



# The Banyan

# The Banyan Academy of Leadership in Mental Health (BALM)



## **BALM Annual Report 2015 - 2016**



# **The Banyan**

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## **The Banyan Academy of Leadership in Mental Health (BALM)**

# **BALM ANNUAL REPORT**

## **2015-2016**

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# Founder's Note

2015-2016 has perhaps been one of the most impactful years of The Banyan's and BALM's life. Our contribution transitioned from direct services in the mental health and homelessness spaces to include a focus on social development in the communities that we worked in. As a result three critical programmes emerged:

- A skills initiative to ensure participation and self reliance amongst persons in distress and living in poverty, particularly those affected with mental health issues.
- A trial that offered inclusive living options for persons who experience long term mental health care needs and thus engaged with local communities in villages to promote social inclusion.
- A programme with children and adolescents through tuition kiosks and youth clubs to promote abilities, help problem solve and pursue well being.

All these programmes contribute significantly to our larger vision of social justice and equity promotion and locate mental health work within a broader canvas of development and capabilities promotion.

Keeping this in mind, our senior leadership and their teams stretched to fulfil our immediate mandate of promotion of psychosocial care through our clinics and inpatient services and in parallel attempted to respond to the distress of members in communities that we worked in – typically low resource and often remote. Using NALAM (meaning well being) as the theme and umbrella under which much of this work was located, our team of community mobilisers reached out to subjugated and abused women, men unable to shake off misuse of substances, the elderly depressed having to engage in tough labour for a living and unable to manage the shift in social structure and dynamic and children growing up in an environment of scarcity, deprivation and conflict.

The clear relationship established between poverty and mental ill health unfolded before us, this year, more clearly than before, evidencing it's complex, persistent and non- linear nature. As we build approaches to tackle these issues more effectively and advocate with the Government for deeper and meaningful engagement, using research as a tool and experiential experts as guides, we also hope that students and researchers who attend the BALM- TISS programme will gain from the wisdom and insights of this real world experience. We realize that multiple stakeholders need to participate in this journey of social transformation and with every person who comes our way, we realize that we have the opportunity to inspire such that they may in turn touch lives and promote a kinder, inclusive and creative world.

**Vandana Gopikumar and Vaishnavi Jayakumar**



# Notes from Trustees

## Message from the Chairperson

After a period of consolidation of work and experience in the last twenty years, New Initiatives and Growth have been the hallmark of the year 2015-16. Both The Banyan and BALM extended the areas of Service as well as Education and Training to new frontiers. The Passion, Care and Dedication for the clients continue.

Banyan's NALAM project following the successful implementation is being replicated across both the rural and urban mental health programmes. A very strong network of NGOs called " Neithal" is now being incubated.

We are laying emphasis on Skill Development programmes across all our centres. There is a significant increase in the number of people working within and outside the organization. Most of the people using our residential services are gainfully employed. What is heartening is the progress made in the families of clients- many of their children have now gone to college. Many have taken to degrees in Social Work.

We have rolled out programmes focusing on mental health issues in many parts of Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra. We work with Central Prisons ( Puzhal) and Missionaries Of Charity. BALM is heading the training programme in all the centres of Missionaries of Charity across India.

The response of our staff to the Chennai Floods especially in Thiruporur Block was much appreciated.

BALM education has expanded. There are nearly 100 students now from Diploma to Masters programme. We have collaborated with Rutgers University, Oxford University, New York University and Cornell University. All these collaborations have enhanced the scope and quality of our education. Our research has resulted in publication of papers in high impact international journals.

I must compliment our dedicated staff led by Dr Kishore for all the enthusiasm, passion and hard work.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees I would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to our donors, institutional collaborators, volunteers and well-wishers.

The tasks ahead are immense and so is the opportunity for service and help. The zeal and enthusiasm of the people in The Banyan and BALM will take us to greater heights.

**Sankara Narayanan**

## Message from the Treasurer

There were no uneventful moments at The Banyan and The Banyan Academy of Leadership in Mental Health (BALM), and this past year was no exception!

We have rolled out two programmes focused on tribal mental health in extremely low resource settings in rural Tamil Nadu (the Nilgiris), and Maharashtra (Aghai), launched a new clinic with a focus on life skills education, and training of lay health workers in collaboration with Stella Maris College, systematically increased our focus on skills development and self-reliance amongst persons with mental health issues and created multiple avenues for employment, welcomed a whole new set of inspired and passionate students who are eager to affect change, and *most importantly* seen two children whose mothers access care at The Banyan graduate high school and enrol in social work programmes at college!

Amidst all this, I am very proud to note the immediate empathetic response of The Banyan and BALM teams and students towards *rescue, relief and recovery operations* in the wake of the December 2015 Chennai Floods. Amidst extremely difficult conditions, the teams and students not only ensured the safety and wellbeing of the clients at The Banyan, and seamless operations, but also reached out in a systematic and effective manner to the rest of the community around, and supported over 3500 *individuals and families* through this extremely traumatic period.

At The Banyan and BALM, we strive to ensure that every activity we pursue, is meaningful, and reflective of our ethos and culture, of equity, inclusion, participation, and responsiveness. This philosophy is observed across all organisational functions including internal services (finance, human resources and administration, and resource mobilisation), and I am very pleased to say that our transparency, keen attention to detail, and strict adherence to norms have ensured that we enjoy query free auditing. We have also hired KPMG as our internal auditors to ensure the highest degree of compliance to statutory norms, and I am proud to say that to this day neither The Banyan nor BALM have ever been questioned by authorities in this regard.

I'd like to take this opportunity to extend my heartfelt gratitude to all our institutional and corporate donors, and countless philanthropists and volunteers for never turning us away, always believing in our work, pushing us to strive for more, and championing the cause of mental health! We would not have the courage to push our boundaries if not for all of you.

I wish the teams the very best for the great opportunities, and exciting times that lie ahead!

**Balraj Vasudevan**





# *BALM Highlights of the year...*

## **(i) Academic Programs**

The Banyan, since 1993, has been involved in addressing the concerns of homeless persons with mental illness, and creating frameworks and pathways that suitably engage with the intersectional complexities of mental illness identified as poverty, homelessness and lack of social and institutional support. The problems of complexity and persistence of phenomena associated with mental illness continue to drive The Banyan in its quest for innovating systems of care and compassion that include medical infrastructure, family, community, law, culture, politics and nation.

The Banyan is recognised as a strong, credible force in the field of mental health in India delineating the much-ignored psychosocial components of mental illness in their enquiries and praxis. Without reducing mental illness merely to symptoms and their prevention or reduction, The Banyan has painstakingly built decades of experience charting individual biographies, narratives of recovery, framing methodologies for the future and improving on the systems in place by constantly challenging present limitations of research practice.

