

ANNUAL REPORT 2020



**Field Action Project of the Centre
for Health And Mental Health,
School of Social Work
Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai**

We are grateful for the learnings and opportunities over the last year and with immense delight we present to you the annual report for 2020

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About Us

Tarasha is a field action project of the Centre for Health and Mental Health, School of Social Work, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. Tarasha was initiated in 2011, as a response to the findings of a study titled Status of Women in Mental Hospitals in Maharashtra undertaken by Prof. Shubhada Maitra for Maharashtra State Commission for Women in 2002. Two key-findings of the study prompted the conceptualisation of Tarasha:

- i. A majority of women were admitted in their late 20s and early 30s and stayed in the hospital as long-stay patients anywhere between 5 to 10 years, growing old in the institution
- ii. While nearly 70 percent women were admitted by the family, less than 30 percent ever went home, pointing to the fact that women were abandoned by their families despite being asymptomatic with no chance to ever get discharged and no skills to fend for themselves even if they got discharged

Tarasha has been conceptualized as a community-based recovery model for women recovering from mental illness. At the core, the project addresses issues of Self, Shelter and Livelihoods. Working from a rights-based perspective, Tarasha facilitates the transition of women living with mental disorders from institutions back into the community through networking, capacity building and advocacy.

Tarasha works in collaboration with the Directorate of Health Services, Maharashtra, through the Regional Mental Hospital, Thane. We partner with working women's hostels which offer safe shelters for our women, day care centres for persons recovering from mental illness, vocational training institutes where women obtain training in a vocation of their choice, providing psychosocial inputs to facilitate women in their recovery process and organisations where women find employment, thereby creating a large network for inclusive practice.

In addition, since 2019, as part of Tarasha's larger initiative towards mainstreaming mental health and creating inclusive and mental health-friendly spaces in the community, the Project continued to:

- Facilitate reintegration of women discharged with families from Regional Mental Hospital, Thane
- Trained and linked college students to support care-givers of persons living with mental illness in Bombay
- Initiate discourse around mental health and influence HR policies to create an inclusive and mental health-friendly workplace

Vision

The creation of a safe, just, non-threatening and non-discriminatory society in which women living with mental disorders can lead fulfilling and productive lives.

Objectives

To support women recovering from mental disorders in making a transition from institutions back into the community through networking, capacity building and sensitizing programs

To facilitate the process of recovery in women aimed at addressing psychosocial issues, shelter, sustainable livelihoods and economic independence

To shift society from a mind-set of exclusion and stigmatisation to inclusion, thereby supporting to create safe, non-threatening spaces for women with a history of mental disorders

To influence policy through advocacy and networking

Our Partners

Tarasha works in collaboration with the Directorate of Health Services, Mumbai, through the Regional Mental Hospital, Thane

Shelter partners:

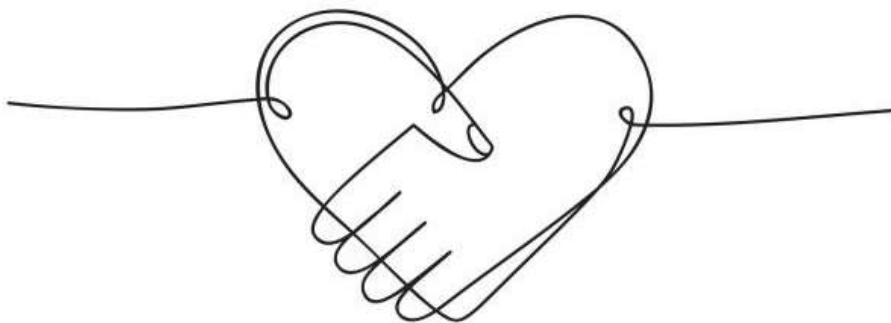
Sharan shelter of YMCA, Saki Naka
Nivara Kendra, Thane

Day care partners:

Tridal Rehabilitation Centre by the
Institute for Psychological Health, Thane
MANAS Psychological Health Centre,
Mulund

Vocational Training and Livelihood partners:

Yuva Parivartan, Bandra
Maid in Mumbai, Mahim
Kotak Education Foundation, Chembur



Tarasha's Phases of Recovery

PHASE I DE-INSTITUTIONALIZATION

- Continuous intervention at the hospital
- Formal consent taken from participants
- Group and Individual sessions
- Ongoing phase including screening, selection and capacity building



Phase II PSYCHOSOCIAL RECOVERY

- identify community-based rehabilitation centres for partnership
- women are sent to the centre to further explore self and related themes, get accustomed to the environment and build new relationships
- approximate time (depending on client): 3-4 months



Phase III VOCATIONAL TRAINING

- identify community-based initiatives for vocational training for women based on skill set and capacity
- approximate time (depending on the client and the organisation): 3 months



Phase IV JOB DEVELOPMENT AND JOB SUPPORT

- once the women are employed, Tarasha provides counselling and therapeutic support at a decreased frequency depending on the case, in a bid to foster independence and reintegration



Phase V EXIT:

- Each phase bolsters the independence and accountability of the client towards her self and gradually decreases the frequency of support
- The exit from the project is symbolic, the client is encouraged to contract with themselves to acknowledge their independence
- Tarasha still provides counselling and therapeutic support whenever required

PHASE I DE-INSTITUTIONALIZATION (6-8 months):

Phase I is a stage of screening, selection, capacity building and a move towards deinstitutionalization. Women are selected in consultation with the staff of Regional Mental Hospital (RMH), Thane on the basis of their symptoms, behaviour in the hospital, eligibility and interest level. This is an ongoing phase, but women who are being moved and need to be part of the group process for a minimum of 6 months. Selection of potential participants for the Project is based on certain assessment criteria including:

