30 AM: Tea Break**
- 11:30 AM-12:15 PM: Solidarity Against Racism Amongst Migrants and Refugees: The Case of UK & Turkey**  
Discussion Initiator: Doğuş Şimşek (Kingston University London, UK)
- 12:15-1:00 PM: Is Protectionism Meant Only for Humans**

Discussion Initiator: Anil Mistry (Bali Nature and Conservation of Wildlife Society & Wildlife Protection Society of India-Sundarbans, India), Anwesha Sengupta (Institute of Development Studies Kolkata, India)

- 1:00-2:00 PM: Lunch**
- 2:00-3:00 PM: Book Reading and Discussion, 'Lockdown r Dinolipi: Banglar Meyeder Lorai o Sangram,' Sristisukh, 2021, Jinat Rehana Islam** (Raghunath Ganj High School-Murshidabad, India)  
Discussion Initiator: Sabir Ahamed (Pratichi Trust, India)
- 3:00-4:00 PM: Lived Experiences of Migration and Life in Camps**  
Discussion Initiator: Saravana Natarajan (Sri Lankan Refugee Minnur Camp, Tirupattur in Tamil Nadu, India), Vijiliya Antony (ActionAid-Tamil Nadu, India), Renu Adhikari (National Alliance of Women Human Rights Defenders, Nepal)
- 4:00-4:30 PM: Tea**
- 4:30-5:30 PM: Documentary Film 'I Am Still Looking for You' Directed by Pavel Ruzyak** (Independent Film Maker, Czech Republic)
- 5:30-6:30 PM: Sharing of Experiences!**  
Discussion Initiator: Samata Biswas (The Sanskrit College and University & CRG, India)
- 7:30 PM: Dinner**

**Day 4: 16.03.2022: Ethics of Care**

- 10:00-11:00 AM: Miya Poetry Assam & Politics of Migration in Assam**  
Discussion Initiator: Kazi Neel (Miya Poet, Assam), Sheema Fatima (Tata Institute of Social Sciences-Mumbai, India)
- 11:00-11:30 AM: Tea**
- 11:30 AM-1:00 PM: City Space, Migrants, Production of Vulnerability**  
Discussion Initiators: Heather Marina Saenz (University of Vienna, Austria), Ana Ćuković (University of Vienna, Austria), Sheema Fatima (Tata Institute of Social Sciences-Mumbai, India)
- 1:00-2:00 PM: Lunch**
- 2:00-3:30 PM: Community, Region, Migration & Protectionism**  
Discussion Initiators: Anwesha Sengupta (Institute of Development Studies Kolkata, India), Yahiya V.U. (Tata Institute of Social Sciences-Mumbai, India), Md. Ilias Miah (Centre for Environment, Human Rights and Development Forum, Bangladesh)
- 3:30-5:00 PM: Worker Rights and Migration**  
Discussion Initiators: Chandan Kumar (Rashtriya Hamal Panchayat, India), Sabir Ahamed (Pratichi Trust, India), Sadekul Islam (Independent Migrant Workers Rights Activist, India)
- 5:30-6:30 PM: Art and Migration [Installation Art on Migration]**  
Discussion Initiator: Ankan Datta (Independent Artist, India)
- 5:00-5:30 PM: Tea Break**
- 5:30-6:30 PM: Valedictory Session**  
Rajesh Kharat (University of Mumbai, India)
- 6:30 PM: Vote of Thanks**  
Shatabdi Das (CRG, India)

## Participant Profiles

### Natasha Israt Kabir



Natasha Israt Kabir graduated from the Pondicherry Central University, being a recipient of the scholarship titled, "UNESCO Madanjeet Singh Institute for South Asian Regional Cooperation" in India, for the academic year 2010 August to May 2012. Her first Post-Graduation and Graduation are based on International Relations at Jahangir Nagar University, Dhaka, Bangladesh. She started voluntary service in 2003 and her professional career from 2007 which is diversified and interdisciplinary, from the hospitality industry to journalism as a part-time contributor as well as freelance researcher, liaison officer, and election observer, very recently worked as a faculty member at a local university, now she is a development professional and working as a community volunteer for her foundation as a founder-president of BRIDGE foundation for the disable community-based on arts, inclusive research and campaign for the rights of the Persons with Disabilities.