The BALM is a not-for-profit organization that was conceived in 2007 to consolidate outcomes from the work of The Banyan, set benchmarks for mental health care, build human resource capabilities across multiple cadres, and use emerging evidence as a tool to impact policy and drive change. BALM, as a sister organisation of The Banyan, focuses on the creation of a committed and informed cadre of mental health and social work professionals where the pedagogical practice depends on the realised outcomes and intersections between theory and practice. Students from BALM have been employed by and involved in hospitals, national-level social projects, field projects run by well-established organisations; in addition to the above, they also engage in individual practice. BALM believes that problem-solving at the individual and community level and policy analysis at the national level depend largely on skills acquired through robust education.

## Education Meets Practice and Research

Education is not merely the means to a humanistic end; it is a constant struggle to understand, know, inhabit and realise differing subject positions and at BALM, this is a commitment we take seriously. The first step towards informed action is introspection and thinking constantly about the nature of struggles and possible solutions by devising new frameworks of understanding and knowledge. Education that believes in remaining abreast of new theoretical developments while at the same time addressing particular configurations of existing problems is of paramount importance. India suffers a major deficit in human resources in the field of mental health and this has repercussions on the delivery of high-quality psychosocial services to (especially) the most disadvantaged among us.

Mental health problems, according to recent WHO statistics, are increasing in low-income nations at alarming proportions. According to estimates, DALYs (Disability Adjusted Life Years) computed as a way of measuring the burden of ill-health or disease on economy and social conditions of living, lost due to mental disorders are expected to represent 15% of the global burden of diseases by 2020. (Industrial Psychiatry Journal, (Jan-Jun 2009)

Compared to this huge need, currently there appear to be approximately 3,500 psychiatrists, 1,000 psychiatric social workers, 1,000 clinical psychologists and 900 psychiatric nurses in the country. The present situation requires pre-emptive, well-planned and layered strategies to counter the shortfall of mental health resources and the quality of training provided. Due to the overburdening of already scarce resources, burnout, frustration and demotivation are common issues identified among many mental health professionals. Being able to reach out to the most vulnerable and marginalised effectively and build networks of compassion requires the mental health professionals to be supported structurally. BALM reminds its students of the passion and drive necessary to tackle multiple, persistent/recurrent issues with patience through programmes in practice.

Among the many stimulating experiences at BALM, students work closely with the evidence collected and analysed from The Banyan's projects. Apart from the external internships and project work they complete for course requirements, constantly being present and active in The Banyan's work with the homeless, mentally ill women strengthens them with incomparable experience in ecosystems representative of the "real" world.

Thus, BALM is an effort in this direction towards equipping professional psychologists, researchers, analysts, entrepreneurs, social workers and community mental health workers in immersive social practice such that they may effectively grapple with the multiple intersectionalities in complex situations. Coming from different socioeconomic backgrounds and cultural experiences, the students at BALM are schooled in maintaining passion for mental health studies and working strategically to meet society's needs.

## Differences in Approach

BALM is in collaboration with TISS, Mumbai to provide academic direction and excellence to its students in its pursuit of ground-breaking, transdisciplinary research that addresses the specific inter-sectionalities affecting illness-wellness in the Global South context. The unique curriculum is devised to ensure that the students take risks in ideating and conceptualizing frameworks that speak to poorly defined complexities. BALM emerged out of the desire to address the omission in the academic study of recovery oriented-paradigms in mental health consistent with the goals of The Banyan. BALM, since 2007, is committed to producing human resources with values to effectively engage with the wide-ranging discourses on mental health and influence policy change, set benchmarks in mental health care, catalyse the synergetic combination of evidence and practice and re-introduce the humane dimension in the popular understanding and practice of mental health. The courses have evolved on the strength of the feedback loops between theory and practice, equipping the students with the necessary skills in the qualitative and quantitative aspects of executing research and management of mental health issues in communities and institutions.

The Banyan has been a champion of rights-based, capability-maximising approaches that focus on facilitating optimal states of personal recovery of PwMIs (People with Mental Illness), integration into communities of PwMIs and building of supportive ecosystems with the help of research, governance, advocacy and civil society. Through its work, The Banyan has built an evidence-based human rights centric practice that affirms the role that communities can play in the care and wellbeing of their most vulnerable populations. This year (April '15 to March '16) 17 women from The Banyan have been re-integrated with their families, through the rigorous facilitation of aftercare and needs-based assistance.

The different research projects run at BALM ensure that the students gain grounding in policy analysis, management, social issues and questions of responsibility and ethics, apart from coursework. The developed skills are due to the study of the complex nature of interactions in the multiple domains of understanding that span social systems. The final degree is awarded by TISS, Mumbai.

## Academics at BALM

BALM in collaboration with TISS, Mumbai offered four Masters Courses in the year 2015-2016 through three schools: Psychology, Social Work and Global Health. BALM anchors three centres: for Health and Mental Health Policy Research, Inclusive Development and Social Innovation (in collaboration with Vrije Universiteit (VU), Amsterdam, the Harvard School of Public Health and the Global Psychiatry Department at Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston) and Mental Health and Marginality (in collaboration with New York University- McSilver School of Poverty).

The Departments of Social Work, Global Health and Psychology work in tandem sharing insights on psychological and social approaches. Due to the varied opportunities provided by the diverse clinical settings in Chennai, run by The Banyan, from prevention and care in the community (part of community based rehabilitation programmes), crisis intervention at multiple locations (rescued from the streets, shelters and the Transit Care Centre), psychiatric OPDs at rural and urban clinics to long term care, students and faculty work together to grasp the nuances that real life situations provide.

Psychosocial rehabilitation, especially of the most vulnerable with high needs, counselling interventions have to be nuanced, which may be achieved only through constant everyday interaction and in-depth exposure to multiple intersections in individual narratives. This unique motivation to combine real-time interactions in campus settings forms the thrust of BALM's drive to create superlative mental health professionals.

## 1. Department of Social Work

### (a) MA Social Work in Mental Health

The Masters in Social Work in Mental Health seeks to create a committed and ethical pool of human resources, trained in the rights and values ecosystem that The Banyan has assiduously built over the last two decades. The students are trained to define issues, originate methods of enquiry and apply possible outcomes of their research conscientiously. Practice-based research and field action projects form the major thrust of this programme in order to ensure students retain a ground-level understanding of issues in society.