- i. Level of functioning
- ii. Current symptoms
- iii. Insight and acceptance
- iv. Willingness towards adherence to medication
- v. Age (upper age limit is restricted to 40 years given the employability opportunities for women discharged from the hospital)
- vi. Degree of family/social support

Operating from a feminist, strengths-based perspective, the sessions conducted have various therapeutic objectives. These are: Introductory, Informative, Exploratory and Reflective. Accordingly, sessions are designed around encouraging and initiating group participation and interactions, sharing, assessing and enhancing strengths and capacities of the women with a focus on cognitive and body functioning, building awareness about the self and the other,

exploring boundaries, emotions, responses and the body, building trust, adherence to medication, managing conflict and relationships, re-defining recovery. The experience of mental illness by women is significantly shaped by patriarchy. The interventions aim to address the same such that the women's identity and pathways to recovery are not defined by patriarchal notions but the women themselves.

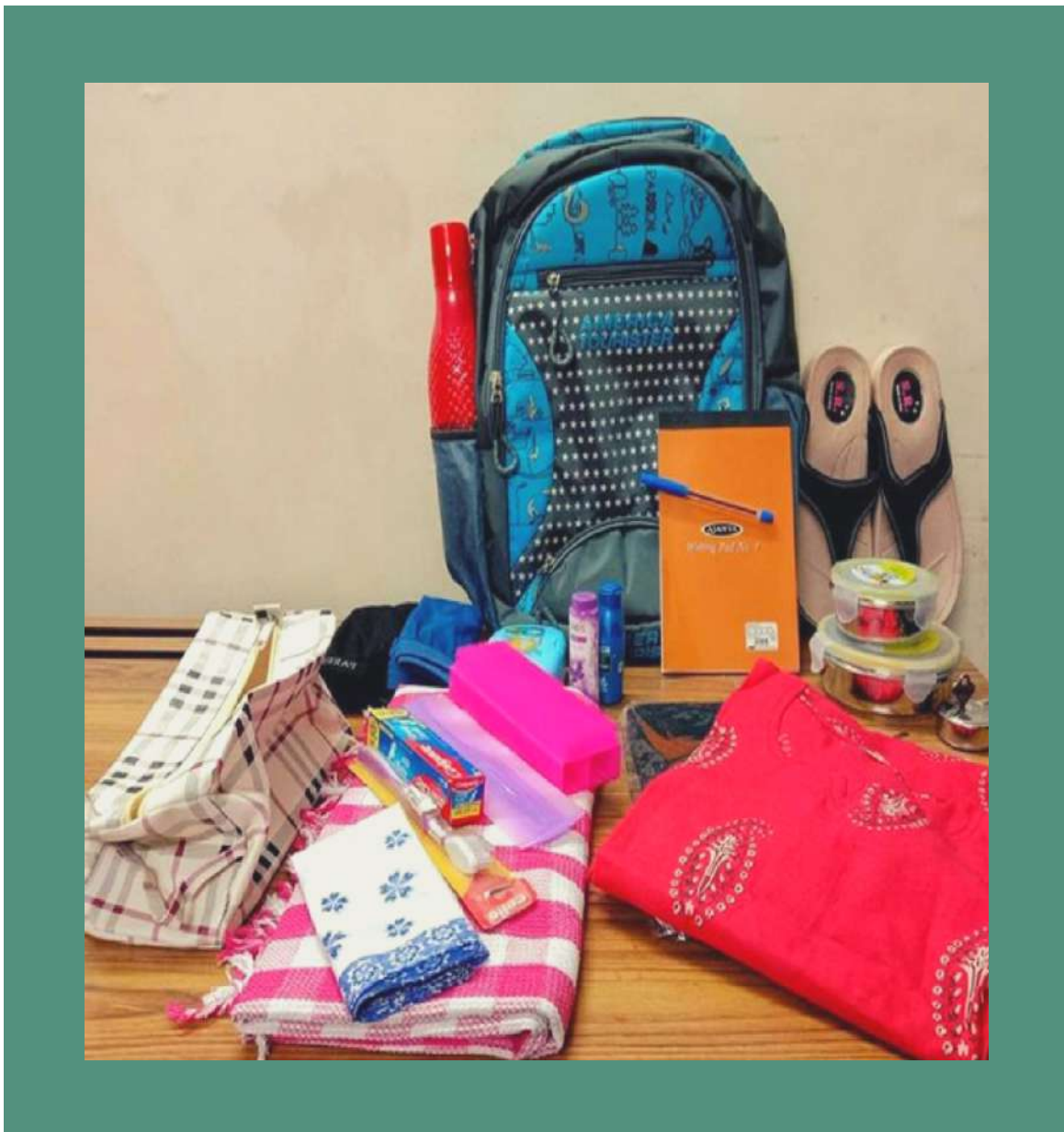
The women are encouraged to form and share their own opinions, and listen to those put forth by other group members. Methodology of the group sessions is participatory and experiential in nature. Group sessions are open to all women who are coherent and wish to participate. We have prepared indicator sheets to monitor women's progress over the sessions. Some of the indicators to monitor women's progress are their regularity and punctuality in the sessions, participation during activities, reduction in symptoms, adherence to medication, personal care and hygiene etc.

