Stories of Healing and Healthy Mind

Success Stories

Covid-19 Crisis Response (Psycho-social support in COVID-19 crisis for resilient community Building) Project
Stories of Healing and Healthy Mind

Covid-19 Crisis Response (Psycho-social support in COVID-19 crisis for resilient community Building) Project

Courtesy

Published on
December 2020

Editor
Tawhida Shiropa
Founder and CEO, Moner Bondhu

Editorial and Design Team

Published by
Moner Bandhu

Supported by
UNDP

We do acknowledged to UNDP, Masudul Haque and Tarikur Rahman khan.

** Client success stories have been written taking the permission from clients without disclosing their names and identities.
Glimpse of Project

Project Objective

• To sensitize people about COVID-19, supports needed for psycho-social counselling for healing
• To ensure appropriate psycho-social support for women and adolescent

Fact Sheet

Implementing Partner:
Moner Bondhu

Project Duration:
July - December 2020

Project Budget:
BDT 63,10,290

Working Areas:
52 districts
Key Findings

During these five months, a total of **11690 calls** were received by the psycho-social Coordinators in 24/7 operation.

A total of **690 psychosocial counseling sessions** were conducted during the months of August, September, October, November and December 2020.

**100% of the clients were satisfied** with the service, out of them **49.29% of the clients said that they were highly satisfied** with the counselling service and called the service excellent.

In these five months, the majority of the service receivers were females at **62.9%**, while **37.1%** were male clients.

Among the service receivers, **59.9% were aged between 20-21 years old**, making this the biggest portion of counseling receivers.

During these 5 months, we have served people from **52 districts** across Bangladesh and expats living in Dubai, Australia, Singapore, UAE and USA.

75 clients suffered from cases of corona panic, anxiety and stress and **45.5% of the clients suffered from depression**.

**52.2% of the clients got the information about the psychosocial support service from Facebook**, while.
Key Findings

Age of clients

- 62.9% were female clients and 37.1% were male.

Diagnosis

- Depression: 45.5%
- Anxiety: 16.7%
- Stress: 7.8%
- Panic: 3.6%
- Sleep Problems: 4.6%
- Marital & relationship: 9.3%
- Interpersonal Problem: 8.7%
- Abuse: 4.3%
- Anger: 0.7%

Sex

- 62.9% were female clients and 37.1% were male.
Client A is a 40 year old journalist living in Dhaka. At the beginning of the outbreak of coronavirus and the lockdown, he started working from home. At this time, due to the financial impact of coronavirus his organization started laying off employees. Every morning he woke up with uncertainty and apprehension that he might be the next person to lose his job. Eventually he got into a state of panic about job uncertainty and coronavirus and started to have panic attacks.

He reached out to a psychiatrist online, who prescribed him a lot of medication. According to the doctor’s advice, he started taking the medication, but it only made things worse. Despite being very expensive, client A tried to follow up with the psychiatrist, but could no longer reach him. By this time, his office had restarted. Now, he also was fearful that he would contract coronavirus if we went out of his house. He could not focus on work due to fear and anxiety. He was fearful of going everywhere and touching everything; his panic and anxiety had become unbearable.

Seeing his condition, one of his office staff told him about the free online psychosocial support available at Moner Bondhu. He contacted Moner Bondhu and told us that he did not want any more medication. Our counselor assured him and gave him helpful exercises to calm himself down during panic attacks. The counselor also taught him ways to overcome his anxiety and fear. The counseling sessions, exercises and techniques helped him very much in his personal and professional life. Now he feels much healthier and happier and a lot more productive at work. Taking psychosocial support from Moner Bondhu has completely changed his perception about mental healthcare. He is very grateful to the counselor and our service and has recommended our services to his friends, family and acquaintances.
One day during the project intervention, Moner Bondhu received a call at the middle of the night. The call came from a distressed sister from Gaibandha who wanted to talk about her sister and how to help her. Her sister, a young female student (age: 17), was suffering from anxiety for a long time and had difficulty socializing with her classmates and others. Due to coronavirus her college was closed and this terribly affected her. Her anxiety started to increase and on the other hand she started to feel very restless.

