

# TRANSFORM NEWSLETTER # 4

JANUARY - JUNE 2023

## WELCOME TO THE "TRANSFORM" STUDY!

### Editorial

In a world where mental health is often stigmatized and neglected, the need for accessible, comprehensive mental health care services has never been more pressing. For individuals living in underprivileged areas, particularly in slums within low- and middle-income countries, the challenges in accessing mental health care is a compound of poverty, limited resources, and societal



barriers. We need innovative low-cost approaches and engage non-expert primary health care professionals with effective training to provide basic mental health care for all. In quest of developing our local need-based, widely accepted, effective and saleable widely accepted mental health training program for primary healthcare workers, we started TRANSFORM in November 2021. The TRANSFORM-Transforming Access to Care for Serious Mental Disorders in Slum project, is funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR), UK. In Bangladesh, we are now in the phase of codeveloping the training manual and piloting the training program for traditional and faith-based healers and community health workers.

We started with ethnographic research to identify community perception of mental health, their health-seeking behavior and the challenges and opportunities to bio-medical care. TRANSFORM's commitment to co-design and co-development has been instrumental in ensuring that the training program is culturally sensitive, contextually relevant, and responsive to the specific needs of the Korail community. The team's dedication to this participatory approach has resulted in a training curriculum that resonates with the community, increasing the likelihood of its successful implementation and long-term impact. To make the training program co-designed and co-developed, we conducted five (05) co-design workshops with people with lived experiences, their caregivers, community health workers, traditional and faith-based healers and medicine sellers. We also learned a lot from the community engagement meetings with teachers of the Korail and community health workers of different national and international organizations working at the slum.

TRANSFORM's work is a testament to the transformative power of collaboration, empathy, and unwavering commitment. It is a beacon of hope for the underserved, demonstrating that with collective effort and a shared vision, we can break down barriers, dismantle stigma, and build thriving communities where mental health is valued, understood, and supported.

Dr. Tanjir Rashid Soron

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### Program Activities

#### Co-designing and Co-developing the Training Module for the TFHs and CHWs as part of Work Package -2

The TRANSFORM team started working on co-developing a comprehensive training module for Traditional and Faith-Based Healers (TFH) and Community Health Workers as a part of work package 2. The purpose of developing the module is to enhance the knowledge and skills and transform the attitude and behavior of the traditional and faith-based healers, community health workers including the medicine sellers with regards to identifying individuals suffering from serious mental disorders and refer them to the biomedical care.

The module have been developed followed by a meticulous process under the leadership of local PI Dr. Tanjir. Based on the ethnographic research and service delivery mapping at Korail and ongoing codesigning workshops, literature reviews of the local and international research, guidelines and manuals, we are drafting two different manuals with the same key domains for the training. After a thorough analysis of participant feedback, incorporation of expert suggestions, and consideration of sociocultural acceptability, occupation, and geographical context, finally developed the training manuals. In addition to the training manuals, the team is working to design and develop the supervision and monitoring plan for the training program.

Our Research Assistants and Field Research Assistants are working at the National Institute of Mental Health to collect the Preintervention data.

## Training Module, Massage and Material Development

### Co-design Workshop: Involving Stakeholders in Designing Training Module

A series of Co-design workshops were organized between May and June 2023 to engage community stakeholders in the designing of training modules for community health workers (CHW) and traditional and faith-based healers (TFH). A total of 46 community members attended 5 workshops including 12 traditional and faith-based healers, 12 local medicine sellers, 12 individuals with lived experience,



Photo 1 Co-design workshop with religious leaders



Photo-2 Co-design Workshop with Medicine sellers at Korail

8 caregivers of people with SMD, and 7 community health workers. To ensure the participation and representation of the community, the project considered the participant's age, gender, occupation, and geographical setting.

