



**Newsletter**  
**January – March 2020**

Dear Members, Advisors and Friends,

Warm greetings from Shuchona Foundation. We have had a great start to 2020 as is evident from the brief highlights of some of our activities below. In the past three months, we are proud to have continued and accomplished our work across multiple sectors and projects. This includes another successful visit from CASP, completion of the National Mental Health Strategic Plan and attendance at the WHO Special Initiative on Mental Health meeting in Geneva, just to name a few. However, the pandemic has completely changed the way we operate. Since mid-March, we have not had too many meetings (other than online ones), or any work trips, trainings, etc. All of us, like many of you, have been working from our homes, trying to remain safe.

We hope that very soon we will be able to continue our work the way we used to; we will get to see our colleagues, have meetings and discussions in our meeting room, conduct trainings, and everything else that we always took for granted.

On the occasion of WAAD, an article written by our Chairperson Saima W. Hossain has been published in IPS news. The article can be found here: <https://www.ipsnews.net/.../story-triumphs-tribulations-impl.../>

Hope you and your loved ones are safe and healthy.

With warm regards,

Shuchona Foundation Secretariat

*For regular activities regarding our current projects, please visit and "like" our Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/ShuchonaFoundation/>).*

**WHO Special Initiative on Mental Health meeting, Geneva**

In January, Chairperson Saima Wazed Hossain and colleague Nazish Arman traveled to Geneva for the WHO Special Initiative on Mental Health meeting. They were joined by representatives from DGHS, WHO, and NIMH. The WHO Special Initiative seeks to ensure that universal health coverage involving access to quality and affordable care for mental health conditions is provided to the Special Initiative countries, of which, Bangladesh is one. It aims to enhance quality interventions and services for individuals with mental health



*Chairperson Saima W. Hossain at a session during the meeting*

conditions. Shuchona Foundation presented Bangladesh's priorities and participated in panel discussions on the other Special Initiative countries that were in attendance (Paraguay, Philippines, Jordan, Ukraine, Zimbabwe). The meeting provided the 6 Special Initiative countries with a platform to discuss and determine the top 5 priority areas for mental health in their respective countries in light of their strengths and challenges. Each country



presented their concerns and priorities. The Chairperson participated in the panel discussion on Bangladesh. There were presentations by people with lived experience and individual country discussions regarding new approaches to incorporate people with lived experience into the Special Initiative. The meeting ended with presentation on different WHO approaches and tools to support the Special Initiative activities.

### **Refresher courses on the SCESD Manual\***

In the first quarter of the year, colleagues from Shuchona Foundation conducted 2-day refresher trainings for peer leaders in Sirajganj, Rangamati, and Moulvibazar on “Social Communication and Emotional Skill Development of Children, aged 0-5”. The participants shared their experiences including challenges faced during the implementation of the manual. Based on the feedback, Shuchona Foundation trainers guided and worked alongside the peer leaders, and assisted them in demonstrating activities from the SCESD Training Manual.



*Shuchona colleagues and participants at a refresher training*

The training program with youth groups are designed to create awareness on early childhood development, and focuses on youth leaders with the objective to disseminate the learning through peer groups to their respective communities. Several trainings and follow-up courses of different target groups (working mothers, day care center staff, youth club members, etc.) continue to be undertaken as part of this program. Till date, core training of all the groups identified under the current project has been conducted, and refresher trainings (3 for each group) are being conducted.

*\* The SCESD manual is part of our program with the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs. The trainings were organized by MoWCA and Shuchona Foundation.*

### **Inclusive Education Manual Review**

In February 2020, our Chairperson reviewed the progress of the Inclusive Education Manual with Shuchona Foundation colleagues and executive committee member and Inclusive Education expert, Shirin Zaman Munir, PhD. The team meticulously assessed the manual that Shuchona, with the help of external experts, has been developing. The Chairperson suggested guidelines and provided further direction, which was incorporated into developing a finalized version of the manual. In March, the Honorable Minister of Education of Bangladesh, Dr. Dipu Moni, visited the Shuchona Foundation office to provide her guidance and to express her support for the project. The manual is being developed to support



*Honorable Minister of Ministry of Education Dr. Dipu Moni at our office with Chairperson, officials of NAAND, and colleagues from Shuchona Foundation*





teachers in expanding their own capacities to facilitate the learning of all students in the mainstream classroom, with a focus on the inclusion of students with disabilities. The manual is currently undergoing some final changes, and we hope to complete it soon. Shuchona Foundation has been working with the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, Dhaka University's Department of Educational & Counselling Psychology, Institute of Education and Research, the National Curriculum and Textbook Board, and other experts, to develop the training manual on Inclusive Education, since January 2019.

### **Shuchona Foundation Annual General Meeting**

29 February, 2020 marked our successful Annual General Meeting at the Green Life Hospital. The meeting saw an almost 100% of members' presence, with two members joining online. Two advisors joined the meeting as well. At the meeting, a report of the previous year's activities, the audited financial report, and the year's budget and plans were presented. The meeting helped facilitate constructive discussion among members. It was an opportunity to obtain valuable feedback from the members, and allow the team to highlight our progress since the last AGM.



*Participants at our AGM, February 2020*

### **National Mental Health Strategic Plan (NMHSP)\***

In January, the NMHSP Working Group had its first meeting of the year. Shuchona Foundation is a member of both the working group and the technical task team, responsible for developing the Mental Health Strategic Plan for Bangladesh. Our Chairperson is the Lead Consultant for the Working Group. The situation analysis and strategic plan document has been developed at the request of Bangladesh's Ministry of Health and Family Welfare's Department of Non-Communicable Diseases. Over the past few months, the members of the team met on various occasions and input from review workshops have been incorporated into the plan. The plan primarily aims to identify priority areas and to help create a roadmap of activities which include awareness and advocacy, policies and human resource development plans, so that mental health can be integrated into the existing system of care, using a holistic, multi-sectoral life course approach. With collaboration and support of multiple ministries, academia, civil society and experts, the National Mental Health Strategic Plan has recently been completed. It is currently undergoing some final changes and will be ready to be submitted for approval soon.

*\*The NMHSP is developed with funding from DFID and technical support from WHO-SEARO*



*Participants at the NMHSP Working Group meeting, January 2020*

### **Empowerment of Families program\***

In March, colleagues from CASP, visited Bangladesh for the 3<sup>rd</sup> time since the inception of our Empowerment of Families program in July 2019. The CASP team conducted a three-week training at Proyash which was focused on

developing functional and natural IEP for students at Proyash based on the CASP model. Shuchona Foundation and CASP team closely worked together and conducted regular classroom observations and teachers' trainings at Proyash. These sessions continued every day of the week until March 16<sup>th</sup> and included pre-recorded video session by CASP Founder, Dr. Liliana Mayo on strategies



*Teachers' Training at Proyash by CASP, March 2020*

teachers can use. The primary goal of the visits and the prospective implementation of the CASP model is to progress towards a more functional learning environment at Proyash, which will allow the students to become more independent, productive, and happy. Due to the pandemic, the CASP visit was cut a few days short, and considering it, the Shuchona team is currently working on revising the plans to be shared with CASP, to collectively decide on how to take the work forward under the current situation.

*\*A joint initiative with CASP, Proyash Institute of Special Education & Research, supported by Leathergoods and Footwear Manufacturer & Exporters' Association of Bangladesh (LFMEAB).*