### Kazi Sharowar Hussain (Kazi Neel)



Kazi Neel is a poet, photographer and social worker based in Assam. He has completed his post-graduation in Cultural Studies at Tezpur University, Assam. He completed his Bachelor's in Multimedia at West Bengal State University, Kolkata. He writes poetry in Assamese, Bangla, and the Miyah dialects of Assam. His Assamese poetry collection titled 'Ghorashalat Etiya Nirantar Tupani' has been published in 2021 by Purbayan Publication, Guwahati, and an untitled anthology of his poems translated to English to be published by Speaking Tiger Books, New Delhi.

### Sheema Fatima



Sheema Fatima is an urban planner by training. Her interests lie in urban politics and governance in non-metropolitan urban centres. She has worked on numerous research projects in both Mumbai and the small and medium towns of Bihar. She has been the recipient of several international student scholarships and research fellowships over the years. She has teaching experience of over a decade and has been doing courses on the usage of vernacular language and literature for urban research and teaching. Currently, she is a post-doctoral fellow at the University College of London in collaboration with the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai.

### Md. Ilias Miah



Md. Ilias Miah is an activist working on climate change-related displacements, human rights abuse and sustainable development. He graduated from the National University of Bangladesh in Political Science. Currently, he is the Chief Executive of Centre for Environment, Human Rights and Development Forum - CEHRDF and also the Chair of the Bangladesh Network of Solidarity for Rohingya (BNSR). Recently he has been working on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 13, 16 & 17 as the Chair of SDG Tracker and has joined many global conferences like HLPF, UNESCO Youth Forum, NGO CSW 65, ECOSOC Youth Forum, ELSAH, APFSD, ADA, GALA and Pacific Climate Justice Summit.

**Yahiya V. U.**



Yahiya V. U. is a Doctoral Fellow with the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Mumbai. He completed his MPhil in Social work at TISS Mumbai and his Masters of Social Work from Pondicherry Central University. His current research interests explore the socio-cultural impact of Gulf migration among Mappila Muslims in Kerala, their history of migration, empowerment, and trajectories.

**Nileema Ambekar**



Nileema Ambekar did her Masters in Social Work from Karve Institute of Social Service, Pune. She has worked in the social sector for thirteen years facilitating barefoot research. She has been associated with the Manuski organization, Pune, which works for Dalit/NT-DNT rights and have been awarded Commonwealth Professional Fellowship in 2015 which was tenable at Karuna Trust, UK, and Germany. She has participated in research studies conducted by the Tata Institute of Social Sciences to understand the vulnerabilities of minorities in prison, vulnerabilities of marginalised population leading to their chance of ending in forced migration and sometimes in trafficking. Currently, she is the Associate Program Director for PUKAR's Youth Fellowship Program since 2018.

**Pavel Ruzyak**



Pavel Ruzyak is an independent film maker. He studied at Babelsberg Film University Konrad Wolf in Germany and at film school FAMU in Prague. He has directed fiction films and documentaries, short and middle-length, and his productions have been screened in competition in many international film festivals in Europe and awarded several prizes. Currently, he is working on feature film projects. His work has been selected at Vilnius Film Festival, Beldocs Film Festival Belgrade, Trieste Film Festival, Figari Film Festival, Riga International Festival and many more in 2016-2020. He is also active in the social and artistic sphere, working on projects that connect cinematic and social together.

**Heather Marina Saenz**



Heather Marina Saenz is an academic, journalist, and cultural facilitator based in Vienna, Austria. She is currently an M.A. student in International Development at the University of Vienna and works in arts management as a fellow for Kùltür Gemma, Austria's only arts foundation for BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) and migrant artists. Heather has also worked in international development (OSCE, UNIDO, AMIDEAST) and CSR in projects across over 30 countries. Her academic and artistic work centers on community-based practices and care.