She became irritable and started showing anger outbursts to her family members. She got into more and more quarrels with her family members and started to feel misunderstood. That night her sister acted very differently that terrified her big sister. We immediately responded and assigned her a psychosocial expert. We also assured the big sister, so that she can also calm herself down. We followed up with both sisters and found that the counseling actually helped them and the entire family. In the next two weeks, they were amazed to see the changes of not only our client, but also the whole family.
Building the pillar of Positive spirit

At the wake of the Corona pandemic, the frontline workers suffer a series of mental health crises. Client C (male, young medical professionals, age: 25) reached out to Moner Bondhu while messaging on Facebook. He expressed his tremendous trauma and panicked situation that he was dealing with because of his medical profession. He was struggling to cope with the fear of coronavirus and do his job. He also feared that he would carry the coronavirus back to his home to his family members. He was too uncomfortable to open up, discuss his distress and fear with his friends and colleagues and cry.

He didn’t know where to seek help and this is where he came across Moner Bondhu on Facebook. Followed by the first counseling, he messaged us again and thanked us deeply from his heart. He always questioned the role of mental health care services and that one counseling changed his view and perspective. After taking the counseling he slept a sound sleep. A few days later the client called the Moner Bondhu Helpline number to thank us and told us that he started to do his job with more focus, confidence and positive spirit.
Now she is a psycho-social advocate

Client D is a 38 year old singer living in Dhaka. Despite admiration from her peers and fans, she felt self-doubt and depression. Due to maintaining social distancing due to coronavirus, she felt isolated and got deeper into her depression. Her regular schedule got disrupted and it changed the overall daily routine. Nevertheless she had to do a lot of housework and caregiving because of the absence of the house-worker. This increased pressure and the ongoing disruption of social activities impacted her negatively. She could not even pay attention to every daily task and this was also affecting her marital life.

She thought a lot about taking counseling, but she was afraid of maintaining her social fame and personality as private. But again, she wrote to us asking for counseling services. We assured her about the strict confidentiality and acts of non-judgement that we highly follow at Moner Bondhu. Gradually she revived her confidence, accepted the intended and unintended consequences and contributed the best efforts to make her life happy and healthy. Since then she has recommended our psychosocial services among her network.
Brings smile on a father’s face

Client E is a middle-aged man who used to live in Dhaka. Just before the corona outbreak, he was transferred outside Dhaka for work. He has been suffering from severe mental health issues since many years. When he lived in Dhaka he went to many psychosocial experts for his issues, but nothing helped him very much. At one point his situation got so bad that his wife left him and after a while his only son stopped talking to him. After being transferred out of Dhaka, his access to psychosocial experts was very limited and he was suffering terribly all by himself as he had no contact with his wife or son.

One day, very early in the morning, he came across a facebook post about the tele and video psychosocial counseling service of Moner Bondhu under the COVID-19 Response Project of UNDP. He noticed the 24/7 helpline and called immediately. The Moner Bondhu team responded and connected him to their psychosocial counselor. After taking Moner Bondhu’s counseling service, client E has gained confidence as he recovered and reconnected with his son. He called Moner Bondhu and heartily thanked us for this initiative and he expressed how grateful he was to his counselor who helped by healing him and helping him to rebuild his relationship with his only son. He later saw the 40 hour long free online course and enrolled himself right away. He called again to express how he would love to do something for Moner Bondhu, if possible, as a show of his endless gratitude.
Client F is a professional working in the development sector. Due to the nature of her job, she was still in the field for her job despite the corona outbreak. She was fearful of contracting the virus and for her life, but still she had to go out for work. Moreover, she was away from her family, so she was very homesick as well. One day, as she was going through her Facebook, she saw a sticker of COVID-19 Crisis Response Project (Psychosocial Support) of UNDP.

She called the helpline on the sticker and spoke to our Psychosocial Coordinator, who listened to her empathetically and booked her a session with our counselor. She was so very helped with our psychosocial counseling that she posted on her Facebook to encourage others to take our psychosocial support.