Phase II PSYCHOSOCIAL RECOVERY (3 months):

We link the women with working women's hostels for shelter and they attend a daycare centre to further address psychosocial issues and to acclimatize themselves with traveling in the city. Phase II of the project is marked by two events:

- i) Moving into a working women's hostel
- ii) Beginning psychosocial recovery

After shifting to the working women's hostel, each woman is given a kit containing essential items including clothing, shoes, bag and a bottle, soap, oil, lock and key and so on.



The daily essential items that the clients are provided with

Women are introduced to Daycare which is one of the first places they begin to meet others recovering from mental illness at different stages of recovery, helps them get into a routine and work on the psychosocial aspects to facilitate recovery. This is when the clients' begin to shape an identity for themselves outside the bracket of a diagnosis, and apart from their disorders. The idea of the 'future' starts to become more concrete. A major challenge is readjusting to a life outside the hospital, following a daily schedule that includes attending and travelling to the daycare centre located in another part of the city, negotiating spaces and interacting with the social environment.

Phase III VOCATIONAL TRAINING (3 months):

Women start vocational training after attending a day care centre for three months, becoming ready to choose a vocation and enter the employment sector. Our women have been trained and employed in hospitality, housekeeping, retail and sales, printing press technology, and home care assistance. This is also the time when we begin the process of accessing citizenship rights; facilitating the creation of identity proofs. Most of Tarasha's clients, were undocumented persons admitted to the hospital accompanied by Police personnel with no trace of family/blood relatives and facing destitution, often branded 'Not Known/Unknown' patients in the hospital with no identity of their own. Tarasha recognises the importance of citizenship rights and entitlements and works to ensure that the clients obtain documents to establish their identity beyond the diagnosis of a mental disorder.

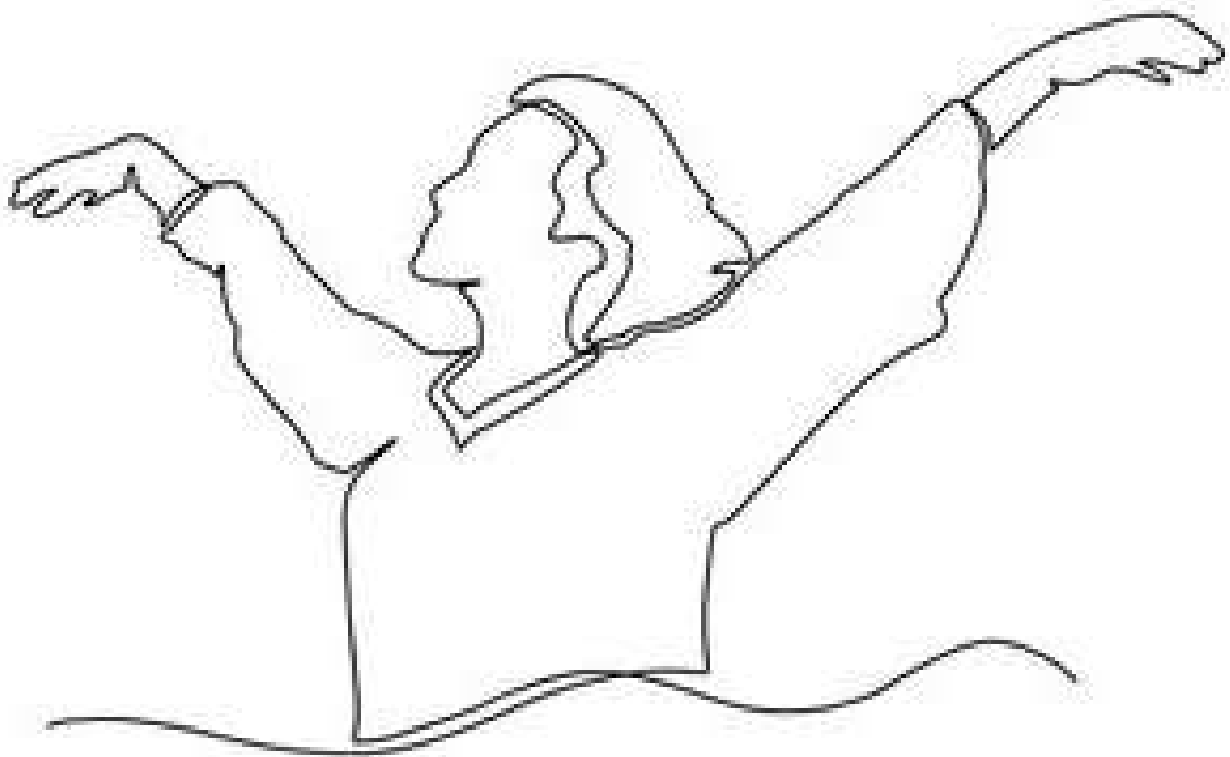
Phase IV JOB DEVELOPMENT AND JOB SUPPORT (4-6 months):

Once the women are employed and able to hold on to their jobs for at least 3 months, the project withdraws financial support; psychosocial support however, continues. The team keeps in touch with the women at least once a week. Step by step, the clients are encouraged to take control of the therapeutic sessions in terms of scheduling and themes, thereby building ownership of the process of recovery.

Tarasha strives to be in touch with the client's employers as well, thereby obtaining feedback from the workplace, while maintaining the clients' dignity, confidentiality and respecting the clients' wishes.

Phase V EXIT:

The last phase of the project is Exit, where the women are encouraged to move towards greater autonomy and freedom by exiting the project. Women acknowledge their independence through an exit letter. Psychosocial support is still available to the women. Tarasha is an innovative approach as it uses a non-institutionalized approach to recovery from mental disorders, linking livelihoods and shelter with psychosocial issues; involves independent living in mainstream spaces and works towards facilitating access to citizenship rights of undocumented women.



