



A just and equitable society where mental health needs and well being of all women, men and children are addressed.

CNMH

IN THIS ISSUE

CNMH'S RESPONSE TO EARTHQUAKE IN NEPAL, 2015

VOLUNTEERS EXPERIENCES

KATHMANDU MARATHON 2015

KATHMANDU CORALE 2014

FUNDRAISING CONCERT (MENTAL HEALTH DAY CELEBRATION CONCERT)

WELCOME CENTER (OUTDOOR, NEW YEAR- PICNIC) & CARERS' WORKSHOP WITH ECTC (ELIJAH COUNSELLING & TRAINING CENTRE)

RTI PROJECT

REMEMBERING HANNAH MARY ROBERTSON

Note from the Chhahari Team

This issue of the Chhahari newsletter focuses on the post-earthquake activities carried out by Chhahari Nepal for Mental Health (CNMH). Gradually understanding and learning the challenges from the Post-earthquake period, Chhahari has been developing new approaches and plan to support the clients and carers.

The focus has also been on the activities performed at the Welcome Centre and Carers Workshop mainly organized to engage the clients and carers in indoor and outdoor activities, and take part in counselling sessions and creative classes. This issue also highlights volunteers who have shown tremendous dedication and creativity while bearing in mind the rights of the mentally distressed.

CNMH's Response to Earthquake in Nepal, 2015



Three days after the first earthquake, CNMH began to locate clients, ensure their safety, then investigate and address their wider needs. During Phase I of Chhahari's Post-Earthquake Activity Plan, the emphasis was on assessing the physical, mental, social and economic impacts of the earthquake on individuals' lives. A central focus was on people's living conditions in the aftermath of the earthquake. CNMH was also involved in the distribution of relief materials like food, tarpaulins, blankets, sleeping bags, clothes, hygiene kits, first-aid kits and home prepared hot meals mainly to its clients. As CNMH worked on Phase-I the need to develop the second phase was identified. During Phase II, the main objective was to locate new clients, re-connect them with their family/relatives, and build positive working relationships with them. While locating these new clients and their caregivers we focused on areas of Lalitpur district that were not covered by CNMH previously. This phase was also designed to carry out the process of working in coordination with the community in accessing clients' living condition.

Under phase III, CNMH provided funds to help clients continue with their monthly medication and monetary support for caregiver's treatment and temporary shelter with regular follow-ups. CNMH also covered 50 % of treatment costs for a few caregivers who are undergoing certain medical treatments such as cataract and haemorrhoids. Monetary support was also provided to clients who lost their houses or suffered from damaged houses. So far, one client is in the process of receiving financial aid.

Chhahari also employed two Earthquake Response Officers (EROs) who actively participated to identify and investigate people suffering from any mental health problems who may have been majorly affected by the earthquake. EROs also sought to locate and reconnect these individuals with their families. We have located 21 new clients during the post-earthquake period and we have continued to work with these clients and support them. EROs also prepared a report that highlighted the findings and experiences focusing on locating mentally distressed men and women as a post-earthquake response.

The post-earthquake response has helped Chhahari identify the need for various psycho-social training programs on stress management, counselling and community-based psycho-social support for the staff and volunteers. CNMH plans to get more professional to support its staff and improve their capacity. We also continue to support our clients and caregivers through our weekly welcome centre sessions. A caregiver's workshop, specially designed to support and strengthen the caregiver group, is held once every two months in collaboration with Elijah Counselling and Training Center (ECTC).

Since the earthquake, CNMH has been working in coordination with the community and other like-minded organizations and individuals. CNMH also in the United Nations Mental Health Cluster meetings led by United Nations and Ministry of Health and Population



Volunteers Experiences

Yeshika - CNMH Experience Report

During my time at CNMH, I developed a wide range of skills and participated in a variety of new tasks. I was provided with the opportunity to not only learn about the lives of the vulnerable mentally ill in Nepal but to understand and empathize with CNMH's clients. Although I only spent, brief five days with CNMH I feel I have accumulated the essential skills needed to work in an organization such as Chhahari Nepal for Mental health through observing many aspects of the work involved in the organization. On my first day, I observed a home visit in the Kumbeshawor area, where I discovered how poor living conditions, poverty and the society's general disparaging view on mental health, meant that CNMH's clients are forced into an increasingly unprotected position.