#### Vijiliya Antony



Vijiliya Antony social worker from Tamil Nadu. She holds a Master's degree in Social Work specialised in Human Resource Management. She began her career in 2012 at the Centre for Workers Management. Through her work over the years, she has successfully conscientised several informal women workers on their labour rights and labour legislations in place both within Tamil Nadu and across the country. She has been working with the ActionAid Association Tamil Nadu State office since 2017. Her work has been centred on the rights of young urban women, economic empowerment, bodily integrity and enabling access to Gender Responsive Public Services (GRPS). As part of her interventions, 54 young women collectives were formed with a total of 1026 members in Perumbakkam urban relocation site on the outskirts of Chennai, Tamil Nadu. Further she has undertaken consistent efforts to mobilise and organise informal women workers and conscientise them on their rights and entitlements and towards facilitating them in availing such entitlements from the government.

#### Chandan Kumar



Chandan Kumar is a trade union activist and associated with Rashtriya Hamal Panchayat, a national trade union which works with informal workers. He is also an organising secretary of the Working Peoples' Charter, a coalition of 162 worker organizations. He is a member of National Minimum Wage Advisory Board (a statutory committee of Government of India) and NHRC Core Group on Bonded Labour. He has been part of numerous labour policy formulations, such as construction workers, bonded labour, migrant workers, domestic workers on state and central level and part of the Social Justice cluster of Asia Europe Peoples Forum, Asia Pacific World Social Forum and works closely with the International Trade Union Movement.

#### Doğuş Şimşek



Doğuş Şimşek is Assistant Professor of Sociology and Criminology at Kingston University London. Her research interests revolve around the sociology of migration, race, and class. Her research, which addresses global problems such as colonialism, neoliberalism, and structural inequalities, attempts to examine how power is materialised in processes of exclusion and inclusion, and organised around race, class, gender, and migratory status.

#### Ana Ćuković



Ana Ćuković is a Doctoral Fellow affiliated with the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Vienna and the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology at the Central European University. Her research focuses on migration and urban redevelopment in Detroit and examines migration as instrumental to capital accumulation at different times and geographies, and through various mechanisms. Currently, she is the coordinator for the Seminar Series on Forced Migration and Europe-Asia Research Platform launched by the Institute for Human Sciences (IWM) and Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group (MCRG) at the University of Vienna.



### Manish Kumar Jha



Manish K Jha is Professor at Centre for Community Organisation and Development Practice (CODP), School of Social Work, Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Mumbai. He has been the Dean of School of Social Work and Chairperson of CODP at TISS. His research interests include Migration, Disaster and Development, Middle Classes, Poverty and Social Justice. Prof Jha has been visiting fellow at different universities in the U.K. and other European Countries. He teaches courses on Social Policy, Social Action, Advocacy and Movements, and Migration and Politics. He is a member of Calcutta Research Group. He has been a Governing Board member to a range of universities and research institutes. He has published numerous articles in reputed international journals and edited books. Prof. Jha has been the project lead of research grant from the British Council, Erasmus, Ford Foundation, University of Chicago and Animal and Society Institute, etc.

### Rajesh Kharat



Rajesh Kharat is Dean Humanities, University of Mumbai (On Deputation) and Director, School of International Relations and Strategic Studies, as well as Professor Chair at Rajiv Gandhi Centre for Contemporary Studies and Coordinator of Master in Social Work at University of Mumbai. He is Professor and former Chairperson at Centre for South Asian Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. His area of research is Forced Migration South Asia and he has published 5 books and more than 30 research articles in various international and national journals and edited volumes. He is also Visitors nominee at the Executive Council of Mahatma Gandhi Central University, Bihar.

### Anil Krishna Mistry



Anil Krishna Mistry has spent his entire life in the Sundarbans. Anil and his team spread awareness on wildlife conservation issues with infectious zeal and sincerity and assist the local communities in a myriad of issues.

### Ankan Datta



Ankan Datta is an independent installation artist based in Assam. His works represent the travails of the daily life of the migrants, dalits, labourers and tries to highlight the precarity of their living conditions.