We are pleased to present the Annual Report for the period
January to December 2020...

Frontline work during COVID-19:



women in a group session at the hostel



social worker in a follow up meeting with a client

With the onset of the pandemic, much of the frontline work involving reintegrated clients staying in the working women's hostel and women at Regional Mental Hospital, Thane was disrupted. The Project staff responded to the challenges by ensuring that the psychosocial support to clients continued through telephonic calls for follow-ups and counselling, visiting hospital OPD to arrange for medication to be delivered to clients staying in the hostel and those at their employer's residence and being in constant touch with hospital staff for updates about women residents of the Regional Mental Hospital, Thane. As for the clients who did not have access to cellphones, they found themselves relying solely on their employers to stay connected with the project team, posing an additional challenge for the team to assess the needs and concerns of the clients with limited interactions.

With the uncertainty around the pandemic and lockdown, the team connected with clients through phone calls 2-3 times a week. Tarasha's team consisting of Mental Health Social Workers, Counsellors and Paraprofessional Social Workers connected with clients for counselling, seeking assurance, emotional and logistical support (delivering medication across the city using intercity courier services, coordinating with their employer, helping during financial crisis, connecting with shelter and COVID-related resources/services). As the Government-laid restrictions were eased, the Project staff would also visit clients at the hostel and respond to COVID-risk related emergencies with the help of the Municipal Corporation helpline.

Tarasha's Therapeutic Work with Women in RMH, Thane

Tarasha's therapeutic interventions involve conducting individual and group sessions with the women residents of RMH, Thane and identifying women to be discharged under Tarasha's recovery and reintegration model.

Tarasha's team would visit the hospital two to four times a week. Prior to the lockdown, from January 2020 to March 2020, Tarasha engaged with 69 women in the female ward through group and individual sessions.

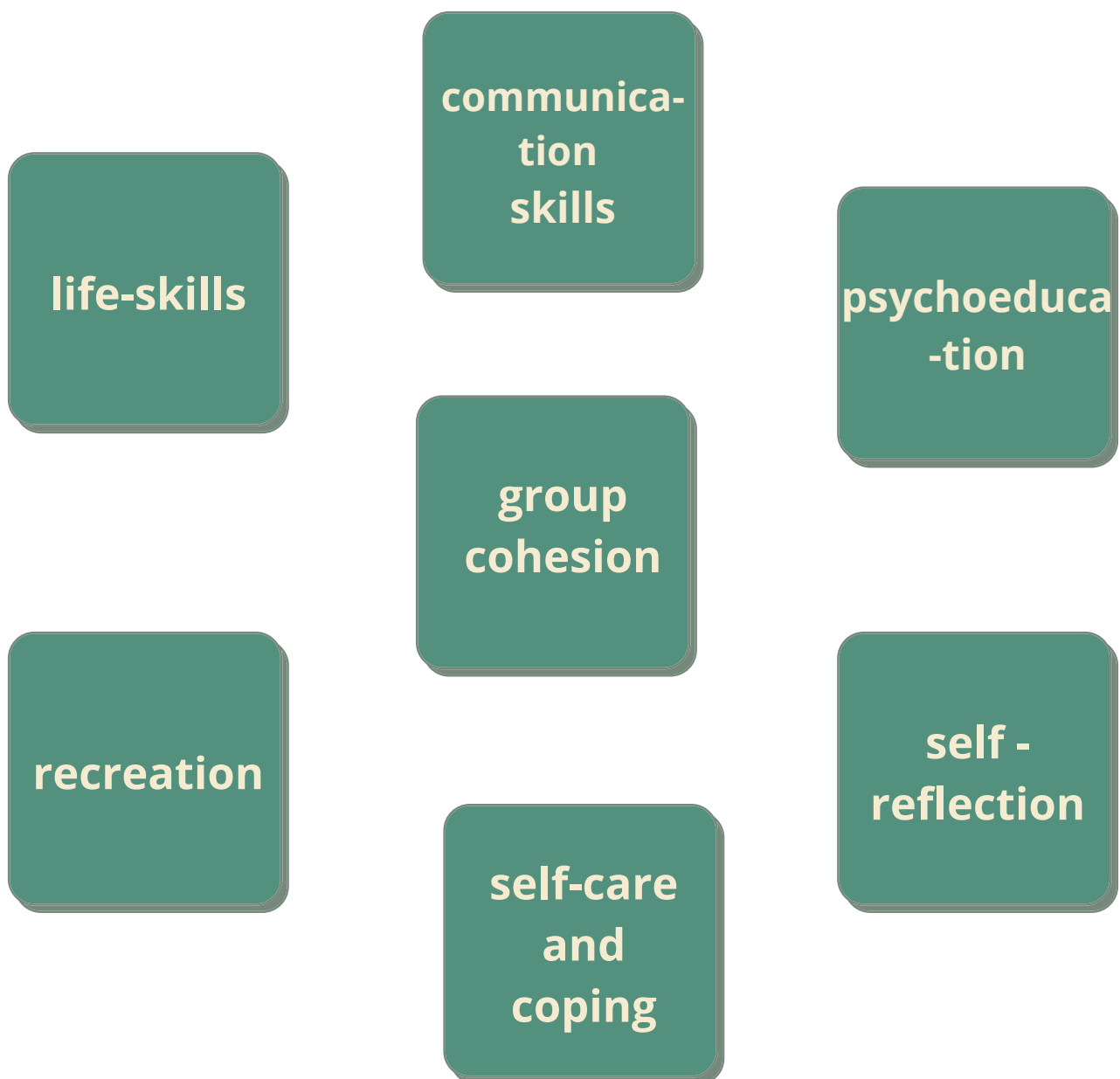


group sessions with women at the hospital

Group Sessions:

The group sessions with women in the hospital provide them a non-judgemental and safe space to share, reflect and learn about themselves, build positive relationships and learn important life skills. The group norms iterated by team members who facilitate the sessions establish a space of mutual respect, equality and confidentiality.

