

Befrienders Worldwide

volunteer action to prevent suicide

Newsletter – November 2015

World Suicide Prevention Day Activities – September 10, 2015

“Preventing Suicide: Reaching Out and Saving Lives” was the theme of this year’s World Suicide Prevention Day (WSPD) on Thursday, September 10, 2015. Befrienders from all around the world have been busy organizing activities to advance the cause of suicide prevention around the globe. Here are a few examples:

Thailand

Bangkok

September 10 of this year was a busy day for Bangkok Centre of the Samaritans of Thailand. It all started sometime in October of last year, when a well-known advertising agency selected Samaritans to receive their Corporate Social Responsibility endeavor. Our unique befriending services somehow caught their attention and they offered to develop a web page for us for free. An internationally acclaimed and award winning film producer/director, Pen-Ake Ratanaruang, was astonished by our “suicide prevention through effective listening” services, and took up the idea of making a clip video interviewing one of our volunteers.

On July 30, we heard the sad news that a well-known young pop singer, Singha, committed suicide. One of his best friends, another well-known singer, Pae-Arak, was very emotionally affected by his friend’s suicide and he offered to interview our volunteer in the clip. The video clip was launched on September 7 and has been circulating on YouTube ever since. From then on Samaritans became increasingly recognized by the public, including the media community. People have expressed interest in our forthcoming training scheduled for the end of October. In addition, the number of our callers has risen significantly, on phone, email, and Facebook.



On September 10, we took the opportunity of WSPD to raise funds by selling artificial “Samaria” flowers. On this occasion, a number of celebrities joined our volunteers in selling the flowers. The director joined a discussion panel on suicide prevention organized by a Psychiatric Association of Thailand. The video clip can be viewed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oD0LwD39_XM (with English subtitles).

As of now, the stream of new clients, people interested in training and the interest of media keep pouring in. In addition, we have received requests from the business sector to conduct training in “effective listening” for their workforce.

Chiang Mai

On Sunday September 6, Samaritans of Chiang Mai organized a talk titled “Who can prevent suicide” at Suan Prung, a psychiatric hospital. Guest speakers featured university lecturers, a monk, a singer and a psychologist. The audience came mainly from the police, but also from every sector in Chiang Mai.

Kenya

This year, Befrienders Kenya teamed up with P.C.E.A Kikuyu Hospital, Samaritans Medical Services, Africa Mental Health Foundation and My Mind My Funk for the WSPD event. This was the 4th WSPD event in Kenya; it was held in Kikuyu, Kiambu County at the P.C.E.A Kikuyu Hospital.

The event was a forum to create awareness on the issues of suicide and suicide prevention, the international network for suicide prevention and the services offered to survivors and the bereaved, as well as to call for action on suicide prevention in the Kenyan context. Around 300 people participated in this year's event – students, community based organizations, teachers, community health workers, service providers in the field of mental health and other stakeholders.



The event featured an introduction to the day and theme for 2015, a candle lighting ceremony in honor of those who died by suicide and solidarity with those who have lost loved ones through suicide, presentations from the various professionals tackling various aspects related to suicide including worldwide statistics, Kenyan perspectives, rape in relation to suicide, drug and substance abuse in relation to suicide, youth and suicide, impact of suicide on significant others, personal experience stories from suicide survivors and a skit by a youth group. The event was chaired by Ms Margaret Karani of PCEA

Kikuyu Hospital and Mr. James Karuru of Befrienders Kenya.

India

Roshni, Secunderabad

Following this year's theme – Reaching Out – the Roshni befriending center in Secunderabad, India, chose to reach out to the citizens of the city and state through the media and educational institutions.

With a committed group of 60 volunteers, they decided to commemorate 10th September with awareness and outreach programs through the week starting from Monday September 7 until Sunday September 13, 2015.

Approximately 800 students were addressed in schools and colleges and some of them were befriended. Bookmarks were distributed to all students and teachers present. Volunteers also spoke on several radio and TV channels. Finally, on September 13, volunteers participated in the Suicide Prevention Awareness 2km Walk conducted by the Indian Psychiatric Society, Telangana State Branch. They took this opportunity to distribute pamphlets and bookmarks to raise awareness of Roshni services and to address the media.

Jeevan, Jamshedpur

Jeevan, a Suicide prevention centre at Jamshedpur organized numerous activities for WSPD. At the behest of Jeevan, several schools have organized student rallies in their respective areas with placards displaying suitable slogans to spread awareness on suicide. The response by schools was overwhelming. In addition, Jeevan volunteers gave two awareness presentations, the first before a gathering of about 400 parents/ guardians of different schools, in Michael John Auditorium, encouraging participants to become volunteers. The second presentation was made before students of RMS High School, Khutadih, Sonari.



A press conference was held on September 9 at Jeevan Centre. A press release was issued on the occasion highlighting the various WSP Day programme. The second press release was issued at the end of the Main Program of Jeevan at SNTI Auditorium on 10th Sept.