## **The Sessions of the Meet**

### **Ethics of Solidarity**

In the inaugural session of the solidarity meet [13th March 2022], Manish Kumar Jha [TISS-Mumbai] delivered the keynote address emphasising the importance of engaging in a dialogue about ethics of solidarity, care and protection. He discussed multiple crises during Covid-19, including health, migrants, and education, and how the states responded to these crises. He also presented several ground-level stories from the Covid period. He explained how the community came forward to take risks over a period of time and how they started negotiating with the state, to provide relief to individuals in order for them to survive. He also examined the term "Ethics" as a set of moral rules governing human behaviour and the inherent nature of care and protection behind ethics.

### **Layers of Protection**

The second day [14th March 2022] of the youth meet began with a discussion on layers of protection. The first session, 'Gender and Migration,' was led by women's rights activists Renu Adhikari, Binda Pandey, and Vijiliya Antony and focused on how migrant women were vulnerable during the Covid period. Binda Pandey, a trade union activist from Nepal, spoke on women's issues, especially when managing families, caring for children, and dealing with harassment at work. She also emphasised the way forward, recommending safe migration through registered agents and also the responsibility of the country of origin to safeguard migrant workers. Renu Adhikari, women's right and public health activist who has worked extensively on human trafficking issues in Nepal, stated that Nepal tends to see migration as a gender-neutral and apolitical phenomenon. She noted that migration policy focused primarily on foreign migration and very little on internal migration. From a gender standpoint, she said there are several cases of abuse and vulnerabilities linked with internal migration, regardless of which government is in power, and all parties are patriarchal, majoritarian, and mostly upper caste. All policies exhibit a patronising attitude toward women. Despite these challenges, several local women leaders stepped forward during the Covid period to care for the people and ensure they had the essential means to survive. She also discussed how urban domestic workers had been neglected, with essential services being refused due to a lack of identity cards. She highlighted the importance of gender concerns in quarantine centres, women's sexual and reproductive rights, pregnant and nursing women's challenges, and the mental health of Covid-affected individuals. Vijiliya Antony, from Tamil Nadu, spoke about the vulnerability of the state's internal female migrant labourers. She stated that the challenges of female migrant workers go unnoticed, that they are invisible and voiceless. Their difficulties at work are ignored and undervalued. She also brought up the issue of sexual harassment in the workplace. She further made some recommendations, such as requiring interstate workers to register, improving the lives of female migrant workers, establishing helplines for migrants in multiple languages, and establishing gender-sensitive migration centres.

The next session focused on migration and vulnerabilities with Natasha Israt Kabir and Nileema Ambekar. Natasha, founder and director of BRIDGE Foundation, Bangladesh, discussed the challenges of persons with hearing impairments and other physical disability at the Rohingya refugee camp in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. Nileema from PUKAR, Pune, explored issues of marginalised people. In the afternoon, CRG organised for the field visit 'Tracking Darjeeling' to interact with interstate migrant labourers from Sonada, a Census Town close to Darjeeling city, who had returned home due to the Covid lockdown. Migrants stated that they were working in southern Indian states and had migrated through the familial network. Even while making a decent income at their destination where they had access to good food and accommodation, there had been language problems and were subjected to racism. Workplaces such as saloons and food outlets had been severely impacted by the lockdown. Migrants from this part of North Bengal lost their jobs, and many of them had their salary cut. Returning back to their hometowns was the only option since it was challenging to remain in the destination cities due to the difficulties caused by the lockdown; for some returnee migrants family obligations were the most important cause of return. Many of these migrants had professional goals and educational plans, but Covid destroyed them.

### **Layers of Solidarity**

The third day [15th March 2022] opened with a discussion focusing on layers of solidarity. The 'Story Telling' session, conducted by Sabir Ahmed and Anwasha Sengupta, was based on individuals sharing their experiences and stories of solidarity and care. Doğuş Şimşek led the next session, 'Solidarity against Racism among Migrants and Refugees: The Case of the United Kingdom and Turkey'. During a rally in Istanbul, she underlined the interconnectivity of refugee solidarity. She spoke about her encounters with racism and Islamophobia. She also stressed the significance of information and communication technology in refugee camps and its role in creating a virtual connection with their homeland.

