



Purola Team
Yamuna Valley

TALKING ALOUD ALLOWED

DR. KAAREN MATHIAS
DIRECTOR - BURANS

The colder weather of December in Uttarakhand is great news for working in mental health in communities. Our work in rural Uttarakhand finds winter the most important time for mental health promotion and group meetings as this is the season where there is no agricultural work. We are taking the opportunity to implement group meetings while sitting on rooves or in fields of winter sunshine. Group meetings have a new focus on Safe Migration (Surakshet Palayn) which uses role-plays and group discussions to ensure that young people and all people moving to cities are safe from trafficking and exploitation, and this also touches on skills for positive parenting. In both Yamuna valley and Dehradun slums, we also are continuing with skill-building using the Nae Umeed (New Hope curriculum) which we are implementing among

groups for carers of people with disabilities (including people with mental health problems). These groups are going really well and also are a great platform to build peer friendships and communication skills, as well as micro-credit and savings. We continue to be thankful for the strong partnership we have working with the Government both in Dehradun with the State mental hospital, and in Yamuna valley with the Uttarkashi district health programme. 2021 has been quite an intense year and COVID continues to be capricious and challenging but we are in good heart and thankful we can support many people with mental health problems and also act upstream to improve wellbeing in communities. Thanks for your interest and support and wishing you a Christmas season of hope and joy.

-Kaaren



Nae Umeed group session

MAMTA'S NAE UMEED

PALLAVI SHARMA
INTERN, BURANS

Mamta Devi (name changed) is a 53-year-old Nepali Woman. She is a member of our Nae Umeed caregivers group run by our community workers. She lives in the SIDCUL industrial area of Selaqui, Dehradun. Mamta takes care of her husband who once was the earning member for the family but is now recovering from his mental health issues. Things went haywire for her when her husband lost his eyesight and subsequently, his mental health deteriorated, which made him lose his job. She was left with no option but to fend for the family from social and financial hardships. Mamta fought all odds to get treatment for her husband's conditions and successfully got him operated on for cataract at the nearby eye health camp. Despite financial hardships faced then and even now, she never stopped the medication of her husband who is now recovering fast and is even working in a nearby 'Company' (The factories nearby are locally referred to as Company).

Mamta recounts her struggle with wet eyes and emotionally thanks the community worker and the nae Ummeed members saying she got a new zeal to live and fight for the family from the group "Nae Umeed se mujhe apne aur apne pariwar ki ladaai ke liye ek bahot bada Sahara Mila". She further adds, "if it wasn't for the awareness and encouragement I got in the group meetings, I would have given up on my husband a long time ago".

The other group members are inspired by her story and seek guidance and assistance from her on medical issues like where to take patients and how to get treatment for their own and families' conditions 'Jaha operation karaya vaha ka bata do'.

Mamta says she liked the sessions on financial inclusion in Nae Ummeed and is trying to save a small amount every day. She manages to save 400 to 500 every month and gets the same deposited in her son's account. The savings, she says is going to help her during the hard days similar to the one she has already experienced.



मानसिक स्वास्थ्य
की और पाँच कदम



इन पाँच सरल युक्तियों को
अपने जीवन में अपनाएं
और स्वस्थ रहें

Five steps to wellbeing

FIVE STEPS TO WELLBEING IN THE YAMUNA VALLEY

DR. KAAREN MATHIAS
DIRECTOR - BURANS

In the autumn (early November 2021) I was delighted to have the opportunity to spend a week in the upper Yamuna valley with the Burans team. It was harvest season and mules and cattle were threshing rice, pumpkins were drying in the sun and people were cutting grass and weaving haystacks into the branches of trees. I felt very encouraged as I spent time observing new community workers in our Purola team visiting people with mental health problems at home, providing active listening and problem-solving counselling support. In turn, after observing some meetings and interactions, project officers coached community workers using appreciative inquiry approaches. What went well in that meeting? What helped it go well? What do you think you might try next visit? Why? What could you do differently or try for the first time to encourage this person to take actions to connect to others.

Other highlights of my visit included meeting a school principal at one of the large secondary schools where we are implementing our youth resilience and mental health programme (Nae Disha). It is really exciting that the block education office in both Naugaon and Purola blocks have requested us to implement NAE DISHA across all the secondary schools in the region. We don't have enough facilitators to do this but great to know that we have such strong district uptake. Another really positive meeting was engaging with Dr Suchi Poonam, who is a doctor trained as a primary care provider of the District mental health programme. Dr Suchi Poonam has been highly engaged and supportive of Burans work and key to facilitating access to medicines and also supportive of our work and engaging with both our community members and community mental health workers.

BURANS BULLETIN

Autumn
2021



Door to door visit in Naugaon

Here are some of the things I noticed that our team is doing really well:

- Relationship building across all aspects of the team
- Lots of training and skill-building evident with the new team
- Great seeing some good counselling using local language, vocab and idioms
- The team members were writing thoughtful critical reflection in filling forms
- Good to hear of examples of using rights-based approaches and building skills in this area among village leaders
- Kind and respectful manner and body language in counselling by CWs
- Good facilitation by Surakshit playan (Safe migration) groups – fun and good discussion

Some of the areas we are working on doing more of include:

- Avoiding giving advice to people in communities
- Increasing reflective listening and encouraging others to identify what they need to do next
- More women in the team learning to drive the scooter
- Building computer skills for all team members
- Increasing strength of relationships with informal providers (E.g. pharmacists) and traditional healers

In particular, we have been focusing on the Five Ways to Wellbeing. These five steps for mental health promotion include:

CONNECT – talk and listen with others to build supportive relationships.

KEEP LEARNING – try a new recipe, visit a new place, make something by hand to surprise yourself at where you can go.

TAKE NOTICE – enjoy simple pleasures like a quiet cup of tea, birdsong or the touch of a hand

GIVE – your time, your presence, what you can

BE ACTIVE – enjoy what you can do - physical activity moves our minds to positive places

We have found these steps work really well with clients and we did a workshop together to explore how to use the Five Steps in working with people in the community. They also work well for building team wellbeing: a highlight on my last day in Yamuna valley was a team picnic with the Naugaon team. We went for a hike up to a beautiful temple, through the forest with commanding views of the whole block and glittering snowy peaks at the head of the valley.



Caregivers group meeting

There are many beautiful natural resources to promote mental health in the Yamuna valley and this clear bright winter day was a great reminder of the value of BEING ACTIVE and KEEPING LEARNING. In summary, spending time with Burans team members in Purola and Naugaon was really energising. There is lots of attentive thoughtful work underway and a number of opportunities to build the quality and breadth of our programmes. I was reminded about how challenging it is to build skills in reflective listening and counselling, and that it requires a high level of ongoing support, coaching and feedback but is also an opportunity that can really build the quality of our care and credibility in communities. We are really thankful to continue this work in 2022 and beyond in our partnership with the Mariwala Health initiative who have confirmed that we will be able to keep taking these Five steps for health communities in this mountainous valley together for another three years.

Comings and Goings

- Meenal Rawat, Research and Documentation Officer at Yamuna Valley worked with us for the last two and a half years has decided to leave us and pursue higher studies. We wish her all the best
- Preeti Kashyap, a community worker with the HOPE team, who has been with us for more than seven years has bid us farewell. We wish you all the best.
- Congratulations to Priya on getting married. We wish you a happy married life

SUPPORT BURANS

We can only work in disadvantaged communities because of donations from generous people who want to make a difference.

We welcome donations both big and small to support our work. If you are keen to fund a specific program – let's talk. Be in touch!

Contact us at info@burans.org