Dr. Soron and Dr. Kazi Shammin Azmery led the workshops in accordance with a standardized Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) and a structured topic guide. The workshops adhered to a methodology encompassing Resource-based design, Storytelling, a Women-centered approach, and a Combination of Reflection, Discussion, and Synthesis (RDS). This approach guided participants through various stages of the workshop, including presentations, open discussions, question-and-answer sessions, group work, and group presentations. The overarching goal of these workshops was to create a comprehensive training module for TFH

as part of Work Package 2. workers. To ensure the participation and representation of the community, the project considered the participant's age, gender, occupation, and geographical setting.

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Photo 3 Co-design workshop with caregivers



Photo 4 CO-design workshop with CHWs

## Community and Stakeholder Engagement

### Sensitization Meeting with School Teachers

The TRANSFORM Bangladesh conducted a stakeholder meeting with the Teachers on March 06, 2023, at T&T Adarsha Girls High School in Mohakhali, Dhaka which is located near by the Korail Slum. A total of 14 teachers including Head teachers from 10 schools, who are working in Korail slums joined in the meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to inform and sensitize teachers regarding TRANSFORM Project. Dr. Tanjir Rashid Soron, Principal Investigator (PI), provided a comprehensive overview of the objectives of the



Photo 5 Meeting with Teachers working at Korail Slum

TRANSFORM Project and underscored the pivotal role that various stakeholder, particularly teachers, can play in realizing the project's goals. According to Dr. Soron, the primary objective of this project is twofold: first, to establish a nurturing and enabling environment where individuals grappling with severe mental illness can access evidence-based medical care, and second, to create awareness about SMD within underserved communities, specifically the residents of the Korail slums in Dhaka city. He also said the project aims to foster collaboration among diverse stakeholders, including traditional and faith-based



healers, community health workers, medicine sellers, primary health care providers mental health professionals and other biomedical practitioners. The overarching aim is to develop innovative strategies that enable these healthcare professionals to collaborate seamlessly in delivering essential services to individuals coping with serious mental illness.

In this meeting the Project team also tried to understand the view of community people regarding Serious Mental Disorders (SMD) and received their feedback on how to develop a participatory training module for traditional and faith-based healers and community health workers. During our open discussions, several critical issues regarding mental health care in the Karail slum have come to the forefront, including inadequacy of mental health care services and negative attitude of the community to mental health, maintaining privacy within families dealing with mental illness and social stigma attached to mental illness which often deter individuals from seeking the help they require. Moreover, cultural norms and customary beliefs play a significant role in shaping attitudes towards mental health and acceptance of services from faith-based healers and medicine sellers emerged as an intriguing aspect of the conversation.

**Community Engagement Meeting with Health Workers of different NGOs**

Another community engagement meeting with the representatives of NGOs working at Korail Slum was held on March 14, 2023, at the T&T Adarsha Girls High School in Mohakhali, Dhaka. The meeting were organized by Bangladesh Center for Communication Programs (BCCP) under the TRANSFORM Project with an objective to inform, sensitize NGOs workers regarding TRANSFORM Project. NGOs are working in the community of Korail for different issues like primary health care, WASH, nutrition, maternal and child health service, disability, Autism, Early Childhood Development, micro credit, skills development, GBV etc. Dr. Soron shared the objectives of the TRANSFORM Project is to establish a nurturing and enabling environment where individuals grappling with severe mental illness can access evidence-based medical care and create awareness about SMD within the residents of the Karail slums in Dhaka city. He emphasized also that the government health structure is well organized in the rural



Bangladesh but highlighted the deficiency in urban areas, particularly among those residing in slums. In Bangladesh, only 8 out of 100 getting access to evidence-based medical care for mental health which much lower for Slum dwellers.

