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World Health Organisation highlights Chennai NGO's 'home again' project

A typical home has 4-5 people with one or two on-site personal assistants visiting or living with them based on need.



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World Health Organization (Photo | AFP)

By KV Navya

Express News Service

CHENNAI: “A large number of homeless people with mental health issues are admitted in institutions and even if some of them get better, they are unable to get out of these institutions due to factors like poverty and homelessness. To address this, we piloted the Home Again project in 2015,” said Pallavi Rohatgi, executive director (partnerships), The Banyan.

Banyan’s Home Again is one of the projects highlighted in the World Health Organisation’s recent publication, ‘Guidance on Community Mental Health Services: Promoting Person-Centred and Rights-Based Approaches’. The Guidance is a set of documents that provide information and support to all stakeholders who wish to develop or transform their mental health system and services to align with the international human rights standards including the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Vanitha Rajesh, head of the Center for Mental Health and Inclusive Development Program, The Banyan, said, “Home Again offers people living with mental illness, the opportunity to live in rented, shared homes in the community with support delivered through personal assistants for health, economic transactions, work and leisure.”

Along with housing, the intervention features allied supporting services including social care support and facilitation, access to healthcare, case management (detailed biopsychosocial assessments and personalised care plans), and on-site personal assistance. A typical home has 4-5 people with one or two on-site personal assistants visiting or living with them based on need.

The intervention has been implemented in neighbourhoods in Chennai, villages in Trichy and Kancheepuram districts of Tamil Nadu, Malappuram and Thrissur in Kerala, Ratnagiri Mumbai in Maharashtra, Guwahati and Boko in Assam with a partner, Ashadeep.

Currently 243 people live across 52 homes in Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Maharashtra. Additionally, 30 people live as part of homes offered by their partner Ashadeep in Assam. One of the panel members at the WHO's conference, Keshav, former union health secretary said, "This model which the Banyan has tried and tested is being implemented in other areas as well.

Government of Tamil Nadu is partnering to implement this in several districts, since Banyan is largely focused on Chennai. In the context of the WHO Guidance, it will only work if government begins to understand it. A lot of examples given in the Guidance are of civil society organisations. We have to see similar work being done by government agencies," he said.

Background

Banyan's Home Again is one of the projects highlighted in the World Health Organisation's recent publication, 'Guidance on Community Mental Health Services: Promoting Person-Centred and Rights-Based Approaches'. It offers people living with mental illness, to live in rented, shared homes

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