



VIEWPOINT

SEP - NOV
ISSUE 04, No. 2

MENTAL HEALTH OF WOMEN IN COVID19 LOCKDOWN A GRAVE CONCERN IN YERCAUD

The Shevaroyhills Tribal Development Institute (STDi) of the Retreat-Don Bosco, Yercaud has reached out to 40 women during the months of July & August (Covid19 lockdown) through 'Project CALLS' – Covid19 Alternative Livelihood & Living Services. It has gained momentum among people as it played a vital role to address the mental health of women of Yercaud. Days of Project CALLS served people as the days of relaxation and learning and more especially as days of healing, healing from the mental stress that they were having for five months of the lockdown. To follow up the process and also to address the need of the hour of Women, STDi decided to conduct a survey on the mental health of women with the help of final year students of Masters of Social Work from Sacred Heart College, Tirupattur.



Two research scholars of the social work department have been meeting people and talking to them on their mental health issues. They made a sample survey among hundred women. It revealed that mental health of women is a grave concern and it has to be addressed immediately. Hence, we immediately wanted to address the issue for those in urgent need. On Sunday, 18th of October, a group of 35 women were chosen from the survey and made to come over to our centre. The day was filled with activities, games, sharing and team building to be supportive to each other in their neighborhood. During their sharing, most of the women recalled their rapport with us during the project CALLS and reaffirmed that it served them to heal from their mental stress. The day was concluded with NATURE WALK in the coffee estate and view point. At the end of the day's programme we could see these women laughing loudly and going out of the campus happily. Smile on the faces of women made the day success.



Sola Illam Past Pupils Meet



On 27.09.2020, we had Sola Illam Past Pupils Meet. In this first meeting, 11 members participated. Fr. Raj, the Rector, Fr. Amos, the Vice-Rector and Fr. Selva, the SOTCHO Director set the right track with their suggestion and guidelines. As the fruit of the meet, Mr. D. Madesh is elected as the President of the Past Pupils. Mr. A. Vengatesh (as the Secretary) and Mr. Thangaraj (as the Treasurer) have taken up the Responsibilities. It is decided that we would identify the rural schools to clean up the place, since they are closed for a long time due to the lockdown.

SOLA TRIBAL HOME – DON BOSCO PAST PUPILS ON A MISSION TO PAINT GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS IN TRIBAL VILLAGES

The Retreat, Yercaud: To mark the 150th year of Don Bosco Past Pupils, the Sola Tribal Children's Home (SOTCHO) past pupils have decided to take up the initiative of painting government run schools in the tribal villages. These schools mostly are abandoned from renovation and beautifying. With the schools closed down due to COVID-19 lockdown, one wonders whether these were the schools that were full of life with children. The initiative will cover as many schools that need attention and care. On Sunday, 29 November, the past pupils started with Kotachedu school in Yercaud Taluk. Fr. Selvakumar along with Fr. Amos joined the past pupils and they are in the process of identifying schools in most need. The Master of Social Work students from Christ (Deemed to be) University who are doing internships in our social ministry wing of Shevaroyhills tribal development Institute (STDi) also joined the past pupils in this venture.



SPS Foundation - INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME

Sacred Heart College, Tirupathur / Christ University, Bangalore.



ADIEU WITH FOND MEMORIES' - AN EXPERIENCE TO SHARE

“With Pandemic on the loop, how is internship even possible?” was my first thought with many other piled up questions running at the back of my mind. The Retreat, Don Bosco, Yercaud proved it otherwise. The amount of fun and learning gained during our stay was impeccable. The infrastructure and the orientation of its functions were remarkable. The love and concern rendered for college interns was mind-blowing. The needs of students were taken care of in a very peculiar manner. Accommodations and food were at the finest. Should say that we, the interns from Christ University were the lucky bunch to get the VILLA all to ourselves. So much trust was given, which has been such an honor receiving from such a great organization. Travelling during this difficult situation, the stay at The Retreat, Don Bosco, Yercaud was the best way to end the year. It gave me personally a “we” feeling and the secure feeling of being home away from home.