The Social Work programme builds competencies in various domains such as community organization, development practice, child and family welfare among others. Apart from theory and research-based work, the programme also builds networking and liaising with governmental and non-governmental organizations for capacity-building, policy and programme development and

### Masters In Social Work In Mental Health



#### STUDENT TESTIMONIALS

I had applied to BALM directly for MA social work in mental health. Little did I know then that the journey will help me transcend the binary between academics and practice. Living, learning and sharing our college space with the clients at the Banyan helped acquire the required sensitivity towards mental illness beyond textbooks and disciplinary ethics. An eclectic group of professionals who taught, problem solved and encouraged to challenge my own limits contributed great deal. To sum it up, the course influenced the person in me and I definitely could not have asked for more.

- Upasana Iyer, MA Social Work, 2014-16

extension through centres and research facilities. Students can be employed as social workers, programme co-ordinators and resource persons for governments, as part of corporate social responsibility and civil society.


## (b) MA in Management, Policy Analysis and Entrepreneurship in Health

The programme introduces the student to theories, strategies and application models for innovating methods as mediators to deal with the range of social challenges that inform the field of mental health. At BALM, the focus is on integrating approaches from different disciplines in order to grapple with the multiple intersections that issues generally present when first tackled. These challenges could vary from poor access to healthcare services, lack of awareness, rapid urbanization and resultant migration to stigma, lack of social support, isolation and eventual disintegration of communities. Difficulties in

approach arise from the lack of consensus in defining problems and inability to decide on the modalities of solving intermeshed issues.

# MPA

## Management, Policy Analysis and Entrepreneurship in Health



### STUDENT TESTIMONIALS

The course is very student-centric in terms of teaching, assignments and project work. It helped me learn subject through self participation.

Month wise course curriculum was very helpful in order to focus on each subject exclusively. This gave me a lot of time to understand the subjects well. Without a Placement Cell, it might be difficult for the students to get placed as many institutions are not familiar with the course. I feel students should get the platform to initiate their business plan along with financial support similar to Social Entrepreneurship course in TISS. Research element is core to any Enterprise and for Entrepreneurs. I think inclusion of research module benefits the course to a great extent.

-Shiva Krishna Reddy, MPA, 2014-2016

The course will work with theories from the fields of ethics, management, leadership, entrepreneurship, innovation, finance, law, sociology and culture in order to develop critical and lateral thinking in approaching deep-rooted issues. The graduate will be able to develop and critically assess business plans with relevant scientific data collection methods and analytical tools. Graduates are trained to become leaders and innovators who are instrumental in aligning broad-range solutions to social systems and looking critically at present ways of functioning and find innovative alignments, research and business plans from their experience of studying transdisciplinary theories and modes of application.



## (c) Diploma Program in Community Mental Health Care

BALM is offering a Diploma Program in Community Mental Health, which hopes to create a passionate workforce that is trained to recognise mental distress, build access points to care and promote larger wellbeing in the community. This program is aimed at members of mostly rural, disadvantaged communities in order to empower them with requisite knowledge and skills to impede health crises and avoid steep social and medical costs in the community. Concurrently, the course is also tailored to increase their employability and build sustainable livelihoods. The batch of 2015-2016 included students identified among the NALAM workers, part of The Banyan's projects. They are taught to mobilise available community resources such as the Panchayats, schools, health centres and government schemes in order to enable those most in need to better their circumstances. Field visits, workshops, role plays and discussions apart from regular lectures inform the pedagogy. The students of the Diploma programme won Third Prize in the Street Theatre competition conducted at RGNIYD apart from performing a radio skit in the same premises.



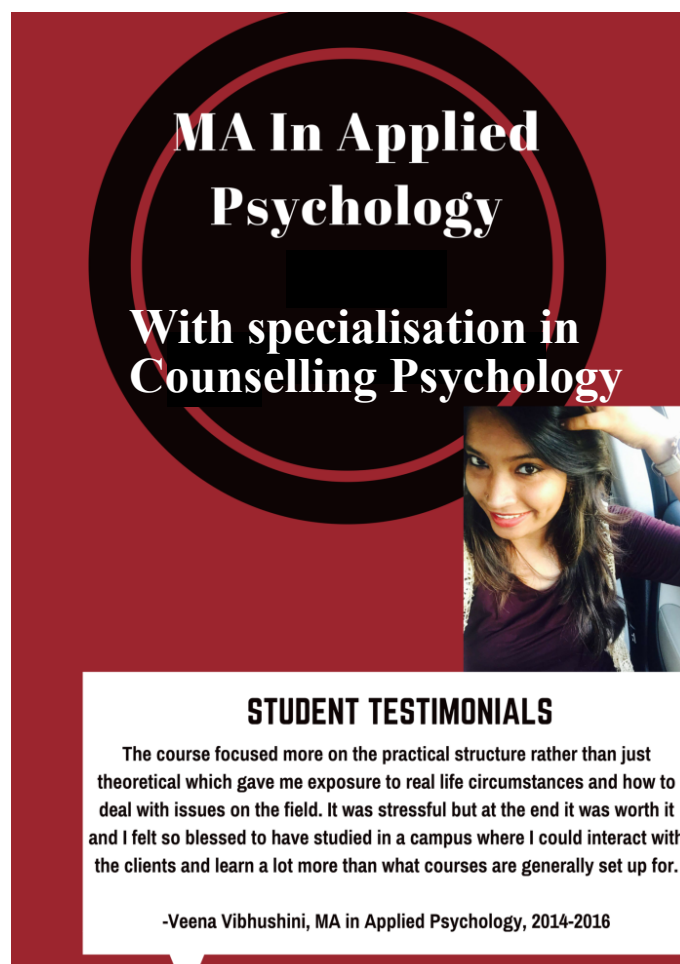
*"It was very encouraging...I think this Diploma course will be useful for applying practically. It was challenging...In the beginning, I found the course to be vague. Later, after reading, and more classes, it became clearer. Now I'm trying to get pension for old people in the village I worked in (during the class days). I learnt how to go to rural areas and help from the NALAM workers. They are doing an awesome job."*

Sri Vidya, Diploma Student, 2016

## 2. Department of Applied Psychology

### (a) MA Applied Psychology with Specialisation in Clinical Psychology

The M.A. in Applied Psychology with Specialisation in Clinical Psychology addresses gaps in the procurement of mental health services by underlining the significance of diagnostic and therapeutic methods. Clinical psychology involves aspects of counselling as well as dealing with patients suffering from severe or chronic psychological problems, including mental health disorders defined by the DSM criteria. The programme will focus on the development of practitioners with a sound base in research as scientist-practitioners.//



**MA In Applied Psychology**

**With specialisation in Counselling Psychology**

**STUDENT TESTIMONIALS**

The course focused more on the practical structure rather than just theoretical which gave me exposure to real life circumstances and how to deal with issues on the field. It was stressful but at the end it was worth it and I felt so blessed to have studied in a campus where I could interact with the clients and learn a lot more than what courses are generally set up for.

