

New year, New us!!

Team Burans started this year with a renewed sense of hope and rigor after reflecting on the activities of last year.



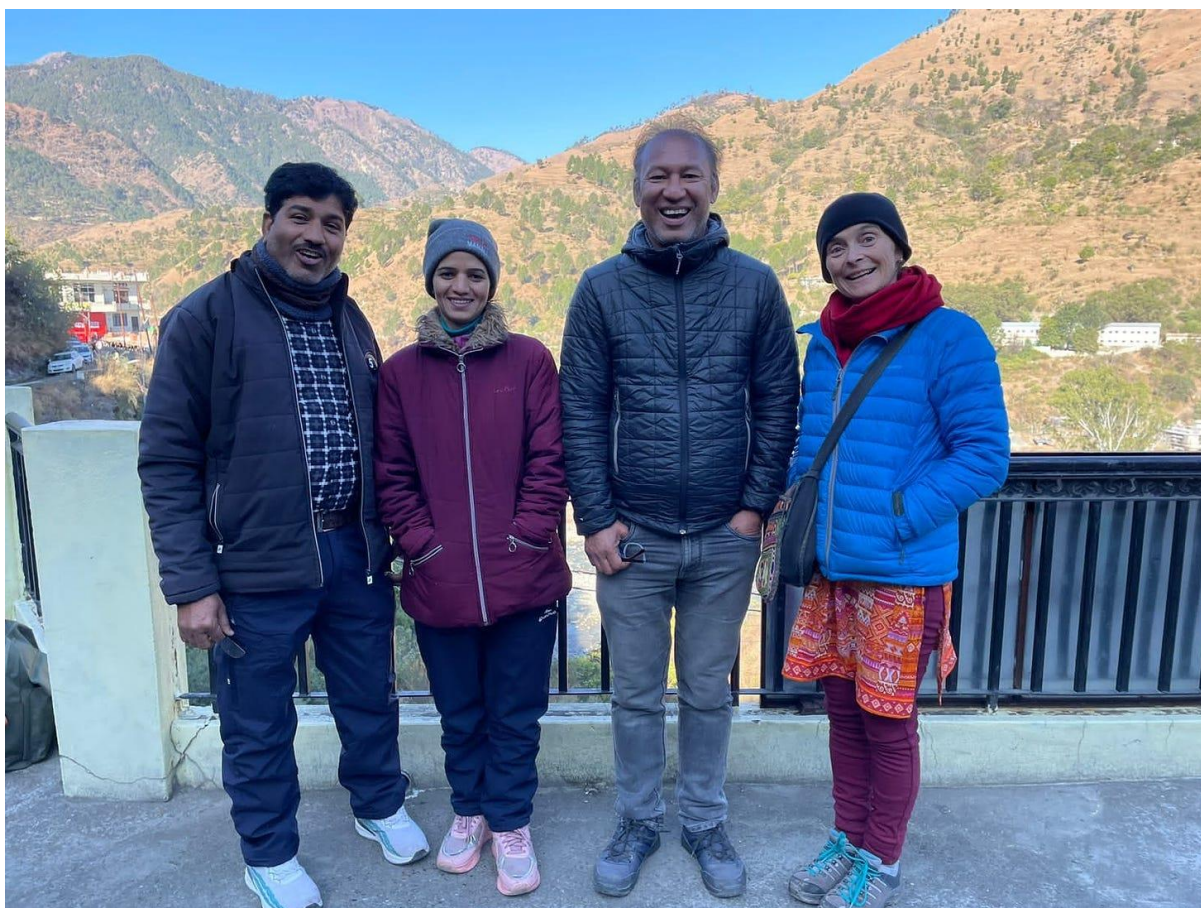
[BURANS](#)

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Thinking aloud allowed

Namaste!

On another day of sparkling sun for some, and growing winter smog in the North Indian cities. Winter is one of the busier times in many ways for Burans as this is the season when people are less busy with agricultural responsibilities and also are more inclined to sit and chat in the warm winter's sun in the middle of the day.



We have had a busy last few months implementing Parwarish among 320 families in Dehradun and Tehri districts in collaboration with partners from the CHGN cluster. In Burans we facilitated 18 parenting groups and we also supported (training and mentoring facilitators) in five other non-profits as they implement Parwarish groups among parents and teens, seeking to promote positive parenting and build family connections and communication.

Sitting with groups in Selaqui and Dehradun during my time with the Burans team in December, I was inspired to hear comments like this: "Now when my father gets home from driving the auto, he nearly always calls me to have a game of badminton outside. I really like playing with him". And a mother told the group sitting on the roof of a house in Dehradun, "My daughter and I have found we are now often talking about our feelings and we have decided to not look at phones at dinner time. We have to remind each other!" Really exciting to hear the impacts of this programme in families.