After a few weeks she returned to her family and she realized that her sister was also suffering from anxiety and had a lot of domestic disputes. So, she told her sister about our service. Hearing from her, her sister took our counseling service and a few days later she booked an appointment with our counselor for her niece. They all received our help and were extremely thankful for the service.
Every Individual wants to be heard

Experience as Psycho-social Coordinator (Night Shift)

We are currently living in a world where everyone’s life has been affected by the Novel Coronavirus in some way. I have noticed this is where a lot of people have realized how important it is to take care of their mental health and how tough it is to continue their basic lifestyle if they are not mentally sound. I, as a first responder during the late night hours had the privilege to get to know and understand people’s tremendous sufferings during this pandemic.

Everyone’s struggle and their way of coping up is different and vital. I have talked to a large number of people during the late night hours when they were totally alone, their thoughts would not let them fall asleep and they felt like they had reached their edge. There was the presence of an urge to get immediate help in their voice. Every time I heard them, I realized how painful things can get during a pandemic. Some people, who would be in their late 40s; would call for help, some of them have lost their jobs but afraid to tell their family or even to their spouses and do not know how they would manage family expenses. One of them even admitted saying “I never believed in mental health care, now I am in this situation where I just know the only way to survive right now is to have my mental sanity. This is only how I can start moving forward one by one.” He added, “I never would have realized this if I did not reach to this point in my life during this pandemic.” To be able to vent at that time he felt so relieved. He called the next week to convey his gratitude. Almost all the elderly callers have said this was so helpful for them to be able find a safe place to vent, to be able to let somebody know they are vulnerable, receiving the empathy without having to be afraid that somebody will know about their personal issues and will not treat or might even judge them based on that. Another night a very young woman called, being very restless she was asking if I could just give her advice on who she should get married to. Now this may sound off the wall but if someone would take a moment to have a walk in her shoes could totally feel how miserable her life has turned in this pandemic. Her father was a Corona patient in a critical condition, they were financially struggling and her father wanted to get her married to a person who could take responsibility for her and the family. Every single second in this uncertainty was killing her. After I hung up, I felt how brutally this Novel Coronavirus has taken all over us.

A large number of people found it easier to vent after 12am, young men and women held the top of this list. Yet anybody who was struggling to fall asleep due to stress or insomnia calls during these hours. Once an young guy called, he said he attempted suicide the other day and that night he was feeling suicidal again. I helped him to calm down and asked to get back to me if he does not feel right again. He would call me back in another thirty minutes and said that he could not sleep, he was feeling self-destructive. After talking for a while, he sounded calm.

From my very personal experience throughout this project, I realized every individual wants to be heard, wants somebody to uplift them mentally when they feel low, wants the assurance that somebody will always be there to hear them out whenever they need somebody to talk to. Since our project gave people that opportunity, the comfort without even having to disclose their identity if they want to remain anonymous. They finally could receive the support and came out for it with absolute comfort. This was one great achievement for us to be able to have people coming forward to get the help for free of charge whereas seeking mental health support is still stigmatized in our country.

Ashrafi Raisa, First Responder
It’s a opportunity to support people

Experience as Psycho-social Coordinator (Day Shift)

First of all I would like to thank Moner Bondhu for giving me this wonderful opportunity during pandemic as a first responder to be able to be there when people reached out for mental health support.

I had such a great experience through the online/tele service without having to go out in person. I had the chance to learn about people’s mental health perspectives throughout this pandemic which I am trying to highlight.

Most of the time people were talking about depression, anxiety, losing jobs and divorces. I have also seen young adults being concerned about family management and adjustment. They all wanted to know how they could be in a better mental state in such situations.

There was a misconception about mental health among the men in our country. However during the pandemic when they had to spend all day with family; they faced difficulties making family adjustments. Eventually they realized and came out for support. This made me realize our country’s noticeable progress towards mental health care.

