

# TRANSFORM NEWSLETTER # 3

JULY -DECEMBER 2022

## WELCOME TO THE "TRANSFORM" STUDY!

### Editorial

Can we bridge the mental health treatment gap with collaborative approach?

In the urban hustle, the mental well-being of marginalized communities, particularly slum dwellers, is often over shadowed. These individuals grapple with socio-economic challenges such as

overcrowded living conditions, lack of basic amenities, limited healthcare access, and economic instability, creating a toxic mix that breeds unnoticed and untreated mental health issues. Stigma surrounding mental health is a primary concern in these multicultural slums, perpetuated by deep-rooted cultural beliefs and societal norms, leading to the underreporting and neglect of mental health problems. Additionally, the lack of access to mental health services exacerbates the issue, and information gaps limit slum dwellers' ability to seek professional help, moreover; for serious mental disorder case they usually seek service from traditional and faith-based healers. In Bangladesh, inadequate government health facilities and community-based mental health clinics further hinder affordable and accessible services.

Addressing the lack of information, education, and awareness is pivotal in transforming the narrative around mental health. Breaking down stigmas and promoting awareness is crucial in fostering a culture of openness, empowering individuals to recognize and seek help for mental health issues without fear of judgment. It is time to bridge the gap, ensuring that mental health is a right, not a privilege, irrespective of socio-economic status. The TRANSFORM project is developing an integrated approach to address SMDs through identification and skills development of traditional and faith-based healers, community health workers and medicine sellers who works as gatekeepers for the SMD patients in urban slums.



Dr. Tanjir Rashid Soron

### Table of Contents

	Pages
Program Activities	1
Community and Stakeholder Engagement	4
Capacity Building	5
Program Coordination and Management	5

### Program Activities

#### Completion of Data collection for Work Package-1

A total of 45 Key Informants Interviews (KII), 08 Natural Group Interviews (NGI) and 10 Observation were conducted in Korail Slum, to collect ethnographic data, under WP1. The ethnographic data collection was completed on 15th November 2022.

These Key Informant Interview (KII) consisted of interview from multiple groups; like Traditional Healer, Faith-based Healer, People lived with Personal Experiences, Community Health Workers, and Caregivers. As per study protocol, the community field workers (local community people) identified the eligible informants followed by a screening criterion. All the key informant's interview were conducted separately in a quiet place within the community and Group Interviews in natural settings. To collect the information, the team used pre-tested and locally contextualized interview guidelines and group discussion guidelines.

The Field Research Team was equipped with adequate skills. All team members completed two months of orientation session on qualitative interview techniques, rapport building with the community, standard procedure of conducting interviews, human subject research and ethical consideration. Dr. Tanjir Rashid Soron, local PI of the TRANSFORM-Bangladesh conducted most of the sessions and mentored the training sessions.



Photo 1: Local PI visited Korail slums

### Initiation of Pre-intervention Data Collection from NIMH



Photo 2: Pre-intervention data collection from NIMH

The TRANSFORM-BANGLADESH initially recruited two field Research Assistants and deployed them under the supervision of a Research Assistant (RA) to start collection of the preintervention data from the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH).

In the November 2022 to December 2022 period around 400 patients were screened to identify the cases healing from our study site. Among them about 1 % cases of SMD were referred from korail were screened and preintervention Data were

collected on trial basis. data were recorded from the outdoor patients of NIMH. Primarily the field research assistants screen the patient to identify the patients healing from Korail. The data were collected using ODK platform.

This pre intervention data collection training was conducted by Jilka Sagar senior research fellow of the TRANSFORM study, Warwick medical school through online platform.

### Prof. Dr. Swaran Singh's Bangladesh Visit

The Warwick University Professor Dr. Swaran Singh, Principal Investigator of the TRANSFORM Project visited Bangladesh field site from 10 August 2022 to 15 August 2022. He visited Bangladesh to understand the field site and the potentiality of collaborating with key stakeholders and policymakers on Serious Mental Disorders (SMD).

During this period, he visited the TRANSFORM field office at Korail and the Telepsychiatry Research and Innovation Network Ltd. Office at Bangla Motor, Dhaka. He also observed a full interview session of one of the key informant interviews and visited a case of SMD house at Korail slum, talked with caregivers and family members. A discussion meeting was held with Work Package 1: The ethnographic research team lead and his field research team to share the observations and learning as well as lessons learned by the field team during the interviews with community people.