Through this, I learned how the employees of the charity require excellent abilities to relate to people of ages and backgrounds. I additionally gained observational skills by assessing the different clients' situations. I also gained an understanding of the patience and perseverance needed to carry forward with clients' cases as clients' maybe homeless and cannot be located easily. However, CNMH's determination to help as many as they can has been a valuable lesson in dedication and resilience for me.

Furthermore, through participating in CNMH'S Welcome Centre, where I served food and drinks and was given the opportunity to be a judge for the welcome center singing competition; I learned of Chhahari's employees' positive attitude and compassion in creating an exuberant and encouraging atmosphere for their clients. I also gained a deep admiration for the small community that Chhahari has created for the betterment of their clients who have often been ostracized by family and the society.

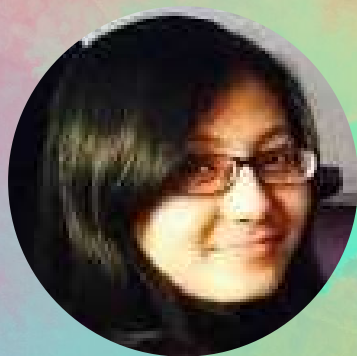
Finally, I would like to thank the CNMH staff for supporting and caring for me during my time at the organization with their never-ending generosity and kindness. I highly respect CNMH's initiative and the staff's determination, standing up for a cause that is spoken of so little in Nepal. You are excellent ambassadors for mental health and I hope that you continue to stand up for the issues that you care about so deeply.

Rojika's (A BSW trainee from St. Xavier's College) Experience

Working in Chhahari Nepal for Mental Health this year is the probably the best college experience I have had. I got new insights on a professional working system and work ethics. I feel privileged that I was able to contribute to the outstanding work and initiative of Chhahari Nepal.

I was assigned work on a client's case project. The project helped the client and her family understand the disease and its treatment. After supporting the client through months-long treatment process along with regular counselling, welcome centre activities, computer classes, and sharing sessions, the client improved drastically. I feel privileged that I was able to witness this first hand and be part of the solution. There are many others who need support from young people like us, and Chhahari Nepal is the best place for anyone to contribute.

Kudos to all of us!!!



Fundraisers

Kathmandu Marathon 2015

Kathmandu Marathon, 2015 was held on the World Mental Health Day - October 10, 2015. The theme for this year's World Mental Health Day was "Dignity in Mental Health". We had 34 runners this year. The aim of this fundraising event was to increase awareness of what can be done to ensure that people with mental health conditions can continue to live with dignity.

The national newspaper - The Himalayan Times, gave the Marathon detailed coverage, and the coverage included a brief introduction of Chhahari's work. We thank Mr. Peter Humpris, Chairperson of IGWR – Nepal for sponsoring the t-shirts.



Kathmandu Chorale 2014

On December 06, the bi-annual Kathmandu Chorale concert was held at the British School, Lalitpur. As usual, donations were collected for nominated charities, which at this concert were Chhahari and Asha Nepal. This was the second time Chhahari was selected as one of the nominated charities and CNMH received NRs 56,185 from the evening.

It was overwhelming to see so many people gathered together for the love of music. We thank Kathmandu Chorale team, who worked hard to create such a beautiful night for a worthy cause. We also thank Jonathan Cannon and Iain Gordon, members of the Kathmandu Chorale and British School teachers.

Mental Health Day Celebration Concert

Chhahari Nepal for mental health (CNMH) in support of Dr Rabi Shakya, a senior Psychiatrist doctor at Patan Hospital, organized an event to celebrate world mental health day globally celebrated on 10th of October every year. The event took place on Friday, October 17, 2014, at the Entrance Café, Bhakundole. LAPEN Nepal Pharmaceutical Limited sponsored the concert and dinner.

The program began with a welcome speech by Dr Chhatra Amatya, chairperson of CNMH followed by our guest speaker Dr Deep Prakash Malla who highlighted the theme for this year "Living with Schizophrenia", followed by a solo performance by Dr Rabi Shakya. Then, Bidya Maharjan, Program Manager of CNMH presented the work of CNMH and gave a brief introduction of the organization along with a documentary. We also had guest artists like Aarti Thapa, Asmita Pariyar (fieldworker of CNMH) and Suresh Shahi (a client of CNMH). Suresh was diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia in December 2013, with the support of CNMH. To end the event, Dr. Rabi Shakya briefly thanked everyone for their presence and for support of CNMH and especially thank the sponsors for this event.

The overall event was a huge success in part due to the tremendous efforts of Ms. Mohini Lama who coordinated the arrangements with CNMH to make the event successful. CNMH would also like to thank Mr. Bijay Karki from Restless Development, our M.C. for the event for entertaining the crowd.

