

# TRANSFORM NEWSLETTER # 5

JULY - DECEMBER 2023

## WELCOME TO THE "TRANSFORM" STUDY!

### Editorial

In the shadowed corners of urban slums, mental health crisis is silently taking its toll. Overcrowded, unhealthy, and hazardous living conditions contribute to high levels of stress, anxiety, and depression among residents. For those already grappling with mental illness, these environments can be devastating.



The TRANSFORM project is a multifaceted initiative aimed at enhancing access to care for Serious Mental Disorders (SMD) in the slums of Dhaka. The primary objective is to improve access to biomedical care for individuals suffering from SMDs in slum areas. Through a collaborative approach that involves various Stakeholders, including Traditional and Faith-Based Healers (TFHs), Primary Health Care Practitioners, Mental Health Professionals, and Community Health Workers (CHWs). A crucial aspect of the project is to enhance the skills and capacity of TFHs and CHWs. This includes training them to identify symptoms of SMDs, provide initial support, and refer individuals to specialized mental health services such as the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) and Hospital.

We completed Pilot Training Programs for Community Health Workers (CHWs) and Traditional and Faith-Based Healers (TFHs). These trainings were designed to test and refine training manuals that are culturally specific and effective for identifying and referring individuals with SMDs to appropriate care facilities. We used a combination of reflection, discussion, role-playing, and storytelling approach to ensure comprehensive training. This participatory approach aims to build the capacity of CHWs and TFHs to recognize and refer SMD cases effectively.

The Pilot Training Programs were held in Mirpur, Dhaka, and facilitated by prominent mental health experts from various national institutions. This Pilot Training Program helped to develop and test comprehensive training materials and manuals.

I believe the community-based collaborative approach for practitioners such as TFHs and CHWs with the project aim of providing training to create a well-bridging for the gap between biomedical mental health care and traditional practices.

Dr. Tanjir Rashid Soron

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### Program Activities

#### Training Module, Message, and Material Development

#### *Co-Developing the Training Module: Writing Workshop with Religious Leaders, Traditional Healers, and Community Health Workers*



Co-Developing the Training Module: Writing Workshop with Religious Leaders, Traditional Healers

As a part of our work package-WP2 activities organized "Co-Developing the Training Module: Writing Workshop" with the Religious Leaders and Traditional Healers on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2023 and the Community Health Workers on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2023 at T&T Adarsha Girls' High School,

Mohakhali, Dhaka. Dr. Tanjir Rashid Soron, Principal Investigator of the TRANSFORM- Bangladesh, welcomed and conducted this writing workshop. The workshops aimed to create a training module tailored for TFHs and CHWs to enhance their ability to identify and refer individuals with Serious Mental Disorders to appropriate mental health services. Traditional and Faith-Based Healers are often the first point of contact for the people who are facing some sorts of mental health issues and serve as spiritual counselors for the communities. Also, Community Health Workers are important in providing information and creating awareness for improving the current situation in the community.

The objectives of this workshop were to ensure the content is relevant and comprehensive, place, and day for conducting the training sessions, and streamline the process of referring patients from Korail slum to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) and Hospital.



Co-Developing the Training Module: Writing Workshop with Community Health Workers

A combination of Reflection, Discussion, and Synthesis (RDS) methodology was followed in the workshops, which led the participants to follow through with the presentation, discussion, question-answer, group work, and group presentations. The workshops were attended by twenty-eight participants, among them TFHs 09 and CHWs 19.

## Expert Group Meeting

As part of the ongoing efforts under the TRANSFORM-Bangladesh project on September 11, 2023, an Expert Group Meeting was held at the Telepsychiatry Research and Innovation Network (TRIN) Limited Office at Banglamotor, Dhaka. The objective of the meeting was to review the draft training manuals for the Traditional and Faith-based healers and Community Health Workers and Medicine Sellers to submit for the upcoming stakeholder’s meeting.

A draft version of the training manual was shared with experts for feedback and validation. The manuals are designed to help CHWs and TFHs identify and refer persons who have Serious Mental Disorders to biomedical care. The discussion focused on fine-tuning the content of the training manual. Beside this, an important topic of discussion was health economics, where the experts explored ways to link the economic burden of untreated SMDs to the broader health landscape, emphasizing the need for cost- effective interventions and the integration of mental health services into primary care.



Expert Group Meeting

On this meeting experts also discussed the ways to collect data from NIMH after the initiation of intervention.

Furthermore, there was a strategic discussion on how to scale up the TRANSFORM project, expanding its reach beyond the initial pilot areas and ensuring that more communities can benefit from improved mental health awareness and care. This Expert Group Meeting marked an important milestone in the advancement of the TRANSFORM-Bangladesh project.



Expert Group Meeting

### Expert Group and Stakeholders Discussion Meeting

Mental health experts highlighted the need to ensure access to care for people with Serious Mental Disorders in slums in Bangladesh to build a sound and healthy nation.