-Veena Vibhushini, MA in Applied Psychology, 2014-2016

Students will be instructed in psychological assessment of children and adults and will be trained under supervision by faculty to administer and interpret standardised intelligence and personality tests. They will develop the skills to use the latest DSM and ICD criteria and nomenclature to evaluate mental illness and devise suitable intervention techniques. Training will be geared towards increasing awareness of diversity and socio-cultural contexts in which individuals are enmeshed. There will be training provided on conducting clinical interviews with individuals, families, and other informants to understand the nature of issues that are being confronted. The basic principles, strategies and techniques of psychotherapy from psychodynamic, cognitive behavioural, group processes and systems approaches will be taught to students to help them apply the same in clinical interventions in an ethical and competent manner.

## (b) MA Applied Psychology with Specialisation in Counselling Psychology

The M.A. programme in Applied Psychology with Specialisation in Counselling Psychology programme is offered by the School for Human Ecology, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. The primary focus of the course is to impart education in counselling that has a developmental and contextual stance. Training will include equipping students with the necessary skills to counsel on issues ranging from school, workplace, marriage, relationship issues apart from overall quality of life and wellbeing. The MA programme involves internships in various settings where students incorporate theoretical knowledge as an extension of practice. Fieldwork also involves supervision, apart from counselling strategies in diverse contexts, allowing students to benefit from feedback provided by trained professionals in the field.

In the light of tremendous demand for professional counsellors in India and the realisation that many individuals need this professional support, the specific goal of this programme will be to equip learners to practice developmental counselling and issue-based counselling with a focus on primary prevention a therapeutic interventions. The programme also develops research as an important aspect of understanding socio-cultural processes that informs the intervention.

We would have not been able to draw visions and reach them without the backing of our steadfast supporters.



Sundram Fasteners Limited

We would particularly like to thank Sundram Fasteners Pvt Ltd for their abiding interest in BALM Education and ensuring that we stay on our chartered course and remain grounded in our vision to create proficient mental health professionals.



We would like to thank with a deep sense of gratitude our Scholarship- providers Real Image, Capital First, Mr. Neeraj Gambhir and Mr. Ranvir Shah for backing our academic potential with zeal and belief in shared common goals.

## (ii) Stakeholder Engagement

With the recent acceptance of the new **Mental Health Policy** in **October 2014**, that encourages public-private-partnerships, focuses on the inter-relational nature of mental ill health-homelessness- and poverty, and the need for convergence, the time is ripe for key players within the mental health and social sector to build capacities, and collectively focus on scaling innovations for lasting and more meaningful impact. Towards achieving this goal, **The Banyan and BALM** collaborate with **Governments, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), and User-Caregiver** groups to initiate, test, and scale up mental health and social care services for homeless and poor persons in **remote, under-served, and poorly resourced regions**. By fostering strategic relationships with multiple stakeholders across various levels, including the police, judiciary, state health and social sector personnel, it attempts to create a diverse, aware, well-resourced and highly skilled workforce equipped to handle complex and persistent problems plaguing the mental health and social sectors today.

A stakeholder engagement charter that clearly defines the nature and duration of the relationship, proposed goals and outcomes, and strict monitoring and evaluation protocols, guides these relationships. **The Banyan, and BALM** serve as technical resource partners across all programmes, and will ensure at least **60% fidelity** to replication toolkits developed by **The Banyan**.

The stakeholder engagement programme seeks to catalyse social mobility and inclusion, by encouraging participation of people with mental health issues in diverse work and social spaces, promoting humane care entrenched in a capabilities framework, and by mobilising deeper commitment and engagement from State and Non-State actors. It seeks to incubate small, niche experiments in collaboration with local partners, systematically share approaches used, and disseminate and transfer the knowledge gained to the regime and landscape levels, and thus has the potential to effectively shape public policy in India and create a platform for a wider discourse on the same across LMICs.



### (iii) Initiatives in Community Mental Health

#### Gramin Adivasi Samaj Vikas Sansthan, Madhya Pradesh

The Gramin Adivasi Samaj Vikas Sansthan (GASVS) based in Sausar, Chhindwara district works with Dalit, Adivasi and other disadvantaged communities in the district. GASVS has been working in Chhindwara district (Sausar) for the last eight years. While their focus has been on PWD, Mental Health and Livelihood, they define the axis of their mental health outreach programmes by catering to PWMI (People with Mental Illness), People with Cerebral Palsy, PWMR (People with Mental Retardation) and PWE (People with Epilepsy) especially those that are identified as socially, economically and politically vulnerable.

The Hanuman temple (Jam Savli) in the vicinity provides an interesting complement to their work, since it is noted for hosting many persons with mental illness. Every evening, during *archana* (offering to the Gods) PWMI gather in the temple precincts and sway with religious verve to the rhythm and chants of the songs and temple bells. It is a trance-like experience and the local communities believe that these people are “possessed”.

The temple thus functions as a refuge and attracts believers and persons with mental illness from far and wide. An NGO based in Kolkata, SEVAC (Sane and Enthusiast Volunteers’ Association of Calcutta) has been conducting psychiatric OPDs in the temple premises. GASVS refers their patients to the visiting psychiatrists. This system links religious belief, community and civil society through mental health programmes.

BALM (Banyan Academy of Leadership in Mental Health) partnered with GASVS to provide consultancy and value addition in their work. BALM and GASVS together work on emergent themes and highlight data and work that reflect the goals of the latter organization. The team generally visits villages within the district, meets caregivers and people with mental illnesses and disorders and is a part of Gram Sabha meetings involving local stakeholders. Since Community Based Rehabilitation is the anchor of their approach, GASVS alongside other organizations is looking to build a community of caregivers and aware citizens.

The personal narratives emerging from the fieldwork are numerous and unrecorded; this is a rich source of information that lies untapped in GASVS’ work. BALM believes these stories could document challenges, paths of recovery and community support and extends support in their documentation. BALM also believes they could be an eventual resource in planning GASVS’ strategy in reaching out to the



disadvantaged communities in a more sustainable manner. GASVS also suggested that their Community Mental Health program be evaluated for future implementation.

In its interaction with the staff of GASVS, BALM team highlighted certain points for the future:

1. Sharing of systemic principles
2. To closely monitor treatment paradigms
3. Define the role of the NGO in treatment and recovery
4. Developing of IEC material
5. Documentation
6. Data organization
7. Training and capacity building
8. Resource building

***Integrated Rural Health and Development Project (IRHDP):*** IRHDP is a TISS field action programme situated in a remote, rural, tribal belt in Aghai, Shahapur Taluk, Maharashtra. The Banyan and BALM are engaged in offering a tribal mental health intervention in collaboration with IRHDP. The focus of the programme is to pursue well-being for persons with mental health issues and the rest of the community by using livelihood enhancement opportunities, and education as key interventions.