Another session was on 'Is Protectionism Meant Only for Humans?' and was initiated by Anil Mistry and Anwesha Sengupta. Mr. Anil Mistry, a former poacher turned environmentalist, is one of the prominent voices advocating for the Sundarbans tiger's survival. The Sundarbans is the world's only coastal mangrove ecosystem with a thriving Bengal tiger population. Like the other 54 Sundarbans inhabited islands, Bali has suffered serious man-animal conflict during the previous decades. Mistry became a bridge between environmentalists, the forest department, and Sundarbans communities. And he introduced words like 'conservation' and 'biodiversity' into everyday conversations. His non-profit organisation 'Bali Wildlife Nature and Conservation Society' now works to promote conservation in Bali for the forest's health and the inhabitants' economic benefit.

In the afternoon, there was a book discussion with Jinat Rehana Islam, a school teacher by profession. Zeenat's book 'Lockdown-er Dinolipi' (Lockdown Diary) was a collection of Bengali women's stories and sufferings through the pandemic. She has been traveling the outskirts of Murshidabad in West Bengal of India to assist women from the low-income category to find work or start small businesses. Her works focus on the discrimination and persecution of women in society and show they have left their imprints on society after a courageous struggle against patriarchy.

Saravanan Nataraja led the second session in the afternoon, which focused on his 'Lived Experiences of Migration and Life in Camps.' He is a Sri Lankan refugee who arrived in India 30 years ago but has yet to obtain Indian citizenship. He described how Sri Lankan refugees in Tamil Nadu managed the coronavirus outbreak despite the difficult living conditions in camps. He brought up their concerns, such as citizenship, livelihood, education, and the Indian government's surveillance. He also outlined how the new Citizenship (Amendment) Bill had let down Sri Lankan Tamils. He further emphasised the need for India to have a comprehensive refugee policy. Finally, he remarked, "Only someone who has been a refugee for over thirty years can understand the sorrow of being a refugee for that long".

Pavel Ruzyak from the Czech Republic presented a documentary film. The documentary 'I Am Still Looking for You' told the story of Natasha, a girl born into an orphanage in Russia. Natasha was adopted by American parents and abandoned by her mother as a kid. She is returning to Russia for the first time to see old friends, caregivers, and the orphanage itself. The participants in the youth meet accompany her on this journey to hear her heartfelt narrative.

In the next session 'Sharing of Experiences', Yahiya V.U. shared a story of solidarity from an organisation that works with expatriates in Gulf countries and has a transnational network. During the period of pandemic, this organisation delivered food to the sick, those isolated due to illness, and those unexpectedly trapped in the lockdown. They provided home-grown grocery kits to those in need, transportation for sick people to hospitals, distributed medicines to patients, and provided quarantine facilities. The organisation's units were in charge of caring for the bodies of those who died due to Covid, organising chartered aircraft to bring individuals trapped in other nations home, and giving financial relief to the home country.

