



**Pushpanjali Trust**

*Mental Health matters*

PUSHPANJALI TRUST

# ANNUAL REPORT

2020/2021

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## **Vision**

A just and inclusive society where persons with mental disabilities are cared for and have opportunities for personal growth and fulfilment.

## **Mission**

To spread awareness about mental health and advocate for the rights of persons with mental disabilities, with focus on rehabilitation and integration in society.

## **About us**

Pushpanjali Trust is a Registered Charitable Trust based in Chandigarh. We are a rights-based voluntary organisation working in the areas of mental health and disability since 2018. We believe that people with mental health challenges have the 'right' and the 'abilities' to lead independent, fulfilling lives within their communities. We passionately advocate for inclusive assisted-living facilities in the community. Through close collaboration with mental health professionals, persons with mental disabilities, their friends and families, we endeavour to develop and promote a human-centred approach to mental well-being.

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## Message from our Mentor

**Keshav Desiraju**

**Former Union Health Secretary**

**Government of India**



I was first introduced to Aditya, Pushpanjali Trust, through an employee of The Banyan, Chennai. Aditya was passionate about the 'right to community living' as per The Mental Healthcare Act 2017, and wanted some more clarity on it. We spoke a few times on the phone, and then he visited me at my home in Chennai in December 2020.

Pushpanjali Trust seems determined to help people with mental disabilities in Chandigarh, Punjab and Haryana get their right to supported and sheltered accommodations as per the law. They have mobilized good public support and extensive media coverage for the cause. I wish them success in their endeavours.

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## From the Founder

**Aditya Vikram Rametra**

**Managing Trustee,**

**Pushpanjali Trust**



The year began with COVID 19 casting its long shadow of fear and uncertainty. The sudden jolt of a total lockdown meant a complete cessation of our activities at least for the first few months. Seeing ordinary people, especially the poor suffer badly for want of food and shelter, made us change our priorities temporarily. We started helping individuals and grassroots organisations, so people don't go hungry. Providing the basic necessities became our temporary goal.

By August 2020, as the situation improved, we switched gears and returned to our campaign for assisted living facilities for persons with mental disabilities in Chandigarh and neighbouring states. We realized that we needed more people and newer ways to be effective. This led us to form a new advocacy group called 'Citizens for Inclusive Living'. Gradually this group has grown to over 100 members comprising social workers, special educators, mental health professionals, persons with mental disabilities and their caregivers, and concerned citizens. Over 200 representations have been sent by the members to the President, Prime Minister, Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment, and officials of the UT Chandigarh Administration.

We made a conscious effort to engage with the media (social, print and TV) much more effectively. As a result, more than 25 write-ups on mental disabilities and rehabilitation were published in Hindi and English newspapers in Chandigarh. News 18 Punjabi TV Channel did an interview with Pushpanjali Trust on the World Mental Health Day, October 10.

This year we hired our second employee - a young psychologist. Since it was difficult to organize large physical meetings, we switched to the online mode. Over twenty Webinars and interactive sessions on mental health were conducted for persons with mental illness (PMI) and their caregivers, and the general public. Regular telephonic contact was also maintained with PMI and their caregivers, to check that no one falls through the cracks. Home visits were made if necessary.

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To beat the loneliness and boredom faced by the PMI, we came up with a novel idea 'Music in the Park'. We were lucky to find two wonderful young singers who happily volunteered for us. Thus began our weekly 'Music Gatherings' in the Fragrance Garden, Chandigarh. Fresh air, open skies and soulful singing in a beautiful park have been quite relaxing for the PMI and our staff, and we all eagerly look forward to these musical evenings!

We continued to expand our core activities - Peer Support Group for persons with mental illnesses, Caregivers Support Group, Awareness Campaigns, Research and Advocacy, and Media Outreach. We actively engaged a lot of volunteers (students, PMI and caregivers) for most of our activities. We are grateful for the support offered to us by our friends, volunteers and honorary advisors.