***Keystone Foundation and Cornell University:*** The Banyan and BALM in collaboration with Keystone Foundation and Cornell University are offering a tribal mental health programme in Kotagiri, Nilgiris District, Tamil Nadu. The programme seeks to contextually replicate The Banyan's NALAM approach to better understand the effects of acculturation in a tribal community on distress.

## (iv) Transforming Institutional Care Practices

### Missionaries of Charity, Chennai

The Missionaries of Charity (MoC) has long been involved in working with large numbers of aged, destitute, the dying and Homeless persons with Mental Illness, providing enduring institutional support and provision of care. MoC is the largest service provider for children with mental retardation and Homeless persons with Mental Illness. The Banyan, experienced in the long-term care of PwMIs and focussed on justice-oriented, timely, critical interventions for women distressed by poverty, mental illness and homelessness brings deep abiding interest and innovation to the existing paradigms of care provided by the MoC.

Before The Banyan arrived, the Mother Superior and Sisters were in charge of daily upkeep of those under institutional care. They realized over time that expertise was essential and that the existing care paradigms could be augmented by protocols and service essentials outlined by The Banyan. The first social worker was appointed in the Ennore MoC when they understood the value of having professional social workers on their team and The Banyan was associated with the recruitment process

The appointment of social workers across all MOC centres in Tamil Nadu, after one year of observation, was succeeded by the appointment of 8 social workers in October 2015 in 8 Homes. The Banyan assisted in the interview and recruitment process and later in the orientation of the social workers. A consultative meeting was conducted with all Mother Superiors and Social Workers with regard to the roles and responsibilities of the social workers. The Banyan initiated a 3 day induction training for the Mother Superiors and the social workers of Missionaries of Charity (MoC) in order to acquaint them with the nature of challenges and goals to be achieved.

#### BALM focuses on

- Systems-building' in order to facilitate long-term smooth operation by bringing together social workers from different Missionaries of Charity complexes on a common platform, through a review meeting to share problems, solutions, build confidence.
- Long-term skill building and training capacity.
- Consultation meetings to troubleshoot and mentor professionals at Missionaries of Charity (MoC).
- Formulate Human Resource (HR) employment policies in line with industry requirements such that professionalism is maintained with respect to the responsibilities of the social worker's position

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Sr. Wilfred, Superior, Missionaries of Charity

*“On (the) whole The Banyan improved a lot in taking care of clients and we expect the same to be continued on rendering service to our home. The Banyan... is very service-minded and kind-hearted, taking much care and interest on (sic) clients of Missionaries of Charity... we are very much pleased with the service of The Banyan and continue the same with harmony and peace.”*

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## (v) Forensic Mental Health

### Prison Department, Government of Tamil Nadu

The Banyan and DGP, Tamil Nadu Prisons signed a Memorandum of Understanding in 2009 and again in 2014 in order to take forward a government- civil society initiative to re-define the roles and functions of the prison with respect to the offender's' mental health and general wellbeing. Through this work, BALM is part of the larger civil rights ecosystem that forms necessary links with the government through public mental health policy and corrective social action. The collaboration with the government includes working with 23 correctional psychologists and counsellors employed by the government.

Every month, the Correctional Psychologists and Counsellors from various districts come to Puzhal on duty to attend the sessions. The Banyan realized that certain procedures needed to be followed in order to systematise the rendering of assistance to the prison. On an average, 12 psychologists and 10 warders visit Chennai every month. In the team meetings, a range of activities is undertaken such as:

1. Case Discussions
2. Role Plays
3. Topic Presentations
4. Documentation
5. Training by Experts on Skype or in person
6. Data Presentation from different prisons

Other tasks of The Banyan include:

1. Centralized Data Management to understand the macro issues and micro details.
2. Provide consultation over the phone if Psychologists and counsellors face difficulties with regard to cases, administration, and trainings in their respective prisons.
3. Provide counselling support to psychologists and counsellors with respect to their personal problems and stress.

Recently, BALM conducted a Mental Health Orientation for Probation Officer (responsible for linking the offender with his family and in the eventual re-integration of the offender into the larger community) trainees wherein basic counselling techniques, work-life balance, possibilities of drug/alcohol abuse by

the warders were discussed by Dr. K. V. Kishore Kumar, Director of The Banyan, apart from the connections between crime, mental health and the prison environment.

Over time, through feedback mechanisms, The Banyan team found that the number of referrals in the prison set-ups in different parts of Tamil Nadu has increased due to warder's training. Better coordination systems between officials in the prisons will ensure that stress is reduced in the psychologists and counsellors work burdens. Some time ago, the counsellors and psychologists mentioned in their feedback forms that working with The Banyan provided them motivation, working knowledge, a platform to meet other counsellors and psychologists who they would have never otherwise met and familiarity with the prison norms and rules through discussions.

A Counsellor / Social Worker at the prison says about The Banyan's contribution:

*"It helped me to do my social work systematically. I learned clinical techniques of counselling and suicide prevention. Movement therapy provided by Banyan, it was excellent. Every month I improved my relationship with my friends here (referring to other counsellors)"*

A correctional psychologist on The Banyan sessions:

*"I learnt a lot...from the monthly review meeting. I understood the working of the prison administration better (because of the manual). I learnt how to help make use of offenders' time and leisure. Capacity building of prison psychologists and counsellors went very well."*

## TATA TRUSTS

Without TATA TRUSTS, BALM' production of capacity-building manuals and ground-breaking research would have not come to fruition. We thank with immense appreciation the role that TATA TRUSTS have played in the growth of BALM as an institution.

This endeavour would have been impossible without the continued support of Mr. Shivkumar who provided assistance to the Stakeholder program at BALM.



## (vi) Research at Mental Health Social Action Lab

MHSAL (Mental Health Social Action Lab) includes CISD, Centre for Mental Health and Marginality and Centre for Health and Mental Health Policy Research. The research subjects for 2015-2016 spanned themes of engagement across certain fields of study.

A needs assessment was carried out for persons with mental illness with respect to social entitlements. This was crucial to ensuring that all opportunities for self-growth and enhancement of capabilities may be maximized, keeping in mind the varying levels of vulnerability that disadvantaged sections of the populations face.

MHSAL also focused on research and better understanding of support structures and methods of peer support for caregivers of persons with mental illness. The caregivers form an important stake in The Banyan's community-centric approach toward mental health. Delineating the possibilities of support for the caregivers is an important component toward enlarging compassionate communities.

An assessment was carried out for trauma and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder in Homeless Persons with Severe Mental Illness in Chennai.