One of the good experiences was; a daughter called for her father. He was being unreasonable, unable to go outside and speak properly. As she was seeking help for her father and he was willing to receive the help. I felt the massive change and people’s willingness to have a better mental health and well-beingness.

Students who are no longer studying in the school environment, are getting sick of staying home and studying from devices. As a result the parents were also seeking help on parenting during this situation.

I feel very honoured that I was able to engage with people as a first responder to provide mental health support.

Iqbal Hossain, First Responder
Experience as Psycho-social Counselor

Being a Psycho-social counselor it is my privilege that I can sense the emotion behind the wall which might be difficult for others. A lot of people live with anger, sadness, hopelessness, panic attacks, grief of losing their loved ones and at some point it starts digging their root on our mental health. I have seen clients during this pandemic who can not sleep and frequently panic for family members or themselves. Some are grieving for the sudden loss of their family members, and some others are struggling for losing their temper and mental stability easily which also had a negative impact both on their personal and professional life. A client who wants to be a self-dependent woman. However, sudden pandemic delayed his final graduation exam and she had to leave the hostel. When she went back to the village after a few months she found out that her parents wanted to fix her marriage. But wanted to complete her graduation before getting married and she cannot convince her family. Gradually became hopeless about her aim in life, she tried to share with her family but she was unable to express her opinion assertively. When I found her as a client she was completely depressed about how her life changed within the last 3 months. She cannot focus on her studies, sometimes she misbehaves with her family which also bothers her as she feels guilty later. As I was appointed as a counselor I gradually helped her to explore her success and achievement which boosted her adult self to act more purposefully, and counter her negative thoughts. To counter her negative emotions I helped her to explore pleasure seeking activities like sketching, painting, online gathering with roommates, spending time with nature and also encouraging her creativity like writing poems to express emotion in a different way. When she finally got hold of her thinking and emotion then I helped her to restore self belief through mirror exercise and also explore her skill and capability. At the end, we talked about assertive communication skills, how to say no without losing temper in a bold and confident way and also run some practice session communication skills.

Besides, working in a helping profession makes me pleased to remind myself as a good human being. It makes me believe that “Humans are basically good. Situation and environment sometimes make our life difficult but as long as we can ground ourselves towards a stable mind, we have a greater chance to not be odd by a situation.”

Mehadi Mobarok
Online Course Participant

Combating anxiousness, Feeling accomplished

I am Nawshaba Hridita from Rangpur, Bangladesh. I am very glad to be able to do a course on “Psychosocial Behavior and Capacity Building Skill.” This course improved my knowledge about my own mental health, compassion, tolerance, stress management, anxiety, and emotional intelligence. Now I can be confident that I have learned the basic knowledge to identify mental health concerns and well aware of it for me and the people around.

From my personal experience this course requires a good amount of work in order to pass it, as there are 6 lessons which have to be done in a limited time and each lesson has upto 9 modules. After completing each lesson I had to give a test based on that.

After completing this course, I realized I have learned a lot of information in such a short module which definitely makes this course different from any other courses available online. It seemed like one of best ways to educate people on mental health during this crucial time.

Concluding, this was my very first online course and my experience was immensely beneficial. During this pandemic I have been through an uncertainty as my Higher Secondary exam has been held and no one knows when we will be able to complete our high school education and move forward to the university level. I was anxious for a while and felt like falling behind day by day. I tried so many things to make me happy nevertheless it barely helped. Suddenly I found Moner Bondhu has launched a course on Mental Health in my Facebook newsfeed. I completed the course out of curiosity, and when I showed it to my mother she was really happy for me. I felt accomplished and happy after such a long period of time which also taught me overcoming fear, anxiousness. Thanks to Moner Bondhu for giving me this opportunity.
Feedback

100% of the clients were satisfied with the service, out of them 49.27% of the clients said that they were highly satisfied with the counselling service and called the service excellent.

Figure: Client satisfaction with the service
Client’s Geographic Location
Total Reach through IEC materials

30,000,000 People

Live TV discussions

Pledges

Stickers

Animations