The country's renowned mental health experts mentioned mental health gap in Bangladesh is a well-established fact, access to care for mental health is insufficient and it is acute for the vulnerable and marginalized people suffering from mental disorders, especially those are slum dwellers in Dhaka.

This expert group and stakeholders discussion meeting was held on November 30, 2023. Dr. Tanjir Rashid Soron, Principal Investigator, the TRANSFORM-Bangladesh shared the ethnographic research findings and two draft training modules developed for the Traditional and Faith-Based Healers and Community Health Workers. Dr. Soron shared his vision to co-develop the training manual.

As a part of this vision, the TRANSFORM-Bangladesh is working to develop a culture-specific, effective, and acceptable training manual for the Traditional and Faith-Based Healers and Community Health Workers of the slum community.

People of the slum community are used to going to Faith-Based Healers and without incorporating them in the mental health service



Expert Group and Stakeholders Discussion Meeting





system, it is not possible to involve people in a Biomedical treatment system. If we can train them regarding mental health problem screening and identification and referral system, it may bring a positive change in mental health treatment. He also mentioned the importance of evidence-based research, intervention, and scale-up to learning.

For the two groups of create a sustainable impact by providing training and supervision to the Traditional and Faith-Based Healers, Community Health Workers and Medicine Sellers. The Program was graced by representatives from national and international organizations, and faculty members from different university professionals.

### Pilot Training Program with CHWs and TFHs

We conducted two Pilot Training Programs with Community Health Workers (CHWs) and Traditional and Faith-Based Healers (TFHs) as part of training manual development.



Pilot Training Program with CHWs



Pilot Training Program with TFHs

The Pilot Training aimed to test the feasibility of content and facilitation approaches. The three days long Pilot Training Programs were started on December 2023 at Mirpur for Community Health Workers and Traditional and Faith-Based Healers.

The TRANSFORM-Bangladesh aims to increase access to biomedical care by developing a collaborative approach among Traditional and Faith-Based healers, Primary Health Care Practitioners, Mental Health Professionals, and Community Health Care Workers. It is also working to develop culture-specific, effective, and acceptable training manuals for the Traditional and Faith-Based Healers and Community Health Workers of the slum community. It is expected that the skills and capacity of TFHs and CHWs will be

enhanced through comprehensive training. They will be able to identify SMDs and be sensitized enough to play a positive role in referring the SMD-identified persons in Korail to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) and Hospital.

## Capacity Building Initiatives

### Celebration of World Mental Health Day 2023

On 10<sup>th</sup> October 2023 Telepsychiatry Research and Innovation Network (TRIN) Limited, organized a workshop titled "Self-Care Workshop on Mental Health and Well-Being" to celebrate and support the mental health of office staff under the TRANSFORM- Bangladesh project. The workshop theme was "Mental Health is a Universal Human Right," emphasizing the importance of mental health care for everyone, everywhere. The workshop was designed to educate, engage, and empower office staff with valuable insights and practical self-care techniques to enhance their mental well-being. The team gained a deeper understanding of mental health and the importance of self-care. Employees felt empowered to incorporate self-care practices into their daily routines and advocate for mental health rights. Many participants developed personal action plans to maintain and improve their mental well-being.

Dr. Tanjir Rashid Soron discussed universal human rights and the TRANSFORM project. The phrase "Mental health is a universal human right" has emphasized the importance of ensuring, regardless of the slum community's socio-economic status or living conditions, access to mental health care and support. This principle is particularly applicable in slum communities, where residents often face challenges that significantly impact their mental well-being. In this regard, the TRANSFORM project has taken comprehensive strategies for mental health in slum communities by implementing certain activities, such as awareness and education, access to services, support systems, integrated care and advocacy, etc.

This self-care workshop was inaugurated by mental health expert Prof. Dr. Mohammad Golam Rabbani, ex-chairperson of the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) and Hospital, and conducted by Dr. Tanjir Rashid Soron, Principal Investigator, the TRANSFORM-Bangladesh Project.



Self-Care Workshop on Mental Health & Well-Being



Self-Care Workshop on Mental Health & Well-Being

## Dissemination and Publication

### E-Poster Presentation at the 23<sup>rd</sup> World Congress of Psychiatry (WCP 2023)

The 23<sup>rd</sup> World Congress of Psychiatry (WCP 2023) E-poster presentation event took place in Vienna, Austria, from September 28 to October 1, 2023. This event featured digital presentations of research findings, case studies, and clinical observations in poster format. Key topics included mental health interventions, the latest advancements in psychiatric treatment, and strategies for promoting and preventing mental health issues.

The TRANSFORM-Consortium an e-poster entitled “Co-Developing a Training Module for Collaborative Identification of Serious Mental Illness for Traditional and Faith-Based Healers” through the online platform, under the TRANSFORM Project. The poster was displayed electronically on conference screens, engaging attendees with the transformative efforts in the Korail slum.



E-Poster Presentation at the 23<sup>rd</sup> World Congress of Psychiatry (WCP 2023)



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