### **Ethics of Care**

The final day of the meet focused on the ethics of caring. Kazi Sharowar Hussain popularly known as Kazi Neel an acclaimed Miyah poet from Assam read out his poetry that spoke of the alienation in the land that is called home and how the National Register of Citizens (NRC) and the country's changing power balances have made the Miya poets aliens in their own homeland. During group discussion on 'Community, Region, Migration & Protectionism', Yahiya V.U. shared the story of his father's journey to the Gulf in the session. His father belonged to an ethnic Muslim community in Kerala. He migrated to the Gulf as an illegal migrant without a passport or any documents in the 1970s on a traditional goods vessel. He was a fifth-grade dropout when he was forced to leave for the United Arab Emirates as a teenager, and he spent almost his entire life, that is, 27 years, sacrificing his wishes so that his family could live a better life back home in India. He visits the home once every two years, carrying large boxes of imported gifts for family, friends, and relatives. The village's story is also not different; in every Muslim household, there is at least one Gulf migrant. It is a Gulf village or Gulf pocket where Gulf migrants are dominated and economically the villagers depend on Gulf remittance. Having a job in the Gulf has higher value and status in the community, whether clerical or housekeeping. Sheema Fatima spoke on the migrant labour scenario on Bhiwandi, a logistical hub near Mumbai that cater tirelessly to the demands of platform economy during the pandemic. Mostly migrant labourers from Bihar and UP come and work in these logistical hubs and often they work on seasonal basis like the time of the festivals when the demands are high and require additional labour. Md. Ilias Miah from Bangladesh detailed the ecological fragility of deltaic zones of Sunderbans in Bangladesh. The following session 'Worker Rights and Migration' Chandan Kumar, Sabir Ahmed and Sadekul Islam detailed how caring for the returnee migrant labour highlights the societal response of solidarity. Ankan Datta, presented his artwork titled 'Borders of Perimeter' and spoke on discrimination and his representation of migrant life through his artwork, installations and sculpting.

### Reflection on the Way Forward

The session included several minutes of reflection on extending and disseminating the discussion by way of dialogues at local and regional levels. Creation of platforms that would be able to take the dialogue forward region-wise in the country is vital, especially among grass-root level stakeholders for addressing social issues region-wise. It was highlighted that since re-integration of migrants go through myriad processes in different parts of India – devising a structured plan of discussion between political leader, migrants and international organisations. The organisation of dialogues also becomes important through government initiatives to be able to flag issues of local governance, cooperative and community services. It is essential to bring to the forefront the unsung actors and heroes who have struggled to provide aid, relief and protection in several forms in the battleground of the pandemic but have been left behind in the stories – raising daises for voicing their opinions through the narration of oral stories of the unsung heroes should be considered. Establishment of networks and forums for refugees for common regions require planning to facilitate discussions of bureaucrats with refugees, to generate awareness on economic opportunities and rights at Panchayati levels and local governance. Advocacy for involvement of international organisations for bridging gaps and taking stories outside India for international representation were also talked about in this session.

### Photographs from the Youth Meet 2022



*Inaugural Session*



*Session on Gender and Migration*



*Installation of art by Ankan Datta*



*Sessions in the Youth Meet*



*Sharing of work experiences in solidarity*



*Reflection on the way forward*



*Glimpses from Field Visit*



*Participants in the Youth Meet 2022*

## **List of Participants**

Ana Ćuković, *University of Vienna, Austria*

Anil Mistry, *Bali Nature and Conservation of Wildlife Society & Wildlife Protection Society of India-Sundarbans, India*

Ankan Datta, *India*

Anwasha Sengupta, *Institute of Development Studies Kolkata, India*

Binda Pandey, *GEFONT, Nepal*

Chandan Kumar, *Rashtriya Hamal Panchayat, India*

Doğuş Şimşek, *Kingston University London, UK*

Heather Marina Saenz, *University of Vienna, Austria*

Jinat Rehana Islam, *Raghunath Ganj High School-Murshidabad, India*

Kazi Neel, *India*

Manish Kumar Jha, *Tata Institute of Social Sciences-Mumbai, India*

Md. Ilias Miah, *Centre for Environment, Human Rights and Development Forum, Bangladesh*

Natasha Israt Kabir, *Bridge Foundation & Solidar Suisse, Bangladesh*

Nileema Ambekar, *PUKAR-Mumbai, India*

Pavel Ruzyak, *Czech Republic*

Rajesh Kharat, *University of Mumbai, India*

Renu Adhikari, *National Alliance of Women Human Rights Defenders, Nepal*

Sabir Ahamed, *Pratichi Trust, India*

Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhuri, *Rabindra Bharati University & CRG, India*

Sadekul Islam, *India*

Samata Biswas, *The Sanskrit College and University & CRG, India*

Saravana Natarajan, *Sri Lankan Refugee Minnur Camp, India*

Sheema Fatima, *Tata Institute of Social Sciences-Mumbai, India*

Vijiliya Antony, *ActionAid-Tamil Nadu, India*

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