### AZIM PREMJI PHILANTHROPIC INITIATIVES



We thank with deep gratitude Azim Premji Philanthropic Initiatives' constant support that buttressed BALM's research wing and provided a strong foundation for the production of academic output, training, research and capacity-building manuals. APPI has been one of the core support frameworks to The Banyan and BALM's initiatives the past year.

## **(vii) Monitoring and Evaluation**

Systematic collection, management and analysis of data can strategically inform public health programs, aid in the process of ensuring adherence to quality standards, assist in tracking outcomes and offer insights for policy level decision making. The Banyan's projects span an entire continuum of mental health services from emergency and acute care services, inclusive living options for long term care, to social care interventions and community mental health programs, in both urban and rural contexts in Tamil Nadu, and in other states through stakeholder partnerships that replicate these approaches. BALM is working with The Banyan on developing a mental health analytics approach with a long term vision of building a robust technology enabled system that offers a combination of real time indicators and high quality longitudinal data that can inform programs and policy in mental health.

In the last one year, BALM enabled the Monitoring and Evaluation Department of The Banyan to digitize a majority of the process and client level data across projects, train a core team of data entry operators, managers and analysts and set up key indicators to measure and track progress against targeted outputs. Further, BALM enabled a tie up with Thoughtworks to design and execute a Management Information System (MIS) using Open MRS with both desktop and tablet based input for use at the Transit Care Centre (TCC). A roadmap to add modules to support data across other projects was also devised.



## *Campus life @ BALM*

### **(i) About the Campus**

The Banyan Academy of Leadership in Mental Health (BALM) was set up in 2007 allied with The Banyan in order to take forward the goals of research, advocacy, planning and implementation of stakeholders' roles and responsibilities, public policy and creation of qualified human resources for mental health and social work. The BALM campus at Kovalam is also home to the residents of the Banyan, as part of the Clustered Group Homes (CGH) strategy. The RMHP (Rural Mental Health Programme) and PC (Primary Care) work in physically proximate surroundings and other Banyan projects such as Shared Housing are in the vicinity of the PC where OPD is provided to members of the community. However, all The Banyan sites form part of the campus experience for the students who visit these sites often as part of their academic work. This includes the Transit Care Centre (Adaikalam), Urban Clinics in the city and Shelter at Doomingkuppam, which being the extended campus environment exposes the students to distinct professional settings and work ethos.

Therefore, the campus is right at the thick of things, where students, researchers, programme co-ordinators, psychiatrists, psychologists, health workers, family, clients and social workers are in constant interaction with each other. There is lively activity, supported by an atmosphere of study, research and everyday care of the clients. The previous academic session brimmed with workshops, lectures, seminars and other events initiated by the students such that there was not a dull day on campus. Many students from the previous years also spent time with the clients by painting their nails, chatting with them, reading stories to them or taking them to the beach.

The cosy setting of CGH, the fresh sea breeze wafting in during the morning and noons and vivacity of Kovalam village apart from the work ensure that the BALM academic experience is like none other. BALM defies the notion of institutions being cloistered and exclusive spaces by re-working the modes of

interchange and correspondence between communities, students, researchers and other professionals who would otherwise work independently of each other.



## (ii) Student Initiatives

The campus remains lively through the week with seminars, lectures and workshops that broaden the scope of the students' participation in the academic and work community. The students also run activities/clubs under the aegis of Student Development Council (SDC) to engage each other in the ceaseless pursuit of knowing and doing. This all-round engagement allows them to be better prepared with structured responses to difficulties arising in their work. These clubs raise discussions around social issues, read texts that are seminal in their fields, organise cultural events on campus to build a sense of connect and community and initiate new networks of understanding. Many students from other disciplines do not get the chance to know the other students on campus due to hectic schedules, and this creates opportunities for like-minded individuals to come together. The students came together in another context too: during the recent flood relief operations conducted by The Banyan.

## Flood Relief Work

The devastating floods of November-December 2015 that crippled the city of Chennai left in its wake much destruction and loss. Apart from the ways in which it tore apart infrastructure, property and livelihoods, it also played havoc with the city's normal functioning for many weeks after. Classes at BALM had come to a standstill as far more urgent matters beckoned.

The citizens of Chennai gathered in great numbers and in creative ways to forge strong solidarities and help those most affected. The Banyan joined the relief effort by reaching out to the villages in Kanchipuram and Cuddalore districts. Since The Banyan had no prior experience in disaster management, it charted its path focusing not just on short-term relief but also long-term rehabilitation and livelihood options for all those who had lost livestock and property.

The students were instrumental in data collection, mapping resources and livelihoods in flood-affected areas, helping the RMHP staff collate material and make field surveys as well as packaging, distributing the material and verifying the credentials of the claimants. Food, livestock and building supplies were handed to many families in villages as part of the relief and rebuilding efforts. The data collection focused on questions of loss of property, present requirements and temporary suitable replacements that could be provided in their place.

Faculty Varun Viswanathan opines, "It was an opportunity to contribute to the city. Chennai is my place, my town- as professionals and as psychologists, all the suffering was so close and crushing, and it impacted us, as students, teachers, as part of organisations. The need of the hour was to work together and the students were also part of that feeling. There wasn't much time to process things because it was completely overwhelming; that particular time also needed more action than thinking. I hope that we as an organisation facilitated that process, and tried to bridge the gap between action and thinking by considering long-term rehabilitation and not just short-term measures, though they were also important. This affected our end of semester reports as well! Most of the practicum reports contained references to the flood relief and the faculty could clearly see that the students were grappling with the enormity of disaster in their own personal work. Many of these reports were deeply introspective. The flood and its aftermath found itself in many different kinds of narratives."



## Conference

Global Mental Health Summit, TISS, Mumbai



## Workshops

Mentoring, **Listening to my Inner Self**. Cognitive Analytic Therapy. **Create, Play, Move and Learn**. Workplace Well-being and SOLVE Policy. **Tulir**. Dance and Movement by Sanved (Kolkata). **Forum Theatre by Radha Ramaswamy**



## Activities

- Discussion on the Rohith Vemala murder/ suicide.
- Discussion on the JNU "anti-national" row.



## Groups

- The Ramabai Ambedkar-Dayamani Barla Group.
- The BALM Gender Studies Group.



# Conferences, Workshops and Cultural Activities on Campus

## Reading Groups

- Poetry Reading Group
- Foucault Reading Group
- Dalit/Adivasi Reading Group



## Special Lectures

**Amita Joseph**-Judicial Intervention Toward Night Shelters for the Homeless. **Aarti Madhusudan**-Governance in the Non-Profit Sector. **Mr. Elango Rangaswamy**-Local Governance.