Pondering on the professional note, The Retreat, Don Bosco, Yercaud gave us the best of the best field experience any Social Work intern can ask for. They had given us the huge responsibility of assessing needs for fifteen villages in and around two panchayats of Yercaud. Adding on to this, gave us the biggest experience of conducting a research study for the same. Being a Social Work student, we were able to practice the theory into the field. Not only did the organization fulfil our requirements from college but gave us practical and personal learning exposure of being part of the annual philosophical debate. Father Raj and Father Selva are the greatest support is teaching us professional leanings and were patient enough in helping us correct our flaws. Treating us like professionals was the greatest encouragement, including us in major decisions, introducing us to newer projects; all this helped us to have a professional lens in all walks of work. Meeting and interaction with the Alumni of SOLA tribal school was one of the best experiences, they were the youth group who made in bigger changes by introducing projects in full support of The Retreat. Father Amos, gave us personal thoughts and trips regarding politics and showed us ways to improve ourselves as professionals. To sum up everything, The Retreat, Don Bosco, Yercaud gave us the professional experience that cannot be found in most of the organizations, especially during this pandemic. A lifetime cannot be enough to cherish the beautiful learnings and love we as Christ University interns had received. Forever will this beautiful journey be loved and cherished.

I am Br. Chinnadurai, SDB, a second year student of MSW, Sacred Heart College, Tirupattur. On 13th of October 2020, I started my internship in SPS India Foundation, The Retreat, Yercaud. It was really a new exposure and learning process of twenty days. The Project coordinator, Rev.Fr. Selvakumar, SDB gave the activity plan for all the twenty days of my field work. For first one week, my activities were on doing a small study on 'mental health' of women in Yercaud town. I collected some 100 samples with 30 questions for the study. While having interview with each woman, they shared all their personal and family problems and it was very sad to hear their worries. It was also for me a new kind of experience. Coming to know the level of their mental health, gave a better understanding in this field of study. During the next two weeks, I was asked to go for basic data collection from each family in and around the Yercaud town as well as in villages. I visited about 10 to 15 villages in short time and I was able to collect data from 600 respondents. It gave me an opportunity to learn how to collect data from people and how to analyze them. My special thanks to Rev.Fr. Raj, The Director and the Project coordinator of SPS India Foundation.



**Br. Chinnadurai, SDB
Student of MSW,
Sacred Heart College,
Tirupattur.**



JOY AMAL.J



**SHASHTI PRITHAN.K
Christ University,
Bangalore.**

Kodikaadu is a village situated 6 kilometers away from a famous tourist spot Killiyur falls, Yercaud. Upon visiting, it was evident that the village is located in a geographic area isolated from the regular rush of the Yercaud town. The road that is compatible for driving down to the village ends at Killiyur falls, after which the owner of an estate inlaying between Killiyur and Kodikaadu has prohibited the members of the community to pass through the estate with vehicles. A cement road accessible only to the owner's personal vehicles is a stretch of about 3 kilometers, after which is a rocky and strenuous climb to the Kodikaadu village.

Upon conversing with the people of the village, it was noted that needs and resources such as water, food, shelter, electricity, personal property, employment are all met and the emotional/happiness quotient of the people is also high. The only issue that the village faces and can be identified as an immediate need, is the lack of proper connecting roads and the dispute with the estate owner for road accessibility. The visit helped us see the reason to be content even in difficulties and ideate on working to bridge needs and resources.

Woman of Valour

"It's been forty-two years, and I still choose to fight the evils of the society," says Mrs. Agilandeshwari. In a small village called Longli Pettai in Yercaud resides Mrs. Agilandeshwari with her two daughters. Early in her twenties, she faced the tragedy of losing her husband in an accident. Raising two daughters and being the only breadwinner in the family was her biggest challenge. Being a widow, she had to be very mindful of her safety as the external environment and people were not a great support. Financial crises, emotional, and verbal abuse was the significant battles she had to fight for survival. Luckily for twenty-four years, she has been working in a garment industry where she's been receiving support from her colleagues. Mrs. Agilandeshwari shared about the suicidal thoughts she had to overcome to provide a better living for her girls and the number of insults she had to face while struggling to pay her debts. Through all the struggles of life, Mrs. Agilandeshwari is empowered enough that she's provided education for her daughters and is also financially stable. Hard work and perseverance are her secret to a successful living.