The methods used are open discussions, poetry, role-play and other therapeutic techniques and methods. From January 2020 to March 2020, 17 group sessions were conducted with 38 women. Women are referred by Psychiatric Social Workers, Occupational Therapists and Psychiatrists at the hospital and also identified by the Project team. The themes covered in group sessions were:



Individual Sessions:

Tarasha's individual sessions are one-on-one counselling and therapeutic sessions for women at the hospital. The issues addressed in these sessions range from gathering psychosocial, familial and illness history, ventilation around loss of family support and abandonment, stress and anger management, challenges in recovery, exploring aspirations, dreams and future plans. The sessions focus on building a therapeutic relationship between the client and the Project's Social Worker. The Project team uses indicator sheets to record observations around the client's mental health status, behaviour in the group and other observations made during group and individual sessions. Tarasha also provides counselling and therapeutic support to women in the hospital who may not be referred to us, but only need emotional support.

Between January 2020 and March 2020, a total of 44 individual sessions were conducted with 21 women.

With the support of The Hans Foundation, Tarasha facilitated the discharge of a woman from the Regional Mental Hospital, Thane in February. Manisha (name changed), admitted in 2004 had been diagnosed with Epilepsy with Mild Intellectual Disability by Psychiatrists at the hospital and was one of the several women who are long-stay patients with a 'not known' identity, i.e. an undocumented person with no trace of her family. Tarasha facilitated her discharge and shifted her to Sharan shelter in Saki Naka, Andheri which is located in the heart of the city in a mainstream locality, well-connected with transportation and was introduced to daycare by MANAS Psychological Health Centre, Mulund. Even with the lockdown restrictions, the team continued to follow-up via telephone calls with the client and the hostel staff and

worked on behavioural issues associated with tobacco dependency through counselling through telephonic calls, visits to the hostel (after lockdown lifted), ensuring to provide support to fight the withdrawal like giving her sauf (fennel seeds) everyday to chew to fight the cravings, checking in with her daily and also shifted her to another shelter by Nivara Kendra in Thane when she decided that she did not wish to stay in Sharan shelter. Unfortunately, Manisha decided that she wanted to go back to the hospital. In November 2020, after an evaluation with the Psychiatrist at Regional Mental Hospital, Thane, her admission was facilitated.

With the support of Prayas Trust, Tarasha also extended support to women discharged from Regional Mental Hospital in Thane by their family and facilitated the reintegration of 17 women (January 2020 to March 2020). We achieved this by linking women with community resources like working women's hostels, day care centres, job agencies for livelihood opportunities towards their reintegration under Tarasha's model of recovery, thus preventing them from becoming revolving-door psychiatric patients.



Manisha's transformation...
(Image used with permission)



Tarasha's Work with Care-givers

With the support of The Hans Foundation, Tarasha was able to continue its initiative, the Care-givers' Support Programme to extend support to care-givers in Mumbai through student volunteers trained by the Project. This support helps care-givers to get immediate relief through a non-judgemental space for ventilation, relieving time by helping to run errands and chores, encouraging the care-recipient to maintain recovery and connecting the family with resources. Tarasha oriented 587 students about the programme and mental health across different colleges in Mumbai. During the lockdown, the Project also conducted an online training workshop across 4 days accommodating needs of students learning from their homes and trained 12 students. The workshop focussed on the following themes:

**understanding
mental illness**

**ground
realities
of mental
health**

**Caregivers
Testimonies**

**support to
caregivers**

**counselling
skills**

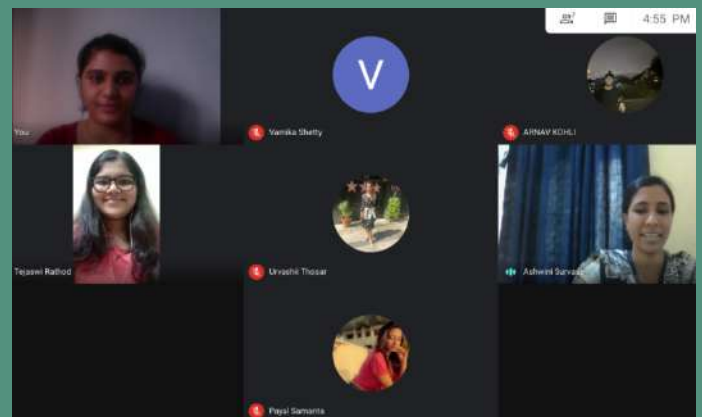
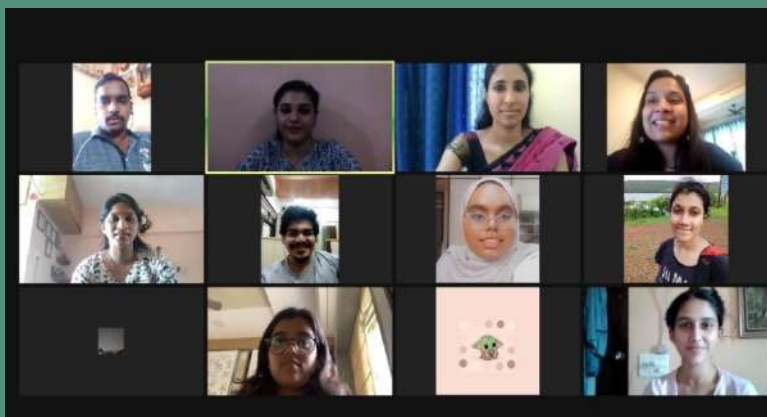
Out of the total families assigned with a student volunteer in the previous year, 30 families continued to be associated with the programme this year. In addition, 3 new families were assigned, student volunteers. During the lockdown, student volunteers followed-up and stayed in touch with assigned families via telephone calls. Support by student volunteers assigned with care-givers shifted to follow-ups, emotional and logistical support to provide a safe space for ventilation and sharing, arranging food/ration supplies for the families and connecting with the organisations doing relief work for marginalised communities.

