



## TALKING ALOUD ALLOWED

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**SENIOR ADVISOR - BURANS**

We are now heading into the winter months at Burans. In our rural Yamuna valley work this is the best time for meeting with people as there is no agricultural work and the best thing to do in the day is to sit in the sun and talk. We are implementing our Suraksht palayn (safe communities and migration) groups in Purola and Naugaon blocks and also looking forward to building skills of the rural social accountability groups.

On 28, 29th November Burans hosted our first two day mental health symposium, Milkar Seekhein with over 60 participants from non-profit community based organisations joining us. We shared best-practice and learnings together, so check out our report on this, and on the media coverage of our dissemination meeting where we were joined by enthusiastic representatives from the Department of Health and Family Welfare and State Mental Health Authority of Uttarakhand.

We are thankful for this quieter time of winter for also reflecting on our work and ways we can work better. We appreciated a team retreat in Mussoorie in early December and of course a highlight was a big bonfire and camping out as a leadership team.

Despite all the tumult of the past two years, there are many things to be hopeful for. The support by our experts by experience groups in Dehradun and Yamuna valley, by many government health workers and leaders, and especially from the community who are enthusiastic and engaged gives us lots of energy as we look ahead to 2023. Sending best wishes and thanks for your ongoing support to Burans.

Kaaren - on behalf of Burans team

## WORLD YOUTH DAY

On 14th August 2022, Burans celebrated 'Youth Day' across all its teams.

The event in Dehradun saw good participation and community engagement of around 125 people. There were various events like singing, dancing, poetry. In addition, the parents of the Nae Disha program shared their experiences and thoughts on the program, and the positive mental health impact as a result of it.

Perhaps the highlight of the program was a game of "Tug of War", which brought together multiple generations - from children, to mothers, to elderly women- together. Such programs are a step forward in creating healthy bonds between the participants and communities. The sheer joy that the mothers felt and shared after the game is a testament to its success.

One of the members, Geeta (name changed) had requested her mother to give a small speech during the event. She was initially met with a strict "No", stating that they were living in a community where she believed that women should not step out and keep speeches in front of everyone. But it was after the persistent efforts by the children in the Nae Disha group that she gave a confident speech on 'Youth Day', which also motivated others in the community. This is a glimpse of how the program has started breaking the stigma and developing a positive attitude towards mental health conversations in communities.

A similar program took place in Choi village, Selakui. Around 50 members participated in the program. The children were given information on what it means to be the youth and its importance in today's time. The children gave dance and *nukad naatak* (drama) performances. It was a peak into the growing confidence of each child. Choi Village Pradhan, ward members and other community leaders were a part of the program. Parents were informed about the parenting program and its benefits. It was of great value and exposure for the children to perform in front of their parents and community leaders. This has strengthened the community's trust in Burans and the work that we do.



Youth Day Celebration at Choi Village, Selakui

## MILKAR SEEKHEIN

A two day event was organised with the aim of sharing the best practices of different Hindi speaking organisations across North India that work in the area of community mental health. We focused on Hindi speaking partners as a highly necessary platform for Hindi-speaking people who are the backbone of community mental health programmes across North India. We saw participation from Delhi NCR, Maharashtra, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand.

On the first day of the event we focused on listening to the different approaches that organisations use. Many interesting ideas were shared and an opportunity for cross-learning was presented through interactive discussions.

For example, Sambandh, from Haryana, described how people with mental health problems joined their program as members and ran day centres for families and others with challenges. In group activities we prepared street drama, songs and games to build skills for mental health in communities. Participants left with new friends and good networking with other NGOs.

The second day there was participation by psychiatrists and Government officials. Chief guest was Dr. Amandeep Kaur (Additional secretary, Medical Health & Family Welfare, Additional Mission Director, National Health Mission, Uttarakhand commented in her address. "The work by Burans in youth mental health is very important for our state and I would love to see their wonderful Nae Disha programme rolled out in Officers colony in Dehradun and other communities across the state".