The main program was held at 6 pm on September 10 at SNTI Auditorium, Bistupur. The program started with a theme song presented by Dr. Anup Gupta, a well-known Rotarian. The guest speaker, Dr. Amool Ranjan, RINPAS, Ranchi highlighted the various tips for suicide prevention with students. Jeevan director presented his annual report on the occasion after the welcome speech.

The results of the second annual competition among schools, conducted by Jeevan, were announced. The names of the schools that have followed the best practices for stress management among students throughout the year were announced. Two schools were honored with Jeevan Trophies by the chief guests.

It was announced by the director in the program that with special and focused efforts of all concerned, the high rate of student suicides in Jamshedpur has come down from 21 per 100,000 population per year in 2010 to 7 per 100,000 per year in 2015.

In the end, all the guests were requested to take one candle and a candle sheet from the volunteers and light the candle in their window at 8 pm in memory of those whom we could not save from suicide.

Saath, Ahmedabad

In the morning on September 10, director Ms. Anjuben Sheth together with a volunteer made an interactive presentation at Mission School Ahmedabad. They discussed “Happy Student Life” with around 200 students, including coping skills and how deal with stress from studies, parental and peer pressure, as well as from romantic relationships.

In the afternoon, the volunteers of Saath along with co-director Salimbhai visited the psychology department of Gujarat University, where volunteers were requested to judge the best poster at an exhibition of posters on suicide prevention. Then, volunteers visited Sabarmati river front which is a very crowded public place of Ahmedabad, where many suicide incidents occur. The volunteers reached out to many people present at the river front and distributed pamphlets, brochures, stickers and posters.

Finally, the team of volunteers visited the Vadilal Hospital where they came across various patients being observed in the trauma center, as well as relatives of some patients who were admitted on account of burning their bodies while attempting suicide. Volunteers listened to the tragedies of other patients who were under care at the Trauma center. There was a telecast of a talk about awareness of suicide in the evening on Gujarat TV where the director spoke about various pressures and causes of suicide and how the center is reaching out to people by providing them emotional support. The program was reported both in TV channel and newspapers.

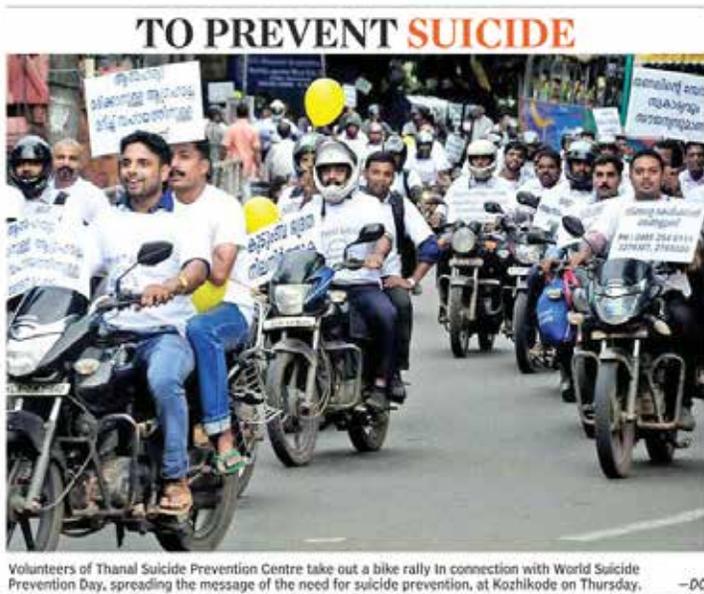
Other activities from BW members:

- In **Malaysia**, Johor Bahru organized an outreach event where volunteers met with Nepali workers who needed befriending.
- In **South Africa**, Bloemfontein center held an information session at Free State University. They held informal talks with students and distributed pens (with the Bloemfontein contact details) and pamphlets. Setshabelo center had a successful outreach program where



they gave information on suicide and suicide prevention.

- In **Denmark**, a 45-minute documentary about the BW Helpline Livslinien was shown: <https://www.dr.dk/tv/se/dr3-dok/livslinien-2#!/>
- In **Thanal, Kerala, India**, Suicide Prevention Centre volunteers organized a motorbike rally to further the cause of suicide prevention.
- In **Bangladesh**, Kaan Pete Roi, Bangladesh's only Befrienders Center, ran a workshop in collaboration with Development of Youth Mental Health for World Suicide Prevention Day. They have also launched an Android App for users and supporters of the Kaan Pete Roi.
- Befrienders **Kuala Lumpur** organised its annual Public Forum in conjunction with the WSPD, on 19 September 2015. A psychiatrist, Prof Dr Philip George, spoke on depression and a clinical psychologist, Ms Lee Kuan Shin, spoke on support for the suicidal.



This newsletter was made by Catherine Goulet-Cloutier from information provided by BW members.