## Events

- Ethnic/Pongal Day
- Republic Day Celebrations
- Sports Day
- Women's Day Event
- Family Day
- Annual Day
- Farewell



## Film Screening

Mounum Pesumpothu





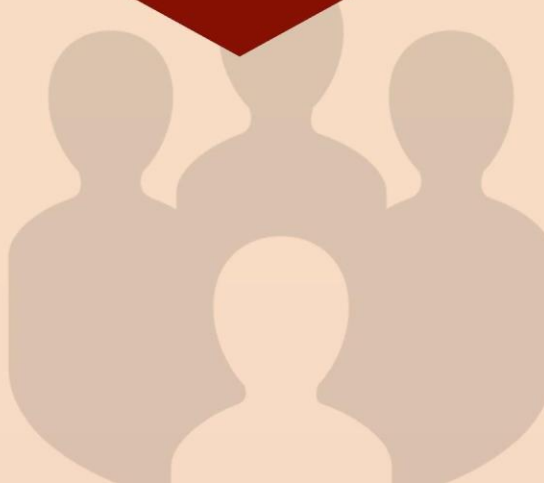
# GROUPS

## **The Ramabai Ambedkar-Dayamani Barla Group**

The Dalit and Adivasi students started this group, named after the long-suffering wife of B.R Ambedkar and the fiery adivasi activist Barla from Jharkhand, with the aim of helping SC/ST students work together on scholarship issues, help incoming SC/ST students and generate political awareness among the SC/ST students on campus.

## **The BALM Gender Studies Group**

Inspired by the Women's Day event held on March 8th, a group of students have come together to start the BALM Gender Studies Group. They aim to do readings, events and activism around gender issues. They are also planning to put up a play next semester.



# READING GROUPS



## Poetry Reading Group

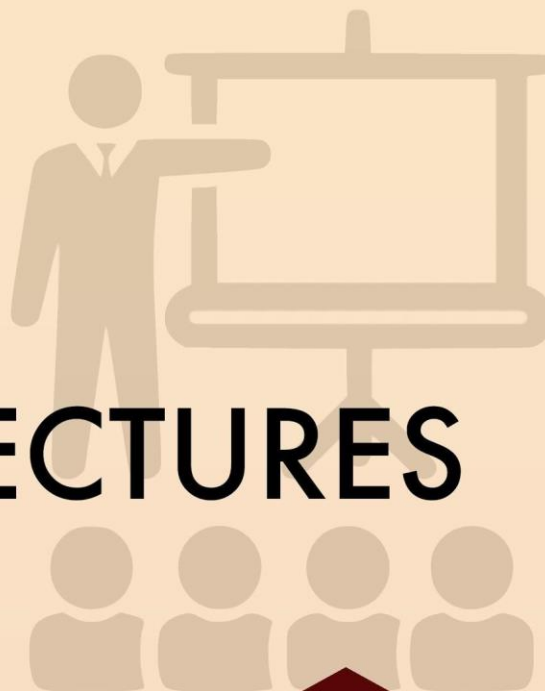
They opened with a poetry reading where students read their poems and discussed what they understood by poetry.

## Dalit/Adivasi Reading Group

The Savitribai Phule - Soni Suri Reading group focusses on issues of Dalit and Adivasi communities by foregrounding the importance of knowing histories.

## Foucault Reading Group

This reading group meets up every week to read the texts of noted political philosopher Michael Foucault, and their relevance in today's times.



# SPECIAL LECTURES

## **Amita Joseph**

Judicial Intervention  
Toward Night  
Shelters for the  
Homeless

Ms. Amita Joseph from the Business and Community Foundation (BCF) spoke on the various constitutional violations being committed in lieu of fundamental rights of homeless persons.

## **Aarti Madhusudan**

Governance in the  
Non-Profit Sector

Aarti Madhusudan is a TISS alumna and the founder of Governance Counts that looks at strengthening boards of NGOs for better functioning. She discussed the difficulties around NGO functioning and the role of executive boards in day-to-day functioning.

## **Mr.Elango**

**Rangaswamy**

Local Governance

Elango Rangaswamy believes the panchayat is the closest governing system to democracy in the Indian context. By encouraging industries to set up small units in villages, providing regular gainful employment, migration to cities can be minimised.



## Extracurricular activities

BALM ensures that students are equipped with the latest advancements in the field of theory, through discussions, seminars, debates and reading groups apart from classroom sessions. The students are constantly stimulated by a wide range of speakers who speak from inspired realms of experience. In the past, speakers such as Michael Stein, Executive Director of Harvard Law School shared personal stories and vignettes from their work on Disability, state, rights and responsibilities.

The prevailing understanding at BALM is that academics is not an ivory-tower exercise and this model of education is the crucial lifeblood to the breath of inspired academic attainment and work practice. Experiential learning is one of the core facets of the BALM experience and while working closely with the residents of Clustered Group Homes, the students build personal and professional bonds with the clients. Hence, academics is not divorced from human connections and aesthetic knowledge that enable erudition, empathy and sophistication in thought and argument.

These insights filter into the student's' personal research work and the various workshops, special lectures and seminars that BALM conducts provide windows of opportunities for students to brainstorm and seek clarifications on complexities that defy immediate illumination. BALM thus arranges for experienced guest tutors, mentors, professors and other professionals from amongst the best universities and organizations to assist the students. Different practitioners and specialists conduct workshops in order to introduce students to the latest innovations in strategy and planning in the fields of development, mental health and psychotherapeutic practice. Workshops are also constructed to suit the student's' course requirements to facilitate the acquisition of skills.





# WORKSHOPS

## **Mentoring**

A mentoring cell is initiated to help all first year students' to meet their psychological needs.

### **Listening to my Inner Self**

A workshop using Theatre-Meena Natarajan and Dipanker Mukherjee from Pangea World Theatre.

## **Cognitive Analytic Therapy**

CAT offers a way to provide therapy and a model of human development that addresses difficulties in respectful ways.

### **Create, Play, Move and Learn**

This workshop introduced the role of creativity, play, and movement in working with children for health and well-being.

## **Workplace Well-being and SOLVE Policy**

The SOLVE course promotes employee health against psychological problems.

### **Tulir**

Focussed on child-sexual abuse and the role that the immediate community has to play to protect child rights.

## **Dance and Movement by Sanved**

An opportunity for students, staff and faculty to relax and feel at ease in their own bodies.

## **Forum Theatre by Radha Ramaswamy**

Through audience participation, actors improvise various scenes.





# CONFERENCES

## **Global Mental Health Summit, TISS, Mumbai**

BALM/The Banyan was the primary organiser of the fourth Global Health Summit, that took place in Mumbai on the 28th and 29th of November 2015.

The theme of the summit was 'Nothing About Us Without Us' and keeping the theme in mind, different mental health professionals and persons living with mental illness from across the world came together to share experiences and discuss issues of mental health and healthcare.