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## **Activities during 2020-21**

### **COVID Relief Work**

The complete lockdown led to a complete halt of our regular activities for the first few months. Seeing many, especially the poor, suffer for lack of food and shelter, we responded by temporarily changing our priorities and geared up for COVID relief. We identified some genuine grassroots organisations (across India) and some vulnerable individuals (in and around Chandigarh) and helped them with financial donations under the initiative, 'Helping Pandemic Sufferers'

Donations were given to the following grassroots organisations:

- 1.Helping Hands Charitable Trust, Mumbai
- 2.GOONJ, New Delhi
- 3.Swaraj Abhiyan, New Delhi
- 4.Aman Prayas – Leadership for Social Change, Jharkhand
- 5.School for Democracy, Rajasthan
- 6.Pryshth, Chandigarh
- 7.Sunderbans Social Development Centre, West Bengal

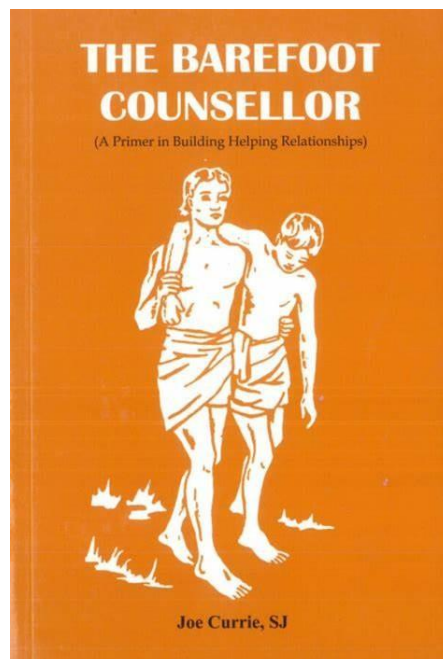
Donations were given to the following vulnerable individuals:

- 1.Ms Sheelu
- 2.Ms Saroj

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## Book Summary - 'The Barefoot Counsellor'

The difficult lockdown and its aftermath gave rise to a lot of anxiety and fear among many people, especially persons with mental disabilities and their families. There were a lot of enquiries for help and guidance. To learn some basic counselling techniques and self-help tips, Gurpreet, our Psychiatric-Social Worker, undertook a thorough study of the book, 'The Barefoot Counsellor' and wrote a summary for volunteers and interns. We found the book very useful and easy to understand. Here is the [web link](#).



**Author: Joe Currie, SJ**

**Published by: Asian Trading Corporation Bengaluru, India**



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### Write-ups for Punjabi media:

Gurpreet Singh, Psychiatric-Social Worker, used the downtime imposed by the sudden lockdown to write seven articles in Punjabi language keeping in view the rural population of Punjab. We are eagerly looking for a good media house to publish these articles. List of the articles written is as below:

List of articles written in Punjabi
1. Introduction to Mental Health: Relation between physical and mental health
2. Understanding Emotions, feelings, and concept of positive mental health
3. Common mental illnesses: symptoms, treatment
4. Severe Mental Illnesses: symptoms, treatment, rehabilitation
5. Therapeutic community: concept, experience of two Rehabilitation based NGOs of South India
6. Mental Health Care Act 2017: its important provisions
7. Rights of persons with Disabilities Act 2016: its important provisions

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## Needs Assessment Survey:

In September 2020, we conducted a needs assessment survey among 40 persons with severe mental illnesses and their families in Chandigarh. The objective of this survey was to know their needs at the present moment so we could help them or guide them for the best way forward.

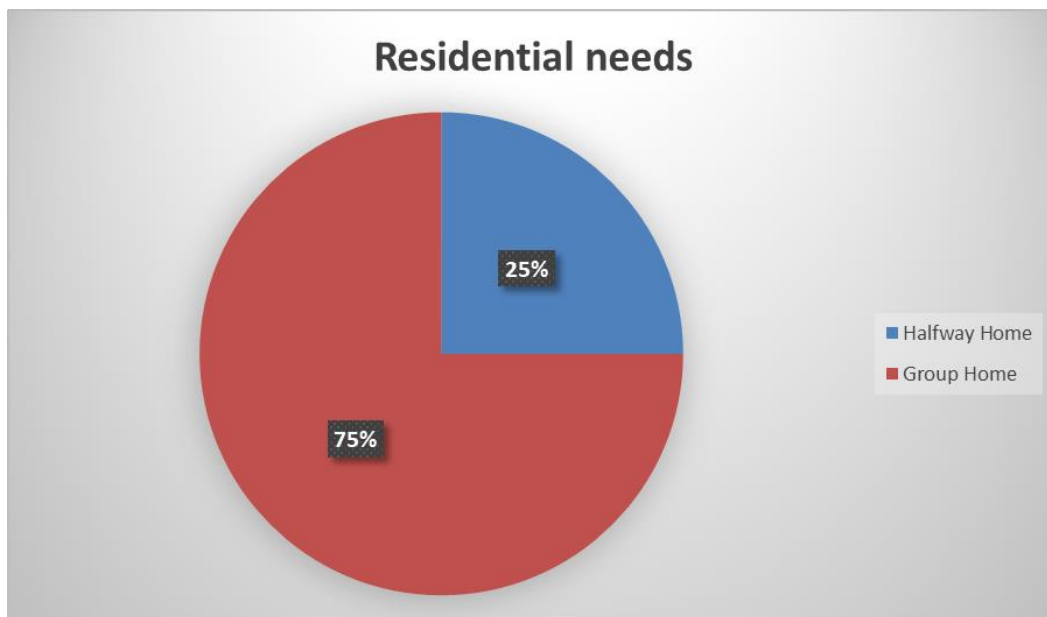
### The Survey revealed the following:

- 50% respondents required vocational training
- 25% respondents had treatment needs
- 40% respondents wanted to have regular counselling sessions and
- 80% respondents wanted a peer support group as they did not have any active friends' circle.

The second part of this survey was about the long-term residential needs of these persons with severe mental illnesses in Chandigarh. Many of the older parents were worried about the future of their wards.

### The second part of the survey revealed the following:

- 25% respondents required Half-Way Home facilities for short stay
- 75% respondents required a long-stay facility / Group Home



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## Campaign for Group Homes in Chandigarh:



*A meeting of caregivers for group home in Chandigarh*

Precipitated by the sudden death of two parents/ guardians of adults with mental illness, we restarted our campaign for assisted living facilities for persons with mental disabilities in Chandigarh with renewed vigour. Beginning in August 2020, we mobilized a lot of parents/ guardians, mental health professionals and concerned citizens for this cause. A flurry of e-mail representations was sent to the officials of the UT Chandigarh Administration.

## The birth of 'Citizens for Inclusive Living'



*A meeting of concerned citizens for setting up an advocacy group for mental health in Chandigarh.*

To make our voice heard, we realized that we needed more people and newer ways to be effective. This led us to form a new advocacy group called 'Citizens for Inclusive Living'. Gradually this group has grown to over 100 members comprising social workers, special educators, mental health professionals, persons with mental disabilities and their caregivers, and concerned citizens. During the year, over 200 representations were sent by

the members to the President, Prime Minister, Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment, and officials of the UT Chandigarh Administration.



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## Press Conference @ Indira Holiday Home, Chandigarh:

We organized a Press Conference on 'Release of Project Proposal on Community Living for Persons with Mental Disabilities in Chandigarh and Interaction with Affected Families, Professionals and Concerned Citizens' on Thursday, 24th December 2020 at Indira Holiday Home, Sector 24, Chandigarh. We had a discussion on the feasibility of a unique project of inclusive and integrated community living in a modern therapeutic village, something that UT Administration can be proud of!

The Project Proposal was sent to the Hon'ble Prime Minister, Hon'ble President, MP Chandigarh and Administrator of Chandigarh.



More news coverage articles are available on our website. Please [click here](#) to read more.



Photo: Manjeet Sehgal/India Today

"We cannot expect family members or relatives to take care of our children when we are not around for a long time. Where should we put our children? We hope the government helps us and holds the hands of her children," said Happy Arora.

This year we made a concerted effort to engage with the media (social, print and TV) much more effectively. As a result, more than 25 write-ups on mental disabilities and rehabilitation were published in Hindi and English newspapers in Chandigarh.

 [hindustantimes.com/chandigarh/ht-chandigarh-readers-take-this-smart-city-has-no-home-for-people-with-mental-health-issues/story-827b53e1aQSVvNgOH65gK.html](https://hindustantimes.com/chandigarh/ht-chandigarh-readers-take-this-smart-city-has-no-home-for-people-with-mental-health-issues/story-827b53e1aQSVvNgOH65gK.html)

Le Corbusier stated in his Statute of Land that Chandigarh would be a city offering all amenities to the poorest of the poor to lead a dignified life. It's time we included people with mental health issues in this list and helped them lead a dignified life even when their families are not around to help them. The provision of a daycare cum home for adults is not a luxury but a necessity and as per the new Mental Health policy 2017 -- a fundamental need. We can start small in one of the under-utilised buildings with the administration. The families of residents could pool in funds, nursing students and medical interns could be employed as a part of their training. Charities, NGOs and sponsors under CSR could help families in need of financial support.

