BW Webinar Connecting our World.

On 19\textsuperscript{th} November Befrienders Worldwide held its first ever webinar to showcase the new Samaritans UK Core development E-Learning training programme. The webinar was received in 32 countries and viewed by 169 BW centres including some invited guests.

The feedback on the new Samaritans Core Development E-learning training has been very positive and we thank Samaritans UK for their participation in this event and for their excellent presentation.

E-Learning training is gaining more traction as a method for training people in many organisations around the world and BW will consider using the webinar platform to share collective learning by our BW members. Further details will be released in the new year. The survey findings on the E-Learning programme are being collated now and will be shared with all our members as soon as they have been analysed.

BW would like to thank all of our members for taking part in the webinar and for your constructive feedback.

**BW India Roshni – Beyond Befriending**

It has been almost a year since the world was brought down to its knees by a mysterious pandemic that spared no one – neither the rich nor the poor, neither the old nor the young. The deadly virus has forced nations to get into lockdown mode, which in turn destroyed businesses and economies, forced closure of educational institutions, led to the collapse of medical infrastructure and healthcare and created an environment hugely detrimental to physical and mental health.

While the skill sets of BI centres in India, with their helplines, dedicated volunteers brought much needed relief to many. It was clear that we had to go the extra mile to reach out to the unprecedented numbers who fell victim if not to the disease itself, then to all the accompanying fears and anxieties they would never have dreamed of having to grapple with.

**Contents of Newsletter**

1. The BW Global Webinar
2. BW India- Roshni Helpline- Beyond Befriending
3. BW Malaysia- NCObM- Colourful Life Experiences
4. BW Argentina- Centro de Asistencia al Suicida- Community and Compassionate Attitude to Emotional Problems
5. BW Thailand- Bangkok- Listening to the Community
6. Uruguay BW Ultimo Recurso Associate Member- Hopeful in Pandemia
7. The importance of the BW Annual Returns
8. BW Help App Analysis

To contact us: To submit articles or information for the newsletter, please contact communications@befrienders.org

Befrienders Worldwide December 2020
Roshni Helpline, a BI centre for the last 23 years, rose to the occasion. By using CALL DIVERTING facility our volunteers were able to offer tele-befriending from their homes. Our dedicated tech-savvy volunteers are on duty every single day of the week (including Sunday) from 11 am to 9 pm.

Frantic callers need to speak as jobs are lost; then follows panic for the future, of debts and dues to be paid, the dread of not being able to secure new employment, the fear of infection and cost of medical treatment, the domestic abuse that takes place in many homes, the feelings of hopelessness, despair, loneliness and deflated sense of self-worth. Our statistics team monitored and reported on the number and nature of calls received including the milestone statistic of our volunteers handling over 5000 calls since the imposition of the lockdown in the last week of March 2020. Covid - anxiety callers which constituted 3% of total calls during the first 2 weeks rose to 45% by the 7th week, while our e-mail befriending saw a sharp increase of almost 50%. An unfortunate death of a high-profile young movie actor allegedly by suicide created significant increase in the number of calls to our helplines. Received calls from young persons in depression and deeply affected by the incident, confirming research reports that celebrity suicides can lead to a rise in suicides.
Beyond Befriending

*An unprecedented situation was the exodus of hundreds of thousands of migrant labourers who were forced by loss of jobs to trek long distances to their villages and homes under the most difficult circumstances – with no money, no food, no prospects for the future and the constant fear of falling prey to the deadly virus. Roshni helped with getting callers in touch with agencies for food, medicines, transport and temporary shelters during their long journey home, and even going beyond the call of befriending by offering their own time, money and services. Such compassionate efforts by our volunteers to coordinate shows empathy and involvement directly from the heart.

Roshni also maintained Covid related database exclusively for our callers. This includes:
- 24x7 toll free Covid-19 call centres
- Doctors on-call
- Nationwide helpline numbers for Corona affected people
- Free oxygen concentrates services
- Details of availability of beds both in government and private hospitals.
- Plasma donors
- 24x7 free helpline for medical help.
World Suicide Prevention Day

With the turmoil going on in the world and little idea of the shape of things to come, the month of September and the purpose of World Suicide Prevention Day on September 10th needed to be commemorated more meaningfully and spread widely through various means and strategies. The theme this year is ‘Working Together to Prevent Suicides’. Focus groups were identified such as schools as on-line classes are taking a toll not only on students but on teachers and parents as well. Health care workers from doctors to cleaners were facing exhaustion and stigma. Old people were being neglected or ignored and infected. Wives were being physically and mentally abused by husbands who had lost their jobs or denied access to alcohol due to financial and lockdown restraints.

Another wonderful initiative by Roshni was the launch of a year-long challenge of “To Suicide”, to get the message out that when you are in pain, “reach out, there is always someone” who cares and listens. All age groups actively participated in the challenge, and many volunteers successfully spread the message beyond our borders as we received videos from UK, USA, Germany, Italy, France, Australia, Malaysia, Singapore, Maldives, Saudi Arabia and Dubai. And it was extremely satisfying to see people from overseas participating in this exercise.

This is the time to reach out to all media contacts in all languages to create and increase awareness. Our media team of volunteers have been very active on the print and TV media both regional and national, getting our helpline numbers scrolled across as many TV channels as possible, for as many days as possible.