# ACTIVITIES

## Discussion on the Rohith Vemula Murder/Suicide

The SDC, organised a panel discussion on the Rohith Vemula case, linking structures of oppression and the most disadvantaged communities in the country. The panel included Dalit/Adivasi students who shared their personal experiences.

## Discussion on the JNU “Anti- National” Row

The SDC, organised a panel discussion on the terms thrown up by the JNU row and the attempts by the present government to take the attention away from its failures. It involved lively debates between students.



# EVENTS

## Family Day

Students performed for the family members of the staff. Everyone had a great time singing along and dancing to the music.

## Annual Day

The Annual Day was a grand affair this year with songs and dance performances.

## Farewell

The Farewell was a moving, sentimental and lovely affair, again with some stunning dancing.

## Ethnic/Pongal Day

BALM celebrated Pongal as ethnic day. Students came dressed in the ethnic attire of their home states and explained it through a performance.

## Republic Day

Included flag-hoisting ceremonies both on BALM campus and with the residents of the Oragadam village.

## Sports Day

Students participated in various games like Kho-Kho, Lemon and Spoon race and Volleyball. These events helped build a sense of healthy competition.

## Women's Day

Students from different disciplines worked hard to put together personal dramatic sketches and dance performances on Women's Day.





## Internships

BALM hosted interns from Indian and foreign universities interested in The Banyan's work and looking to gain field experience from working in different capacities. Students came from London, Amsterdam, the Caribbean, the USA among other countries to learn and contribute to The Banyan's work. Some interns were scholars and students from Indian universities looking to study localised phenomena and build analytical frameworks to better understand their own areas of interest. Some were research scholars who researched, evaluated and analyzed various Banyan projects and compiled their findings in internship reports submitted to their field supervisors. These internship findings are crucial to BALM's sense of purpose and vision since they are approached from differing yet significant academic perspectives that may inform future work.

The interns had heard of The Banyan's work through online media, word-of-mouth and recommendations from professionals in the field. They came from various course backgrounds eager to contribute in small and large ways to The Banyan's ongoing projects. Many interns helped in compiling data, administrative work, collating information, visual communications, assisting project managers in the running of programmes, drives and other outreach initiatives, research and indexing, organising events, writing and maintaining of records, transcribing interviews, community mobilisation, assisting psychologists and social workers, observing, working with the clients among other tasks. They were stationed across The Banyan's projects while assisting BALM with specific tasks with respect to the required goals.

An intern speaks...



*"During my one-month- long internship with the Banyan I primarily worked at the Banyan shelter for men with psycho-social needs at Doomingkuppam. The functioning of the Shelter itself taught me how active community engagement can be a strong route towards de-stigmatisation of mental illnesses...At a personal level, my time at the shelter helped me overcome my own mental-blocks regarding the subject...Another crucial source of learning was the street engagement done during evenings."*

Varna Balakrishnan, LSR, DU



*My internship at The Banyan was very exciting. Coming to The Banyan felt as a warm welcome into a big Indian family; staff members (irrespective of their position/rank) welcomed me, helped me whenever needed, and were always available for a chat or a laugh. I had so many good and lovely conversations over lunch at the Banyan cafe, so many helping hands, and staff who became friends to have dinner or go for trips. What I loved most about The Banyan is the passion they have for people; perceiving homeless psychiatric women as people, providing them with what they need, and helping them to rebuild a life; those are the core concepts of the hard work that Banyan's staff perform every day of the week.*



*My internship focussed on the Shared Housing project, in particular the lessons that had been learned over the past year in developing the Shared Housing project. I learned that providing people with a real home, a place of their own and a new family can be just as important as medical and psychological support. Having a home and a family are the most basic aspects of human life, and I was amazed by the efforts of the staff to provide just that to these women. Of course many barriers and boundaries were found along the way, however the staff works so hard to overcome them all and bring a brighter future to these women. Also, during my stay Chennai was severely flooded (Nov/Dec 2015), and during that time The Banyan provided flood relief to so many people in and around Chennai, both patients and others. Witnessing the flood and hardships caused by the flood was intense, however I was very grateful to be safe, and also very honored and glad to be able to contribute just a little bit by being part of The Banyan's flood relief. I would like to thank The Banyan staff for their support during my internship, and for the work they do for their fellow Chennai/Madrassi.*

-Liesbeth, VU, Amsterdam

# Research Projects and Field Work Agencies

## Students of MA Social Work in Mental Health

Name of Student	Title of Research
Noelta. S	: Faith Healing Practices in Managing Mental Health Issues
Shruti Padmanabhan	: Mental Well-Being of Migrant Workers in the Unorganized Sector: A Study at the Construction Sites of Chennai and Muscat.
Upasana Iyer	: Hysteria among the Women of the Katkari Tribe in Aghai Panchayat, Thane District, Maharashtra
Enosh Kasar	: A Study on Understanding the Mental Health Status of Injecting Drug Users (IDUs) in Ukhrul District, Manipur
Samte Kamzalam George	: The Subjectivity of the Substance Abuse: A study in a Government Hospital in Churachandpur, Manipur
Sunil Kumar	: Fear, Silence and Violence among Manual Scavengers in Gaya, Bihar: A Psychosocial Study
Ashrandra Kumar	: Abjection among Dalit Adolescents Studying in Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Residential High School, Gaya District, Bihar

## Students of MA Applied Psychology with Specialisation in Counselling Psychology

Name of Student	Title of Research
Bikash Das	: Coping among Family Caregivers of Cancer Patient at Tata Medical Centre, Kolkata
Divi Tara	: The Experience of Elderly Persons Living In Institutionalised Care Settings: A Comparative Study between Delhi and Chennai.
Veena Vibhushini	: Application of Reinforcement Behaviour Modification Strategies on the Children Belonging to a Marginalized Urban-Coastal Community in Besant Nagar, Chennai.

## Students of MA in Management, Policy Analysis and Entrepreneurship in Health

Name of Student	Title of Research
Shiva Krishna Reddy	: The adoption of internet tools for public relations by non governmental organizations in Hyderabad, India
Kamala Krishnaswamy	: Employability of students who study masters in research, management and entrepreneurship in health: Potential employers perspective

## Field Work Agencies

- Adaikalam, The Banyan Mogappair
- Shelter Home, Dooming Kuppam, Santhome
- Clustered Group Home, Kovalam
- Shared Housing, Kovalam
- Wisdom Hospital
- Adyar Cancer Institute, Sardar Patel Road
- NIEPMD, East Coast Road
- Vidyasagar, Kotturpuram
- Society for Education and Action, Mamallapuram
- Association for Community Development Services, Kelambakkam
- Integrated Rural Development Project, Aghai, Maharashtra
- Duncan Hospital, Bihar
- Mental Health Action Trust, Calicut
- MHSAL

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