**Jane Chelsea I
Christ University,
Bangalore.**

ABANDONED HOME



**Sruthilaya
Christ University, Bangalore.**

The old couple Mr. Kamarajan, aged 75 and Mrs. Kaamakshi, aged 70 live alone in a cold and broken home at Jerina Nagar with the minimum of the minimum to survive. The lady of the house is the only OAP holder and does menial jobs, while her husband mends footwear and together, bring home fewer money fortunate enough for a meal in a day. Their children have long forgotten the love and gratitude to care for their parents. The couple is trying to make the ends meet with everything they have in their weak clinging bones.

To live and to learn.



Annette Joseph,
Christ University,
Bangalore.

Interning with SPS India Foundation will unquestionably be my most eye opening and adventurous internship experience ever. Not only has the onset of the COVID-19 – 19 pandemics curbed my post-graduation student life, but has also held me back from pursuing what I love to do the most – To be among the people and work with and for them. SPS India Foundation has not just given me new experiences of walking miles, meeting extremely different people from my regular lifestyle and professional knowledge, but it has also opened my mind's eye to be more open to change, and be emotionally thankful for what I have.

‘To sit on the end of the world, and dream of flying into the sky’

SPS India Foundation has showed me countless possibilities to work for people, bridge gaps and find happiness in all there is to possess. But it has also extended my horizons, so to say that I have been given the opportunity to pitch in skills, efficiency and also discover myself from within. The 21-day internship at SPS India Foundation has given wonderful memories and learning at the same time that I would always hold high in my professional growth.

FELLOWSOPHY

I've always wondered about the big questions. What is this experience we call life? What is our purpose? Why do we exist? Suddenly life decides to show me the bigger picture. It all started the very second, I entered THE RETREAT, Yercaud. It was an amazing opportunity to meet different types of people and understand that every coin has two sides. Every minute spent here enhanced my perspectives and made me understand that at the end of the day, it's all about understanding the fact that this experience we call life is a conscious journey, our purpose here is to empower ourselves and others around us, we exist to spend the first half of our life to learn and accept our EGO. The next half of our life is to understand that we are not only our EGOs but a part of something infinite and unfathomable and that we are all important points of this magical cosmic play.



Bennett Jonathan
Christ University,
Bangalore.

To live, love and not forget your roots

Ms. Bernadette, a 55-year-old woman, seems to show all of her trust and hope in her eyes, as I ask, if I can talk to her. One look at her “home” told me why. With a family of four siblings, among whom one is mentally affected to be taken care of, Ms. Bernadette shows me around her extremely damaged house that can pass off easily as a shack of poor infrastructure that is not fit to live in. Though the statement might sound harsh, the pictures may prove the otherwise pathetic truth. With the roofs leaking and the house flooding up during rains, foot space being congested and the kitchen in a state of despair, Ms. Bernadette starts to talk about her two siblings who are employed, one as an electrician and the other, a daily wage worker. She mentions that what they make is insufficient to meet their needs and that too at the ages of 50, 55, 57 and 35, none of them have married due to economic reasons. This goes on to say that they are the last generation of their lineage. Ms. Bernadette shocked me by saying that this is the home that her family of four generations has lived in. When asked about her routine, I came to know that her world revolves around her mentally ill sister whom she takes care of. The sister, Ms. Freeda gets fits and that has made it impossible for care centers to take her in. But this does not deter Bernadette's love for her sister and she continuous to stay by her side. Her only concern and need is that she would want a functional and proper house that is not always under repair. When asked if she would like to move in with her sister to a care center, she sweetly smiled and said that her roots and memories were bound to this home and that she would never let it go. As much as her story, she and her siblings being the last in the bloodline, only because poverty, ended her hopes for a family; her world only consists of caring for her mentally ill sister and fending off in a home that can barely be called a home. she reminisces that this is her place in the world where she is the most happiest. With teary eyes she says that all she wants is for her home to be repaired as she can't afford to do it. She reminds us of how little there is to someone's life and yet all it takes to keep us sane is gratitude, love and not forgetting what we have come through.



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