During his period of visit he went to the Korail field office on 10th August 2022 Field Office Visit

- Observe the Interview and provide feedback to the research team.
- Visit a case of SMD house at Korail slum and talk with caregivers and family members
- Visit NIMH
- Bangladesh Clinical Psychological Society, at Dhaka University
- Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) academic session
- Visit Korail field Office of TRANSFORM-Bangladesh
- Stakeholder meeting



Photo 3: Visit National Institute of Mental Health



Photo 4: Visit Bangladesh Sheikh Mujib Medical University

During the visit, he also met with different stakeholders including Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU), National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) and Hospital, Dhaka and Bangladesh Clinical Psychological Society (BCPS), Dhaka University to explore the scope of working with SMDs and the TRANSFORM Project. He met mental health professionals and renowned psychiatrists including



Photo 5: Professor Singh with young mental health professionals at BSMMU



Photo 6: Professor Singh with field research team at TRANSFOR-Field Office, Korail

Prof Dr. Bidhan Ranjan Rai Poddar, Director and Dr. Helal Uddin Ahmed, Associate Professor at the NIMH, Professor Nahid Mahjabin Morshed, Chairman, Department of Psychiatry of BSMMU and Dr. Muhammad Kamruzzaman Mazumder, President, BCPS and shared his thoughts with them. Dr, Singh also conducted an academic session on SMD with the postgraduate students of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mijub Medical University (BSMMU) and shared contemporary thoughts on SMD.



## Community and Stakeholder Engagement

### TRANSFORM- Bangladesh Stakeholder Meeting

Dr. Singh also participated TRANSFORM Bangladesh Stakeholder coordination meeting held at Hotel Holiday Inn, 23 Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed Sarani, Tejgaon, Dhaka where the TRANSFORM NGO partner Bangladesh Center for Communication Programs (BCCP) and NGOs working in Mental health like Save the Children, Bangladesh, World Health Organization (WHO), Government Stakeholders like Non-Communicable Diseases Control (NCDC), Directorate of Health Service (DGHS), Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Medical University (BSMMU), and Mental Health Professional Associations like Bangladesh Clinical Psychological Society representative participated.



Photo 7: Stakeholder's meeting



Photo 8: Stakeholder's meeting

Local Principal Investigator Dr. Tanjir Rashid Soron led the discussion session where the TRANSFORM Project objects and implementation process was shared, and open discussion was held regarding current mental health policy, urban mental health service facilities, social stigma and policy-related barriers and also the context of working with slum people in Bangladesh. Dr. Singh also shared the learning from Ibadan, Nigeria.

## Visit to the Extended Outpatient Department of the NIMH at Korail by the Local PI

Dr. Soron, Local PI, TRANSFORM-Bangladesh visited the out-patient departments of NIMH at Korail slum several times to understand the patient flow, health-seeking behavior of the Korail community. The out-patient services were scheduled on the last Saturday of each month in Ershad Govt. Primary School of Korail Slum.



Picture 9: Extended OPD of NIMH at Korail

## Capacity Building

### Training on ODK to the Research Assistant (RA) and Field Research Assistant (FRA)

A day-long online training was organized by the TRANSFORM-Bangladesh on November 1, 2022, for the RA and FRA who will be involved in preintervention surveillance data collection. The ODK tools were developed by the TRANSFORM-UK team. The technical session was facilitated by Jilka Sagar- Senior Research Fellow, TRANSFORM study from Warwick University and ethical issues of data collection from patients or caregivers were presented by Dr. Tanjir Rashid Soron, PI, TRANSFORM-Bangladesh.

## Program Coordination and Management

### Learning Sharing and Adaptation- Weekly meeting with the Field Research Team

A weekly meeting was prescheduled usually on each Tuesday on Work Package-1 progress under the TRANSFORM-Bangladesh. The Local PI and Project Manager Participated in the meeting at the TRANSFORM-Bangladesh Field Office at Korail. Field research team members shared Data collection progress, challenges faced during interviews; managing community people and relevant issues and threats in the meeting. Local PI guides them with necessary actions for the smooth running of the project. A total of fifteen (15) meetings were held during this period.

## Editorial Board

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