

Newsletter

ISWAR SANKALPA

(June'18- Aug'18)



**OPENING A WINDOW OF
HOPES & DREAMS**

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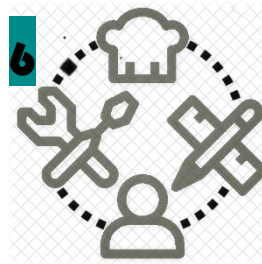
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SARBARI ▶▶

Zebu, a middle-aged woman was identified in June' 17, loitering around Tollygunje Metro with few packets stuffed with paper pieces, torn clothes and calendars. She was continuously muttering to herself. She was diagnosed with Psychosis- made no eye contact, hoarded goods, spoke irrelevantly and suffered hallucinations.

Interestingly, she was found to be a cooperative recipient of all our services and within a short span of time, exhibited marked improvement in her overall functioning.

On having traced her family we learnt that she was tortured & abandoned by her husband and in-laws after giving birth to three daughters. On having stepped out of the home, she happened to lose her way in the city.

Her journey is truly remarkable- After having reached the stabilization phase in the shelter, she was enrolled into the functional literacy classes where she happened to appear for NIOS exam (equivalent to class 3), passing with flying colours. She also received a 6-month course training in sewing and stitching and then moved onto securing INR 2000/ month by working productively in a Rakhi making factory. We only hope she keeps adding such colorful feathers to her cap!



SARBARI is a shelter for homeless women with psychosocial disability, extending a therapeutic roof over their head. Currently, it is catering to the needs of 90 such women with 20 of them being very recent entries. We are looking forward to them celebrating Bengal's biggest festival- Durga Puja with a new found dignity and honour!

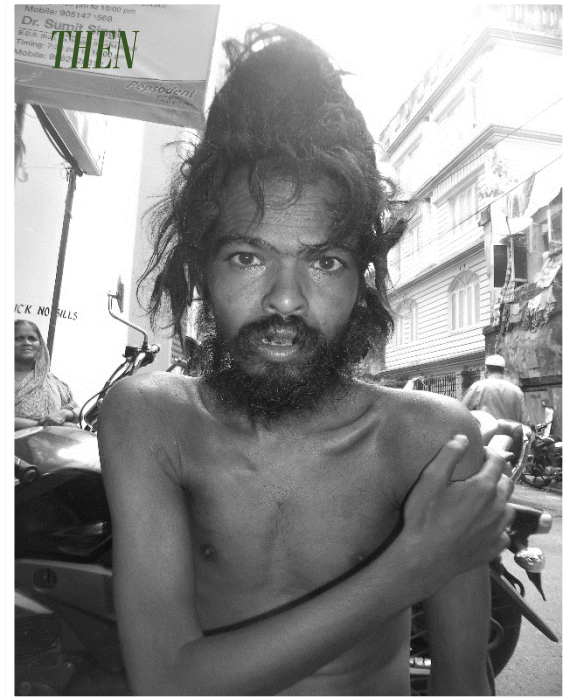
MORUDYAN ▶▶

During a rainy August, two years back, Santosh, a 30-year-old man was spotted roaming on the streets of Park circus, in an unkempt state wearing multiple clothes. He expressed his resistance towards making any verbal communication.

With the help of some community members, he was taken to *Morudyan* where the doctor diagnosed him with Schizophrenia. Overtime, with the assistance of caregivers, he started engaging himself in the therapeutic sessions- like Vocational training, individual counselling, Functional literacy classes, Dance therapy, art therapy.

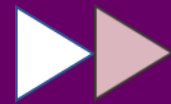
Notable results were seen within a period of 4 months-Santosh exhibited his skills in kitchen by chopping vegetables, washing utensils, grinding spices etc. Just a few months back he got employed in a local food joint and is now earning INR 3000/month along with refreshments.

Story of his success has crossed the confines of the shelter!



MORUDYAN is a shelter for homeless men with psychosocial disability, an enabling space for them to return to the mainstream society. Currently, it is catering to the needs of 30 such men. The focus is on imparting transferrable livelihood skills to the men through their engagement in notepad making, paper packets making and paper plate production.