The Project was able to raise Rs.10,000 for a caregiving family living in Vidyavihar through a donor. The family consists of a primary caregiver, Ankita (name changed) who is a person living with disability, living with her husband (primary income earner who is a daily wage labourer), 2 children and her care-recipient mother living with chronic mental and physical health issues. The care-giver and her family had been living under extreme financial struggle with electricity and water supply cuts and debt. The support helped the care-giver to clear the dues and get immediate relief so she could focus on her care-giving and household responsibilities.

Another care-giver, Zareen (name changed), living in an urban slum in Mumbai suburbs, takes care of her mother living with chronic mental illness. Zareen's experience of looking after her mother has been an exhausting experience with having to juggle responsibilities of a homemaker, parent and so on. Due to old age of the care-recipient mother and the chaotic daily schedule of the care-giver wherein she had to balance helping her husband prepare items that he sells door-to-door, taking care of children and household chores, she was not only

fatigued and under-slept but also guilt-ridden of not being able to give her mother the companionship she knew she needed. That's when the student volunteer's regular checking-in with the care-giver, companionship and emotional support to the care-recipient mother to identify and work on issues around self-care and maintaining recovery, gave Zareen a sense of relief and stability. This way the support from Zareen to her care-recipient mother could continue and help her mother to maintain recovery.

Tarasha also used the virtual platform and conducted an online review meeting with the student volunteers to monitor the work and provide a space for the volunteers towards shared learning and providing guidance and insights to better support care-givers.



Online Review Meetings with volunteers

Mental Health at the Workplace Programme

Tarasha's programme was conceptualised with an aim to start a discourse around mental health, disclosure and sensitivity among employees and influence HR policies to be more mental health friendly and inclusive. Tarasha has worked with corporate organisations to design session content and has covered over 651 employees across 2 organisations. The participants included HR Managers, Corporate staff and employees with different job roles with segregated sessions for each group. The sessions typically had between 30-50 participants and were 2 hours long covering topics from navigating the work-from-home scenario during lockdown, self-care and creating inclusive and mental health-friendly spaces in the workplace as an integral part of the session. The themes covered were as follows:

**Acknowledge
COVID-related
changes and
stressors**

**Seeking help
and self-care**

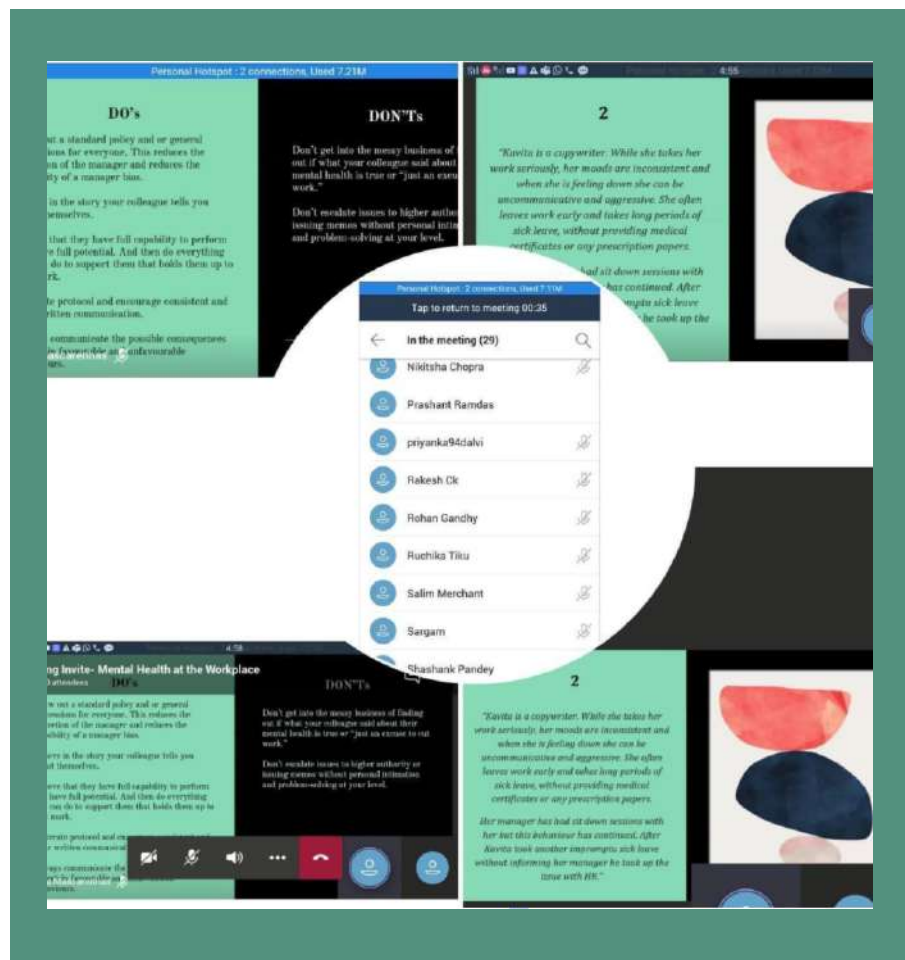
Busting Myths

**Dos and Don'ts:
communication
guidelines**

**Reasonable
accomodations**

Common points of discussion brought up by employees ranged from work-life boundaries, stigma around mental health as prevalent, need for greater sensitivity in work interactions and more open conversations rooted in empathy, identifying early signs of dysfunction, focusing on self-care to seek help and modelling an inclusive and mental health-friendly workplace.

This was achieved through acknowledging pandemic-related stressors, dispelling common misconceptions around mental health, case studies-based discussions exploring communication guidelines for the HR and colleagues and structural /environmental changes to encourage disclosure and offer reasonable accommodations to employees for an inclusive workplace.



screenshots from the Workplace Mental Health Session

With our own observations and reflections and feedback from participants, we have been open to evolving the content of the sessions to make them more relatable and relevant.

Voices of employees around mental health:

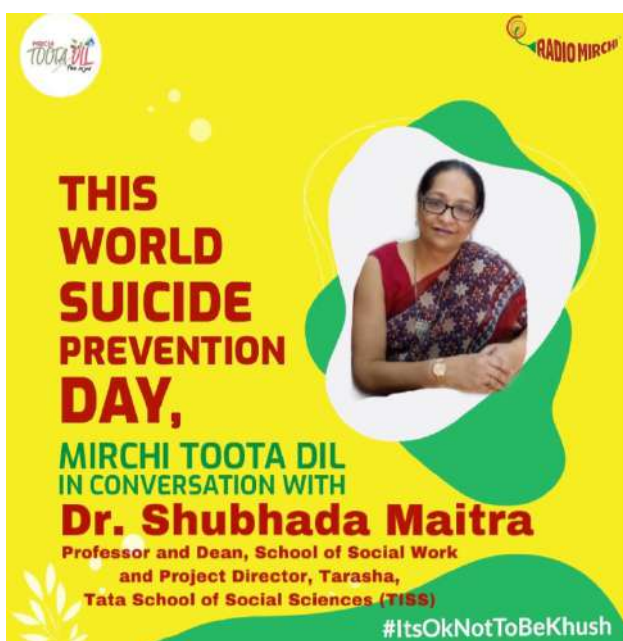
"If you have a mental (health) issue, it's considered as madness. That way people are not open about it!"

"Sometimes just knowing it's okay to go through what you actually are, needs acceptance and moral support"

"I am someone who has braved depression between 2014-2015"

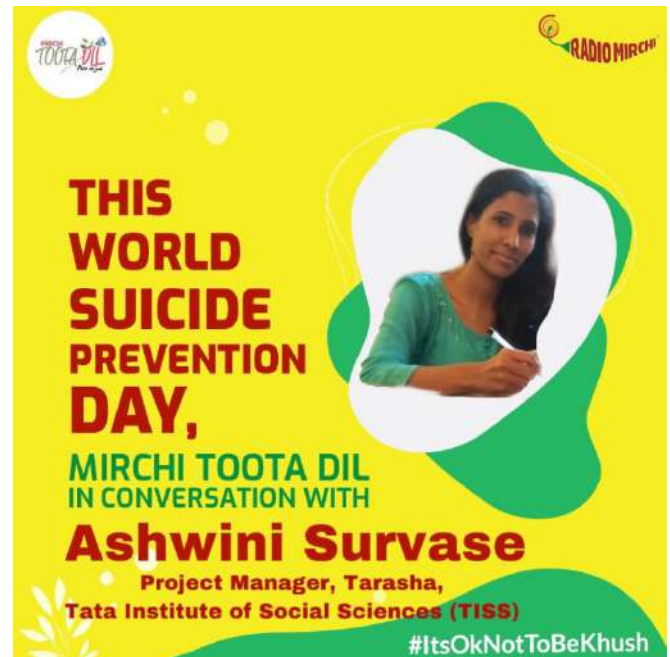
"We should have a human touch and approach. If someone trusted you and told you their problem, it's the moral responsibility of the Manager to help rather than accuse"

As part of encouraging discourse around mental health and support, Tarasha collaborated with a pan-India mainstream radio station in an online campaign on the eve of World Suicide Prevention Day to talk about losses in life, job uncertainties as part of the COVID experience and living with mental illness.

