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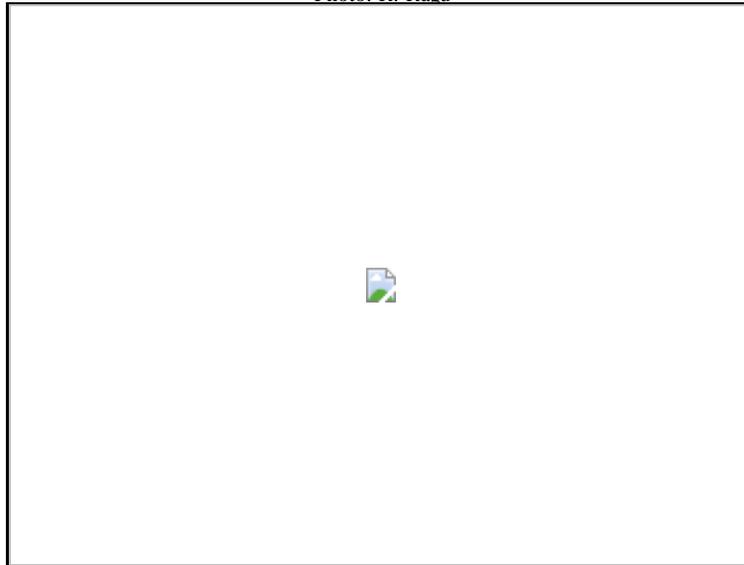
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## Halfway homes for mentally ill destitute women planned

Staff Reporter

*TISS to enter into MoU with Maharashtra Government and The Banyan*

Photo: R. Ragu



**Photographer Christoph Von Toggenburg speaking at the launch of short films on mental health on Sunday. The Banyan founder Vandana Gopikumar and TISS Director S. Parasuraman are in the picture. —**

CHENNAI: The Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), as part of its outreach programme, will set up halfway homes for mentally ill destitute women, where they could undergo treatment and begin the process of reintegration with the society, its Director S.Parasuraman said here on Sunday.

TISS would enter into an MoU with the Maharashtra Government and the Banyan, a non-governmental organisation that takes care of mentally ill destitute women, to impart technical training for these women and thereby ensure them a livelihood, Mr.Parasuraman said. Two such facilities will be set up – one in Mumbai and another at Tujapur. He was speaking at the launch of a series of short films on mental health.

The decision on the project was taken after a study conducted by the TISS students showed that there was an increase in the number of women destitute found on roads. Under the project, the volunteers would identify such women in Mumbai and take them to the halfway homes for further treatment and rehabilitation.

“The TISS and Banyan Academy of Leadership in Mental Health will take up collaborative projects to make a difference in the lives of people with mental illness. The joint ventures will also provide an opportunity for students to work along with institutions in the field of mental health,” he said.

On the making of the short films, Christoph Von Toggenburg, a photographer who directed the films, said the films are categorised into different subjects such as ‘Despair, ‘Challenge’ and ‘Hope.’ A team of volunteers interviewed dozens of persons with mental illnesses, their families, mental health professionals from various institutions, and volunteers for this purpose. The films will be sent across to film festivals and other institutions to sensitise people to the issue.

Banyan founder Vandana Gopikumar said lack of access to care, lack of awareness about mental health and family burden make the living condition of people with mental illness even more challenging.

“We have been working for more than 10 years to design a replicable and sustainable system that offers support for the wandering mentally ill.” Welcoming the initiatives of the Chennai Corporation in identifying the mentally ill, she said care should be taken to ensure the right kind of socio-medical response for them.”

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