In this meeting NGO workers shares their experiences and views dealing with people having mental disorders or illness, especially the norms and values perceived by the community at Korail slum. Most of them agreed that taboos related to mental health strongly prevailed in the community, as a consequences community people always tried to hide family members mental problems related to

information with outer community, even do not seek medical treatment due to fear of disclosing the information. It is more acceptable to the community to describe the mental health case as possessed by jinn than mental health patient and many of them seeking service from traditional and religious based healer or taking medicine from the local medicine sellers. The participants had also some suggestions; create awareness regarding mental health, aware them about taboos and benefit of medical treatment, engage community volunteer and stakeholders, develop a referral system for patient, assist service seekers at point of service (national mental health institute and hospitals) that might create positive change in the community for treatment of the serious mental health disorder patients.

### **Engaging Community with TRANSFORM: Mental Health Awareness Session with Youths at Korail**

The TRANSFORM project created interest in the community and stakeholders. At a request of community-based organization, Vialisa Foundation, the project organized a mental health awareness session with 20 adolescent boys and girls, at Vialisa Foundation technical school campus, dated 20 May 2023. To engage the participants effectively, the TRANSFORM team opted for a holistic approach. Interactive activities, group discussions, and storytelling sessions were carefully designed to create an open and non-judgmental space for the youths to express their thoughts and concerns about mental health. It was a revelation to witness how their initial hesitation melted away, replaced by genuine interest and empathy.



Photo 6: Mental health awareness meeting at Korail

Expert speakers in the field of mental health, Dr. Tanjir Rashid Soron, Psychiatrist and Principal Investigator, TRANSFORM Bangladesh site provided valuable insights, sharing their knowledge on the importance of emotional well-being and the strategies to maintain it. He discussed signs and symptoms of SMD, social stigma and barriers related to mental health and also the role of community representatives and stakeholders at different levels in the slum. Stories of resilience and recovery were shared, painting a vivid picture of hope and possibility for those struggling with mental health challenges. Besides that, participants shared their observations and experiences regarding SMD patients in their community. The highlight of the day was the creation of a collective expression of the participants' thoughts and emotions regarding mental health.

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## **Capacity Building**

### **Training on SMD for Young Professionals: Enhancing skill of young professionals on SMDs**

A 03 day-long training on SMD was held from June 17 to 19, 2023 at the conference room of the TRIN Office, Bangla Motor, Dhaka. The participants were young professionals (doctors), post graduate students of BSMMU and TRANSFORM Bangladesh site team members. The primary aim of this training initiative



Photo 7: Training on SMD with Young medical professionals

was to enhance the skills of young professionals in addressing Serious Mental Disorders (SMDs). The inaugural ceremony was honored by Dr. Prof. M G Rabbani, Director of NDED, who delivered insightful opening remarks. Dr. Tanjir Rashid Soron, provided an overview of the TRANSFORM project goal, specific objectives and approach of addressing SMD for urban poor.

The training sessions were diligently led by an array of experienced experts, including Dr. Helal Uddin Ahmed, Associate Professor, Department of Child Adolescent and Family Psychiatry at the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH); Dr. Rahanul Islam, Resident Physician, Central Drug Addiction Treatment Center; Dr. M M Jalaluddin, Associate Professor at the National Institute of Neuroscience (NINS); and Kamal Uddin Ahmed Chowdhury, Professor, Department of Clinical Psychology at Dhaka University. The training covered a range of critical topics including Mental disorders in the context of Bangladesh, the concept of hallucination and delusion, essential care and practice, Psychoses, Psychotherapy in SMD, and Referral and follow-up process for SMD cases. On the third day, Dr. Swaran Sing, PI of TRANSFORM joined the closing session from UK via the Zoom platform. Prof. Nahid Mahjabin Morshed, Chairman of the Department of Psychiatry at BSMMU, delivered the closing speech and presided over the certificate distribution ceremony. Participants received their well-earned certificates from Prof. Nahid Mahjabin Morshed and Dr. Tanjir Rashid Soron.



Photo 8: Training on SMD with Young medical professionals



Photo 9: Certificate giving of SMD training participants

### Expert Group Meeting: Insights from Technical Experts on TFH and CHW training module

The TRANSFORM Technical Expert committee regularly meets to support and guide developing the training module and over project scientific aspects.