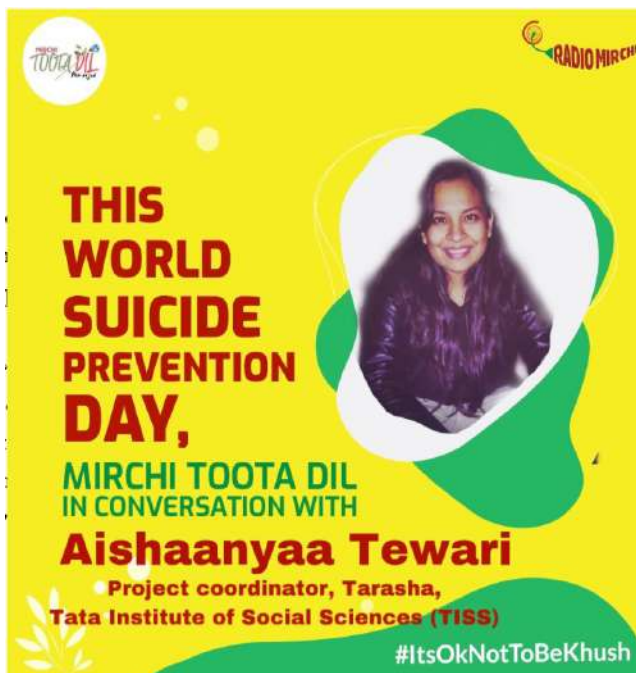


Prof. Shubhada in conversation about 'Matters of the Heart and Losses'

Ashwini Survase in conversation about
'Living with Mental Illness'



Aishaanyaa Tewari in conversation
about 'Recent Unemployment'

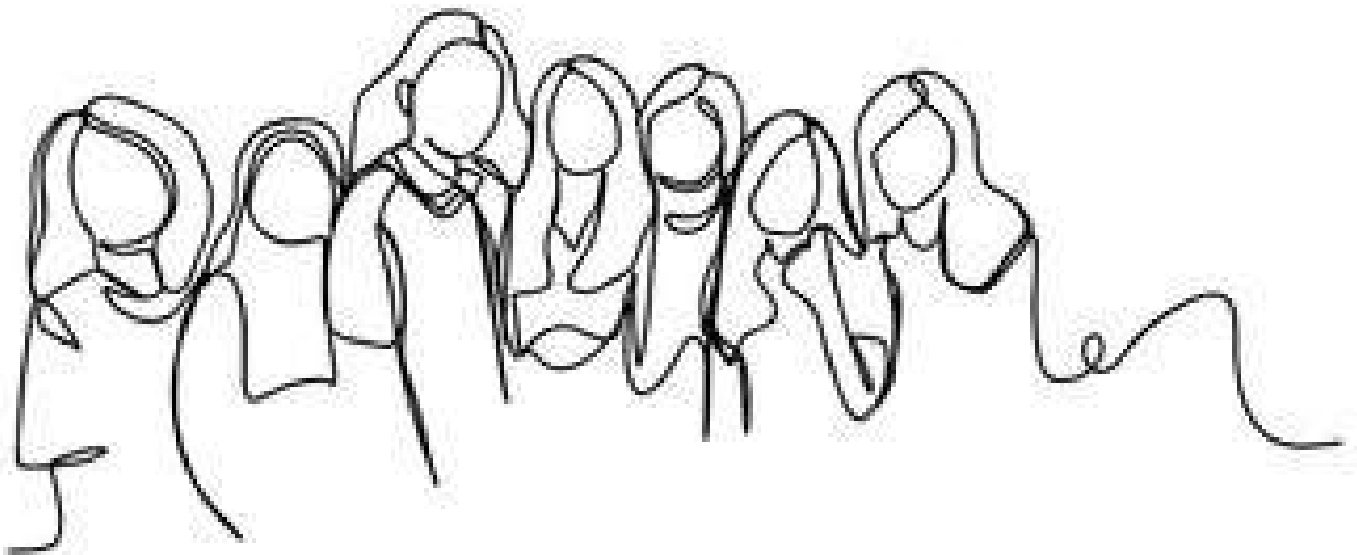


The project has also partnered with the pan-India radio station Radio Mirchi to offer in-house online/telephonic counselling service to their employees.

Tarasha continues to be in dialogue with other organisations to design tailor-made sessions as per their unique needs and will soon begin sessions with their employees. These organisations are from the sectors of manufacturing, media and entertainment and training and livelihoods-development.

The Way Ahead...

As Tarasha approaches her 10th year, the Project plans to continue on the path to expand its novel initiatives towards mainstreaming mental health and making cities mental health-friendly.



Acknowledgements

Tarasha would like to thank our donors The Hans Foundation, Prayas Trust and Dr. Jhaver for their support to the project.

We would also like to thank our partners

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Yuva Parivartan, Bandra

Maid in Mumbai, Mahim

Kotak Education Foundation, Chembur

We would like to thank the Psychiatry Departments of Lokmanya Tilak, Dr. R N Cooper and KEM Hospital Municipal Hospitals in Mumbai.

Our Team

Shubhada Maitra, Ph.D. - Project Director, Professor and Dean
of School of Social Work, TISS

Ashwini Survase - Project Manager

Sargam Jadhav - Mental Health Social Worker

Priyanka Dalvi - Mental Health Social Worker

Ayushi Srivastava - Mental Health Social Worker

Arpita Lavhale - Paraprofessional Social Worker

Komal Das - Paraprofessional Social Worker

Changes in the Tarasha Team...

We are pleased to welcome Ms. Ayushi Srivastava on the Tarasha team as Project Coordinator in place of Ms. Aishaanyaa Tewari whose contribution we value during her time with us. We wish Aishaanyaa all the best in her future endeavours.

Associate with *Tarasha*

If you want to contact us, donate towards the Project or need more information about our work, you may contact us at tarasha2011@gmail.com

**7715009558
9833446520**

Donations could be made in cash/cheque. You can also donate towards our women in terms of their monthly supplies/clothes. Please ensure that the products you wish to pass on are new, and in good condition.

**Visit our Instagram and Facebook page:
[@tarashatiss](#)**

We look forward to hearing from you!