Mental symposium keynote speakers included Burans team member Pooja Baluni, who journeyed from a volunteer facilitator to becoming trainer in the team. National mental health policy member, Dr. Alok Sarin shared his thoughts on the importance of reducing stigma and discrimination for people with mental health problems. The program was covered by Hindi media and mental health was the focus of this coverage. Our aim was to initiate a public conversation around mental health in the mainstream. The event was supported by Mariwala health initiative and the Swedish university, Umea.

Media coverage links:

<https://youtu.be/Kc8Kl6pP4KY>

[https://youtu.be/ybJY\\_MPspDQ](https://youtu.be/ybJY_MPspDQ)



देहरादून। भारतीय मानसिक स्वास्थ्य दिवस के अवसर पर उत्तर भारत स्वस्थ खुश संगोष्ठी का आयोजन किया गया। संगोष्ठी में उत्तर भारत के समुदाय में मानसिक स्वास्थ्य को बढ़ावा देने के लिए किए गए प्रयासों के बारे में जानकारी दी गई। इस अवसर पर डॉ. अमरेंद्र कुमार, राष्ट्रीय मानसिक स्वास्थ्य नीति के सदस्य, ने अपने अनुभवों और चुनौतियों को साझा किया। उन्होंने मानसिक स्वास्थ्य के प्रति जागरूकता बढ़ाने और लोगों को मदद करने के लिए आवश्यकताओं को समझने पर जोर दिया।



Media Coverage



## OUTCOME STORIES FROM YAMUNA VALLEY

Ramesh (name changed) lives in Pujeli village of Purola block and has 4 children. He is suffering from severe mental illness for the last 16 years but due to the lack of information about mental illness, Ramesh could not recover from his illness and his condition became deteriorated. He was unable to bear any responsibility for his family and used to beat his wife and children. The financial condition of the family had also become very bad. All the responsibility fell on his wife, as the family environment was not conducive, his wife left the house and came back to her maternal home. His wife was involved as a community worker when the Burans Project started. Ramesh was treated with the support of the project officer and his wife gained knowledge and skills through training about mental illness, which helped Ramesh in his recovery. Today Ramesh has recovered from his illness and has good knowledge about his illness and takes care of himself. Ramesh loves to teach. Seeing his interest, his wife talked to the principal of the Government Primary School and gave him a chance to come to the school and teach science and maths to the children. Ramesh is serving in the government school for the last 4 months. With Ramesh's recovery, the awareness of mental illness spread rapidly among the people of the community and people from the community started asking for help for their mental illness. Ramesh's story is a very good example of social inclusion.

Ayus is a 15 years old boy studying in the 9th class. During the Nae Disha session, he didn't show any interest and didn't respond to any questions asked. When the module on communication was going on, the qualities of a person with low confidence were discussed. The session also included how to recognize the qualities within us. After talking to Ayus individually several times, the CW discovered the problems that are going on in his family due to which he remains silent. Slowly as more modules were completed he started talking and replying to the questions asked. On the occasion of Gandhi Jayanti, he participated with the NCC group. The teachers were surprised and happy to see the change in Ayus. The teachers told the CW that she could take more classes if needed and help the children to open up and participate in different activities. The teachers and the school have been very supportive as they can now see the change in the students after the Nae Disha program.



Ramesh at the Primary Government school where he teaches math and science.

## Comings and Goings

- Farewell to Pooja Pillai. Best wishes for your future endeavours!
- Welcome Disha! Our new research officer for Dehradun.
- Welcome Geeta, Mamta Bhandari, Pooja Rani, Mamta Pandey and Kiran! Our new community workers for Dehradun.

## 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](mailto:info@burans.org)

### We are excited to share our most recent publication

#### Title

*"Conducting research with young people at the margins – lessons learnt and shared through case studies in Cambodia, India, Sweden and Zambia"* which profiles our work in participatory research with young people with other colleagues.

#### It is free to access - just click the link:

<https://bmcpublichealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-022-14427-8>