A long time resident of Chandigarh, I am the father (and the only caregiver) of a person with mental illness. I am now nearly 80 years of age and suffering from multiple health problems. I know firsthand the pain and anguish of parents of persons with disability. The Chandigarh administration must pay heed to the following:

- The administrator should notify Indira Holiday Home as group home for persons with mental illness. The building is vacant and available. It will entail minimal or no cost to UT Chandigarh administration.
- An admissions committee comprising private and government psychiatrists, and social welfare department, Chandigarh, should be formed at the earliest for care of residents.

[indianexpress.com/article/cities/chandigarh/chandigarh-residents-ut-adviser-group-homes-mental-healthcare-act-6559718/](https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/chandigarh/chandigarh-residents-ut-adviser-group-homes-mental-healthcare-act-6559718/)

A person is sitting on a staircase, looking out a window. A book is on the wall.

A US citizen has written to UT Adviser Manoj Parida stating that her Chandigarh-based younger sister, who has a mental illness, resides with her parents who are now growing old and suffer from various ailments.

[illegible]

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## World Mental Health Day 10 October, 2020

A discussion about the urgent need for a group home in Chandigarh for persons with mental disabilities was streamed on a TV channel News 18 Punjab/Haryana/Himachal. Dr Simmi Waraich, Consultant Psychiatrist and Honorary Advisor Pushpanjali Trust, Mr. Aditya Vikram Rametra, Managing Trustee, Pushpanjali Trust and Mr. Gurpreet Singh, Psychiatric Social Worker, Pushpanjali Trust were part of this discussion. Many caregivers from our network also shared their emotional stories and expressed their pain for the future of their wards in the absence of a group home in a modern city like Chandigarh.

[Click here](#) to watch the full episode:



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## Official Meetings with Punjab government officials:

Pushpanjali Trust had filed a PIL (Public Interest Litigation) on 6th December, 2019, in the Punjab and Haryana High Court. The High Court vide CWP-PIL-252 of 2019 had issued directions to the states of Punjab and Haryana to frame a policy on Group Homes within three months from the receipt of a certified copy of the order.

Due to the COVID lockdown imposed in March 2020, there was a break in following up with the government authorities of both states. From August 2020, we started sending official reminders and requests for meetings to the concerned departments of both Punjab and Haryana.

The following meetings took place with Punjab government officials:

1. **24-09-2020:** Video conference attended by the Managing Trustee of Pushpanjali Trust and the following officials:
  - a. Principal Secretary, Social Security, Punjab
  - b. Director, Social Security, Punjab
  - c. OSD, Litigation, Punjab
  - d. Program Officer, Mental Health, Punjab
  - e. A few junior officials from concerned departments

The Agenda for discussion included:

- CWP-PIL No. 252 of 2019 to frame a policy for "Group Homes" as per the Mental Healthcare Act, 2017.
- Availability of expert staff for Group Homes. Availability of patients to be included.
- Legal provisions for Group Homes.
- Utilization of existing HR and infrastructure for Group Homes.

A very detailed discussion on the concept and dire need of Group Homes took place. The Managing Trustee of Pushpanjali Trust was asked to provide further information on 'needs assessment', service provisions, and other important aspects of Group Homes. As per the request, a detailed email was sent to the government authorities shortly thereafter.

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2. **11-12-2020**: Second Video conference attended by the Managing Trustee of Pushpanjali Trust and the following officials:

- a. Principal Secretary, Social Security, Punjab
- b. Director, Social Security, Punjab
- c. Director, Health & Family Welfare, Punjab
- d. OSD, Litigation, Punjab
- e. Program Officer, Mental Health, Punjab
- f. A few junior officials from concerned departments

The Agenda for discussion included:

- Nodal departments: Health & Family Welfare, Social Welfare/ Security, and Disabilities dept.?
- Involvement of stakeholders: PMIs, parents/ caregivers, mental health professionals, NGOs
- Role of SMHA: minimum standards and service guidelines for Group Homes
- Identification of land, budgetary provisions for 3 pilot districts?
- Management of Group Homes: Role of Govt. / NGO?

3. **18-01-2021**: Following these two video conferences, a **Speaking Order** was passed by the Principal Secretary, Health & Family Welfare, Govt. of Punjab, on 18th January, 2021, wherein the matter was referred to the Expert Committee constituted to draft the Rules under The Mental Healthcare Act, 2017

4. **15-02-2021**: The Managing Trustee of Pushpanjali Trust went and met the Principal Secretary, Health & Family Welfare, Govt. of Punjab, in his office and requested the officer to expedite the matter under consideration.