As a process, the local PI of the TRANSFORM Project shared the finding based on the transcriptions and translations of all the Training, The Expert Group Meeting was held on 15 June 2023 at the TRIN Office, Dhaka, Bangladesh.



Photo 11: Meeting with experts for validation of Training module



Photo 12: Expert group meeting

During the meeting, a robust discussion unfolded as the experts shared their insights and recommendations concerning the training module. They emphasized the need to make the training more engaging by incorporating role play and activity-based methods rather than relying solely on lectures. Furthermore, they suggested keeping each session concise, attractive, and interactive to maximize participant engagement.

The experts included Prof. Dr. MD Golam Rabbani Ex Director NIMH, Prof. Nahid Mahjabin Morshed, Chairman of the Department of Psychiatry at BSMMU; Dr. Rahanul Islam, Resident Physician at the Central Drug Addiction Treatment Center; Dr. M M Jalal Uddin, Associate Professor at the National Institute of Neuroscience (NINS); and Kamal Uddin Ahmed Chowdhury, Professor from the Department of Clinical Psychology at Dhaka University. These valuable comments and suggestions were thoughtfully integrated into the training module.

## Development of Communication Materials: Poster and Banner, Newsletter

The Community engagement and communication message and material development partner, Bangladesh center for communication Programs (BCCP) supported to develop 02 Poster and 01 Baner considering the aims of the project; improve access to biomedical care for persons with SMDs and to improve outcomes for persons with SMDs at Korail Slum, Dhaka.



Photo 13: Poster on Health service facility

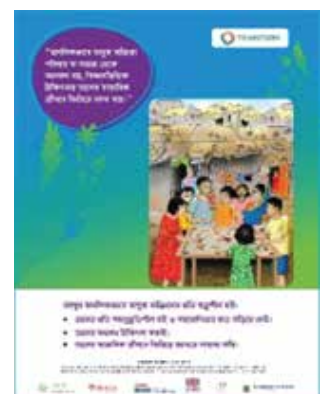


Photo 14: Poster on Positive attitude of community on SMDs

The message of the poster was developed in such a way that will graduate them regarding SMDs and create interest in taking biomedical care. The first poster in this period was focused on the community norms and responsibility of community especially households having SMDs, and the second poster was focused to illustrate a positive change who are getting biomedical service and provide address of government mental health service facility in Dhaka City. Both posters were pretested with the community regarding content, design, colour, understanding and acceptance of messages.

## Program Coordination and Management

### Annual Program Review of NGO Component: Supporting the TRANSFORM Project through Community Engagement Activities and Development of Communication Materials

On 08 January 2023, the TRANSFORM project-Bangladesh Component organized an Annual Program Review Meeting to review the progress of 1st year ( January 2022- December 2022) of planned activities and planned for next year's matching with the progress of TRANSFORM Bangladesh work packages. The meeting was held at our trusted partner, Bangladesh Center for Communication Programs (BCCP), Mirpur, Dhaka office.

## Disseminations

### Inform, aware and sensitizing Community: Displaying poster and Banner in Korail

The TRANSFORM project performed various activities in the Korail slum to inform and aware slum dwellers regarding serious mental disorders (SMDs). Community sensitization meeting held with different stakeholders including slum leaders, imams, teachers, CHWs, NGO workers, and caregivers at the community



Photo 14: Poster displayed at Korail Slum



Photo 15: Banner displayed at Korail slum

level. Besides that, outreach activities like displaying posters and banners in the strategic points of Korail slum. Around 500 posters and 60 banners displayed focusing the information of informing about SMD symptoms, taking care of SMD patients, and scientific medical treatment. The project also developed newsletters and brochures and sent it to government, NGOs, Academic institutions and policy makers in a regular manner both electronically and hard copy to keep update about TRANSFORM Project.



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