NAYA DAUR



“Mujhe ghar jana hai” (I want to go home), said Sambhu during our first encounter at Sealdah platform in the freezing December of 2012. A man of approximately 35 years of age, he was evidently lost and donned a disheveled appearance. He was a tough nut to crack- not cooperating or communicating.

Social worker’s persistence bore fruit when he agreed for a medical check-up. He started taking the medicines. Within three months, his self-care improved even while living on the streets with many others like him. He gradually started working in one of the nearby shops.

The owner of the shop was a voluntary caregiver on the street, supporting the organization in furthering its mission. Sambhu’s desire to return home, propelled the team to look for it- his home got traced in Saharsa district, Bihar. With the help of Bihar Police he was handed over to his family. Sambhu happily reunited with his family after 9 long and trying years- he is homeless no more...



Naya Daur is an outreach programme for homeless persons with psychosocial disability, with organic community rehabilitation at the heart of it. It leverages local support in providing mental health and allied services to the beneficiaries on the streets itself by roping in the support of voluntary caregivers. The programme is in its expansion phase- beginning services in North Kolkata now!



Israt is a 30-year-old independent woman who is not only taking care of herself but also is assisting her family economically. However, this wasn't the case a few years back.

Since her early adolescence she suffered from myriad physical problems- thyroid, body aches, and neurological imbalance. Her mother found it extremely difficult to attend to her failing health; she often criticized Israt. Her parents remained non-cooperative, neglecting her and favouring her siblings. Post her graduation, she stayed at home for 8 years. On August 1st, 2017, *Israt* came to the Urban Mental Health Programme (UMHP) on being referred by one of the volunteers of Iswar Sankalpa. When she arrived at the UMHP, she was unable to sleep, she was irritable, she would palpitate, get aggressive, had a sense of worthlessness. In addition to all this, she had suicidal thoughts.

After check up by the Psychiatrist, the counselling started. In her very first session, she vented out all the negative emotions she was feeling towards her family members. She was gradually motivated to involve herself in private tuition classes. She started providing tuitions and earning money to take care of her own treatment. Overtime, her family members began developing a sense of respect for her. She is now also taking culinary lessons from the organization's café- *Crust & Core*; Israt has rewritten the story of her!

Urban Mental Health Programme (UMHP) caters to the mental health needs of the slum based population through clinical and community outreach service in collaboration with the KMC. From operating in 2 wards (78 and 82), it has now expanded to 3 more wards of the city (54, 26 and 11). It has actively carried out community awareness on mental health via schools, auto campaigns and the like.

DROP-IN CENTRE ▶▶

The team met Shoeb in 2013 when he was brought to the UMHP clinic by his mother. He struggled with behavioural issues, hardly made any eye contact and had difficulty speaking. She had noticed certain developmental delays as he was growing up- he was diagnosed with mild intellectual disability.



He was advised to attend the Drop In centre (DIC) but due to family's negligence, he discontinued after a while.

Two years later he joined again and was exposed to group counselling sessions, vocational activities and life skill sessions.

A marked improvement was noticed in his communication and social skills with increase in overall attention span. His attendance has also regularized. He also is caring towards other attendees.

He has tasted a sense of independence by attending the DIC himself and assuming responsibility of cooking in the kitchen of DIC. His growth is truly inspiring for us all!

The Day care centre provide a therapeutic space for persons with psychosocial disability with the aim of advancing holistic healing through an array of bio-psycho-social interventions. It draws clients from all the other programmes of the organisation, serving as a critical convergence point for accelerating their habilitation and rehabilitation process. There are two such spaces now- in Keoratala and Hastings.

REHABILITATION ▶▶

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Sobha, a 60-year-old woman was found near DIC in Keoratala- distrustful of others, aggressive, and fearful. Consequently, she shared a strained relationship with her family members. Medication helped her tide over tough times. She eventually joined Functional Literacy classes. The enthusiasm to learn at this age was noteworthy. She kept climbing the ladder of improvement, her relationship with her family growing healthier on the way.

She secured 3rd position in the annual assessment conducted for selection for National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) exam to be held in 2019. She underscored the fact that age truly is no bar to learn something!