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## **Rehabilitation & Support:**

Rehabilitation and re-integration of adults with mental disabilities in society is of fundamental importance to the Pushpanjali Trust. Instead of providing rehabilitation services directly, our approach is one of enabling and empowering people so they could help themselves.

### **Peer Support Groups for PMI and their Caregivers**

This is an ongoing program. We had to resort to conducting more online Webinars because of the limitations imposed by COVID.

- **Peer Support for PMIs:**

Many adults with mental illnesses are languishing in their homes. Even though they are taking regular treatment, they suffer from loneliness and meaninglessness. The vocational and volunteer opportunities are extremely limited and there is massive stigma. We have consistently found that connecting such persons with each other has a therapeutic effect on their mental and physical health. They find empathy, camaraderie and mutual support.

- **Caregivers support network**

Just as persons with mental disabilities are dealing with their challenges and loneliness, so are their caregivers/ guardians. The caregivers continue experiencing fatigue, burnout in addition to loneliness and stigma. Having a support group of caregivers has a similar therapeutic effect on them - they find empathy, a sense of community and mutual support. They realize they are not alone; even more, they can lend support to each other, and receive help when the chips are down.

### **Telephonic consultations and home visits**

During and after the covid lockdown, a total of 50 families were in regular touch with our team. They had different queries and problems to discuss.

- **40 families had telephonic consultations with our team.**
- **22 Home visits were made, as per the needs assessments done by our team.**

## Online meetings / Webinars:

A total 13 webinars were conducted for persons with mental illnesses (PMIs) and 11 webinars were conducted for the caregivers. During the pandemic these webinars helped PMIs and caregivers to address their issues and they could get some support through these webinars. Some of these webinars are listed below:

List of Webinars with Caregivers	
1 "Caregiving Emotions: How to identify and cope" Speaker: Japneet Bakhshi, Psychologist	2 "Mental illness and marriage" Speaker: Dr Simmi Waraich Consultant Psychiatrist
3 "Role of counseling and therapy in long term rehabilitation" Speaker Dr. Adarsh kaur Psychologist Ex. PGI	4 "Interactive session for caregivers shared by Madhubala ji " (A caregiver of her daughter)
5 "Non compliance in schizophrenia" Speaker: Dr Simmi Waraich Consultant Psychiatrist	6 "Stress management techniques for caregivers" Speaker: Gurpreet Singh PSW & Nandini (Intern)

List of Webinars with PMI	
1 "Basic Social Skills " Speaker: Gurpreet Singh Psychiatric Social Worker	2 "Sleep Hygiene" Speaker: Gurpreet Singh PSW & Japneet Bakhshi Psychologist
3 "World Bipolar Day " Speaker: Gurpreet Singh & Interns	4 "Lets Discuss Schizophrenia" Speaker: Gurpreet Singh & Interns
5 "Right to community living from perspective of PMI" Speaker: Gurpreet Singh	6 "Mental Health Concerns in Covid" Speaker: Gurpreet Singh & Anoopinder Kaur

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## Orientation session with Panjab University students:

An online orientation session about Pushpanjali Trust, a mental health NGO, was conducted on the request of Centre for Social Work, Panjab University, Chandigarh. 30 students from the first-year batch of Social Work Department attended this session. They were curious to know about mental health and our work. Students were from various states of North India, majority of them from Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh. They had many queries about depression and anxiety. Only a few of them were aware of severe mental health disorders such as Schizophrenia and Bipolar disorder. Additionally, they asked questions about the three core areas of Pushpanjali Trust's work: Awareness, Advocacy and Rehabilitation. Areas of Advocacy and Rehabilitation were very new for them as they hadn't visited any mental health NGOs earlier. Some of them expressed interest in doing their monthly internship with the organization.

To conclude, field supervisor Mr. Prashant Sharma, Centre for Social Work, Panjab University, Chandigarh, thanked Pushpanjali Trust for giving students an opportunity to interact and learn from the work done by the organisation.



## 'Music in the Park'



The limitations imposed by COVID were particularly difficult for persons with mental disabilities, who were stuck at home with nothing to do and hardly any socialization. To beat the loneliness and boredom faced by the PMI, we came up with a novel idea - 'Music in the Park'. We were lucky to find two wonderful young singers – Harman and Mandeep - who happily volunteered for us. Thus began our weekly 'Music Gatherings' in the Fragrance Garden, Chandigarh. Fresh air, open skies and soulful singing in a beautiful park have been quite relaxing for the PMI and our staff, and we all eagerly look forward to these musical evenings!