We also held a team retreat in December to think about our plans and dreams for the coming five years. We were excited to also spend time with Rini, from Ember who was enthusiastic and supportive of our work and had lots of ideas about how we could shape our communications to reflect the great work happening on the ground.

Some emerging issues came up, such as the growing need for Burans to engage with the impacts of the climate crisis, particularly in Yamuna Valley. Later in groups in Purola, Jeet and I heard community members report delays in rain, and cloud bursts causing loss of topsoil and changing crop yields, such as apple, as snow is much less frequent than it was two decades ago. This leads to uncertainty about the future, and anxiety and drives a push to migrate to cities for income generation.

- Kaaren Mathias, Senior Adviser, Project Burans, Uttarakhand

What are recycled bricks, feathers and water bottles doing as symbols of Burans?



We had a really great two-day team retreat in early December to think about emerging issues and how Burans could plan ahead and make sure we are doing what we do well - and also engaging with emerging issues.

Our team brought unique perspectives to the essence of Buran's work. Jeet likened it to feathers, symbolizing a collective journey towards freedom from inequality, where unity can lead to soaring heights. Atul saw Buran's efforts as medicinal, offering solace and healing to problems. Kaaren presented a brick, representing the strength and foundational solidity of Buran's resources. Samson compared our work to a small bunch of leaves, emphasizing the interconnectedness of all tasks. Krishna found a refreshing parallel in mental work, akin to the effect of 'Center Fresh'. Pooja Baluni equated our work with the nurturing aspect of refreshments, fostering relationship building. Sharon and Prasanth used water metaphors to signify adaptation and acceptance. Lastly, Manoj perceived the beauty in an overlooked river stone, drawing a parallel to how PPSDs are often neglected but, through our efforts, are polished and made appealing to others.

Some of the big picture issues emerging included the climate crisis (soil loss, changes in crop yields and floods were all frequently mentioned when we spent time listening to different groups of people in the Yamuna valley), the changing role of women, where it is more culturally accepted and normal for women who are married to work and generate income, a need for greater digital literacy and a growing number of people with addictions and substance abuse challenges.

We are still working out the details of how we respond but we are excited to keep shaping the Burans work promoting mental health in ways that are relevant and responsive. Stay tuned - we'll update you as we develop our strategic plan for 2024 - 29.

Narrative Report: Staff Mental Well-being Trip to Rishikesh



It was an unforgettable experience for all of us at Burans during our recent team retreat to Rishikesh on 7 and 8 November, 2023. The trip provided an opportunity for the team members to offload themselves from their mundane routine, connect with nature and colleagues, and engage in strategic planning.

The team met at the Devbhoomi Camp in Ghattu Ghat in Rishikesh where we all played some games, huddled together for conversations, and danced along the bonfire.

The next morning, we left our cosy tents for some exciting recreational and adventurous activities like outdoor sports and rafting in the chilling water of Ganges. It made us realize the nature of our professional lives which is marked by constant challenges and fears and how one can easily overcome them with collective strength and guidance.

This trip recharged us, reinforced our bonds as a team and contributed further to individual mental health and well-being.

The Burans team expresses heartfelt thanks to Ember for their kind contribution, making this event possible.

Prison Programme



In August this year, Burans collaborated with the Suddhowala Jail Authority for working on emotional awareness and self-regulation of jail residents. The project aims to provide counselling and group sessions

comprising of activities such as ice-breakers, games, positive experiences sharing, discussions, role plays, art and drawing activities.

“There is a massive scope for work in mental health among the prison inmates and we are glad that Burans has taken this up. Their work and outcomes are not just limited to papers but we are seeing a remarkable change among the members and getting positive feedback from them as well.” said Shri Dadhiram ji, DIG Prisons-Government of Uttarakhand.

We also engaged in a session during Suicide Prevention Week that highlighted the important aspects of suicide prevention such as combating suicidal thoughts, controlling negative thinking and fostering future planning.

One of the key highlights from our prison engagement programme was an experience-sharing session by one of the residents on his journey of recovering from an addiction. It was an insightful session.

Another important mental health issue that we discussed during our work at Suddohwala Prison was countering bullying and promoting peer support setting in prisons. We explored the importance of unity and peer support in addressing the problem of bullying which is highly pervasive in prisons all over. We explored these issues through the lens of art and expression. Participants identified common ways of expressing negative emotions, including substance abuse and violence. Yoga, music, art, journaling and supportive friendships were discussed as major coping strategies.

Some of the artwork by jail residents:





Got any thoughts? Want to know more about our work? Feel free to reach out to us at info@burans.org