V O C A T I O N A L

Jyoti, battling Schizophrenia over 20 years was brought to *Morudyan*- had poor communication, mostly preoccupied, depressed and socially withdrawn. Within 4 months he showed his active participation in shelter activities getting involved in sewing & cooking sessions. His inclination towards sewing was given special attention. After 3 months of training, he became part of the production unit.



T R A I N I N G

In July, he prepared coin bag, shopping bag etc. and earned Rs. 400.

He also was skilled enough to repair shoes; thus, a repairing kit was bought for him.

He started earning from it as well. In mid-July, he returned home and is continuing to stitch together his severed self-esteem!

CRUST & CORE ▶▶

Jharna, Haripriya, Sushma, Rinku, Kajal, Shampa and other 8 women who battled mental health issues, some of whom also roamed on the streets of Kolkata, labelled 'Pagol' by the community are now running a cafe in the heart of South Kolkata. All of them have proved that if there is a will and an honest support, one can grow in leaps and bounds and that people with mental illness are not a life-long burden!

In the 6 months of its existence on the foodscape, the café has secured commendable popularity. It is truly helping these women redefine their identity; the women have evidently become more responsible, especially about maintaining work schedule and the quality of product being made.

They make our chest swell with pride!



Crust & Core is a training unit cum café for persons confronted with psychosocial disability. It has been conceived as an enabling force for a population, neglected by the government and rejected by their family, friends and the community at large. It is to help them make the movement from the margins to the mainstream society with due honor & dignity!

HIGHLIGHTS

- 9 clients have been reunited with their families in the last 3 months – 7 women and 3 men
- Successful exhibitions with corporate giants like APPEJAY, ATOS & CAPEGEMINI
- 100 bags were supplied for the National Conference of Indian Psychoanalytical Society
- New products have been launched by the production unit (*Crafts & Empowerment*)- key rings, notepads, shopping bags and Rakhi
- Total sales from the exhibitions in the last 3 months : INR 76,000
- Media coverage of the organization: Hindustan Times, Radio Mirchi and in social media platforms such as ‘The Better India’
- Crust & Core tied up with SVF Cinemas, Narendrapur and Navina Cinemas (Tollygunje) for providing bakery products to their food kiosks
- It is now making sales of about 60K /month

NAYAGRAM ▶▶

Sangeeta, a resident of Sarbari was initially always withdrawn, had a high volume of speech and would just about speak in whispers. When she came in she had a rigid posture, poor social skills had absolutely no interest or motivation in work. She could only speak in Marathi and despite the assistance of a Marathi speaking team member to help with translation, communication with her was still a challenge.



However, gradually through medication, therapeutic interventions, counselling sessions, she gradually began to improve- She shared that she hailed from Maharashtra. However, despite all efforts her home couldn't be traced.

But Sangeetha's recovery continued.

Seeing this the team then put forward the option of an Assisted Community Living at Kashipur where she could be involved in farming as her means of livelihood. Sangeetha showed her interest in moving to Kashipur and finally moved there in 2017.



Now she greets the team members with a smile every time they go to meet the women at Kashipur. We get to see her diligently working on the field-tilling the soil, weeding or sowing. She also actively participates in any kind of activity the team plans for them. The last time the team visited them, they could not stop talking about how well Sangeetha sang a song for them!

Nayagram is an assisted community living programme in a bucolic village- Kashipur. It is to help the women who have recovered but for whom chances of returning home is relatively lesser get a home, away from home! A house has been constructed for them and they are being trained in farming & related work.

CHALLENGE AHEAD

Iswar Sankalpa began its work with yet another very very vulnerable and stigmatized social population- the sex workers present in the 2nd largest brothel of India.

Urban Mental Health Programme landed in ward 26 to offer its mental health and allied services to the underprivileged people there; it would be a grave injustice to not have included the aforementioned population as potential beneficiaries.

The sex workers have been found to be at a high risk of-

1. Acquiring HIV and other STDs
2. Suffering from mental health concerns such as depression

Their poor social location, stigmatized occupation, occupational hazards such as physical and mental stress and injury make them prone to and silent sufferers of varied mental health concerns. A poor mental health state is likely to compel them to engage in high risk behavior such as substance use.

Thus, interventions concerning this population is imperative and challenging for the team....we look forward to doing our bit!