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## High Court Interim Order:

### Compiling a new list of potential beneficiaries for Group Homes in Chandigarh

After repeated adjournments on account of COVID, we finally got a good interim order for our **PIL (Public Interest Litigation)** filed in early 2019 in the High Court for issuing directions to the UT Chandigarh Administration to frame a policy on setting up Group Homes within a set time frame. The **Court vide order dated 15.03.2021**, asked us to submit a fresh list of potential beneficiaries for Group Homes to UT Chandigarh Administration, and it sought a status report from the respondent authorities (UT Chandigarh Administration). As per the Court order, we initiated an intensive drive to prepare a new and comprehensive list of potential beneficiaries for Group Homes in Chandigarh (no mean task, given the limitations imposed by the pandemic!).

The fact that the Hon'ble High Court asked us to submit a fresh list of potential beneficiaries for Group Homes gave us an inkling that there is still hope for our cause!

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## Testimonials

I am a single mother and cancer survivor. My daughter has been suffering from Schizophrenia for the past 15 years. Last year, I joined a webinar for caregivers organized by Pushpanjali Trust. Since then, I am part of most of the activities of the Trust. The Psychiatric Social Worker and Psychologist of Pushpanjali Trust visited my house on my request, to motivate my daughter to participate in activities of daily living.

They have mobilized many parents like me into the ongoing campaign for group homes for persons with mental disabilities in Chandigarh. Otherwise being a single mother and senior citizen, it would have been so difficult for me to participate and contribute to the campaign. Elderly parents need someone who continuously keeps the motivation level up and doesn't let it go down, as such campaigns take time and energy. Pushpanjali Trust has been playing such a crucial role for all the caregivers of Chandigarh, Mohali and Panchkula.

Apart from this campaign, the Trust has helped us by creating a strong caregivers support network - people with whom I can discuss my problems and spend quality time out of the house environment.

I want to say thank you and wish Pushpanjali Trust good luck.

**Madhu Bala**

**(A caregiver)**

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## Testimonials

COVID lockdown period was very tough for all of us. There was no activity or work to keep us busy. I was desperately looking for a job as per my qualifications. But it was not easy just after the COVID first wave. Luckily, Pushpanjali Trust arranged a few students for me, to whom I had to teach basic English. It was a great opportunity for me and I successfully taught students for 3 months. It increased my motivation level.

After that Pushpanjali Trust even helped me to get part-time work in a good Cafe in Chandigarh, but unfortunately, I wasn't able to perform as per the expectations. But it gave me lessons for the future. Apart from this, I made some new friends from the Peer Support Group of PMIs run by Pushpanjali Trust. Now at least I have friends to spend some quality time with. Social and Musical evenings are my favourite as we all meet and enjoy that day.

Regular webinars organized by Pushpanjali Trust give us space to share our thoughts within a safe group. We discuss a number of topics and play group games. I feel very good being a part of this group.

### **[A Service User]**

[Many service users (persons with mental illnesses) are comfortable sharing their experiences but do not wish to reveal their names. We respect their choice.]

## Financial Statement for 2020-21

	Amount in Lakhs
<b>Assets</b>	
Fixed Assets	--
Loans Advances & Deposits	0.74
Cash & Cash Equivalents	50.18
	50.92
<b>Liabilities</b>	
Funds & Reserve	48.26
Loans & Deposits Unexpended Grants Creditors & Accruals	2.66
	50.92

	Amount in Lakhs
<b>INCOME</b>	
Donations	0.20
Other income	3.75
	3.95
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>	
Direct Program Activity	4.30
Administration	0.19
	4.49
Surplus for the year	(0.54)



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## Contact Details

**Head office:** H. No. 208, Sector 36-A, Chandigarh 160036

**Email Address:** pushpanjalitrust43@gmail.com

**Website:** Pushpanjalitrust.in

**Our Bankers:** Axis Bank, Sec-35, Chandigarh

IndusInd Bank, Sec-35, Chandigarh

**Trust Registration No:** DEL - PR26755 - 27122017  
(under The Indian Trusts Act)

**Tax benefits:** Donations made to the Trust are exempt under  
Section 80G (5)(vi) of the Income Tax Act, vide  
ref. No. DELHI/80G/2018-19/A/10092



**Pushpanjali Trust**

*Mental Health matters*