We had many doctors from various backgrounds coming together to support this programme. This has definitely opened up huge opportunities for Chhahari to increase our network. The doctors were very interested in our work and we hope to build on this that will benefit Chhahari in the future. The whole program was informative as well as fun. We have managed to raise our profile along with mental health issues through this great event.



Welcome Center (outdoor, new year- picnic) & Careers' Workshop with ECTC (Elijah Counselling & Training Centre)



The Welcome Centre at Chhahari opened in October 2013, as a direct reflection of the needs of the men and women with whom Chhahari was in contact with through the Street project. Open on Wednesdays, it is a place where the mentally distressed and their carers can engage in indoor activities and take part in counselling sessions and creative classes. Currently, we have 25 clients and carers attending this session. The last Wednesdays of each month are for outdoor activities. These activities have been helpful in building clients' strengths, supporting their areas of interest and encouraging them to engage with society.

Chhahari has been gradually developing new approaches and activities to provide better support to our clients. These include the welcome center and the carers workshop sessions which have evolved as a consequence of our interactions with clients and carers. The importance of carers has a huge impact on the mental health setting, especially to the clients who fully depend on the carers for their well-being.

In participation with the Elijah Counselling and Training Centre (ECTC), Chhahari has been actively participating to enhance the creative skills of carers who care for mentally ill people and have agreed upon providing carer's workshop once every two months starting from June 18, 2014. Various therapeutic activities using art, clay, flowers, and group therapy, meditation etc. are performed with the carers. These sessions have proven to be of huge psychosocial importance and have helped build closer bonds and self-esteem amongst the carers. These sessions also help the staff build a closer relationship with the carers by understanding them and their needs.

Carers workshop are formal and informal groups that provide friends, family and carers with an opportunity to meet others in similar circumstances. Many people find it comforting to know that others have had similar experiences. It can be extremely useful to tap into the first-hand experience of coping, negotiating the mental health service system and understanding mental illness. Most of such sessions cater to particular types of carers or family members, such as for children with parents who have a mental illness or partners, parents or siblings.

Carers workshop has played a huge role in strengthening the support system of a mentally ill person, which is one of the most important factors in recovery. Gradually, we plan to include community-based workshops and enhance our reach beyond Chhahari premises. We plan to get more professional help to support staff and build their capacity. This will also allow us to interact and integrate with other like-minded organizations in Nepal.



RTI Project

RTI Mental Health Project was implemented by Bachelors in Social Work (BSW) trainees from St. Xavier's College. The focus of this project is to gain information regarding:

- Allocation of funds for mental health in Government and NGOs
- Procedures and criteria applied to NGOs to access funds for MH related activities
- Which NGO's received funds from Government for MH with the amount received?

The students managed to get the answers to the proposed questions and have prepared their final report.

Remembering Hannah Mary Robertson

Hannah Mary Robertson (1919 – 2011) from Scotland made her first visit to Nepal in 1994, this is when she saw the poor condition of mentally stressed people. In 2009, on her 5th trip to Nepal, Mary celebrated her 90th Birthday. On this occasion, her observation of mentally ill people wandering the streets in Kathmandu valley being denied their basic human rights challenged her to do more. From her own experiences, she understood that the task Chhahari had set itself was indeed tough, but much needed.

On seeing a mentally ill woman sitting on top of a mountain of garbage she asked: "How does Chhahari begin to work with her?" Mary was encouraged by the work started by the Street Project to reach men and women existing under inhuman conditions. Until the end of her life, she advocated and raised funds to make a difference for mentally ill people in Nepal.

Chhahari Nepal for Mental Health organized a Memorial Service on the 4th Anniversary of Late Mrs Hannah Mary Robertson. The Anniversary was on 28th August but we held this service on 2nd September, as it was a Wednesday and our clients and carers who were present at the Welcome Centre could participate and know more about the support that Mrs Hannah Mary Robertson had provided to our organization.

On that day, we began the service with a brief introduction about her and her desire to see a better mental health situation in Nepal. The day was fun-filled and Mrs Hannah Mary Robertson was remembered by the entire Chhahari family. Hot meals were served to all the clients and carers who attended the service.

We have deep admiration for the concern and patience she showed towards mental health and society. She has been a great example for all of us, as someone who has dedicated herself to the well-being of mentally distressed men and women in Nepal.



If you would like to support Chhahari please contact us

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