We have been participating in webinars and on television channels regularly. Extensive awareness was created through social media platforms like, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube.

Other BI Centres across the country have also been rendering yeoman services during the on-going crisis by organizing webinars and talk shows on topics such as ‘How to Support People Undergoing Stress, Loneliness and Depression during Covid times’, ‘Break the Stigma India’, ‘Addressing the Needs of Teenagers’ and ‘Social Isolation, Loneliness and the Elderly’.

Roshni has clearly been a fore-runner in many activities relating to mitigation of distress due to the Covid 19 situation. The dedication and tireless efforts of volunteers and trustees have ensured that it is so and will continue to be so in the months and years to come.
I joined Befrienders Johor Bahru, Malaysia in January 2007 as a potential volunteer and became full-fledged volunteer in January 2008. Since April 2008, I have been actively participating in numerous roles within the Executive Committee (EXCO) until this April 2020. Currently, I am the National President of the National Council of Befrienders Malaysia (NCOBM).

I love my engagement as a Befriender, it is indeed a platform for serving myself and others. Befrienders Malaysia have a total of nine (9) centres. They are: Befrienders Kuala Lumpur (KL), Ipoh, Penang, Malacca, Seremban, Johor Bahru (JB), Kota Kinabalu (KK), Muar and Kuching. We are looking forward to the establishment of new centres along the east coast peninsular of Malaysia with introduction sessions on Befrienders Worldwide in the States of Terengganu and Pahang commencing in January 2021.

Besides my normal volunteering duties as a BW phone listener, I have experience in dressing up as a “Befriender Clown” for publicity and fund-raising purposes. I had also been a pantomime stage performer in a shopping mall to spread the awareness of the existence of our Befriender Centres and the availability of our services.

I have also conducted “Laughter Therapy” sessions and given talks to doctors, nurses, staff and patients. In fact, I am actively involved in listening and laughter therapy whenever opportunities arise. Laughter exercise helps to de-stress and release the positive feeling hormone, endorphin. Indirectly, laughter session helps to boost our immune system which benefits our physical and mental health especially in this challenging COVID pandemic period.
From my personal point of view, I feel that both the listening and laughter therapy are channels which offer emotional support to people around us. Thus, I am a cheerful Befriender radiating joyful energy to people around me whilst mindfully practicing the Befrienders’ core values of acceptance, non-judgment, non-attachment and confidentially. Life is Precious, We Care, We Listen!

May all of us be well, happy and peaceful always!
Happy Befriending Always!

Esther Teo (Esther Smiling)
President
NCOBM
30.12.2020

**BW Argentina- Centro de Asistencia al Suicida**

**Community and Compassionate Attitude to Emotional Problems**

As an association dedicated to the prevention of suicide, our vocation and our main aim to the community is, without a doubt, direct assistance to people in crisis through our helpline *Linea de Asistencia al Suicida.* We realise the importance of broadcasting what we do, the basic guidelines of assisting people in crisis and the concepts regarding the prevention of suicide.

We currently have around 25 volunteers and we have various potential volunteers who are in the training right now in order to be able to cover shifts next year. Currently we are open from 8am to 12pm every day.

Through our helpline we help thousands of callers a year, but we know that they are only a few in relation to the huge quantity of people who go through emotional crisis, or who have suicidal thoughts. In order for effective suicide prevention to be successful we need much more. We need a significant proportion of people in our communities to understand the signs of those showing signs of emotional crisis and suicidal ideation. If this were possible, it would create a true network of emotional support which anyone could access when they are going through a difficult time in their lives.

We can all help someone in emotional crisis but first we need to recognise the signs. This implies that training is required, not just by professionals but ideally, those of us that are in a position to receive the necessary training. It is with this in mind that the Centro de Asistencia al Suicida has developed training aimed at all the community, like transmitting courses, talks and workshops. At this moment, and in spite of the restrictions imposed by social distancing, we are carrying out more training activities than ever:

- Our web page, [www.asistencialsuicida.org.ar](http://www.asistencialsuicida.org.ar) with useful information about suicide prevention is one of the pages on this topic most visited in the world.
- Our blog: which also reaches thousands of people has reflections about current events, the activities of the organization, campaigns, tributes and resources for the prevention of suicide.
- Our social networks: Facebook and Instagram and Twitter where we spread the content of our website, our blog and motivational messages.
- Our appearances in the mass media each time we are invited, in order to reach even more people with basic guidelines for supporting mental health issues and the prevention of suicide.
- Our courses for aspiring candidates, where every year tens of interested parties are trained, some of which join as volunteers on our helpline but all of them have the tools to use in their daily lives to help people in crisis (this year via Zoom). More information here.
- Our courses for professionals, in which doctors, psychologists, teachers, firemen, and personnel from the security forces and those who have frequent contact with people who they could eventually offer assistance, acquire useful intervention skills for assisting someone in crisis or suicide prevention. (this year via Zoom). More information here
- Our talks about the prevention of mental health issues, in which thousands of people can listen live to notable professionals who talk about specific themes (this year via Facebook Live). More information here.

In order to face an increase in emotional problems or mental health issues which many have foreseen and which we are already seeing in our communities, the actions of national, provincial or municipal states will be of vital importance. As ordinary citizens there is a lot we can do; to start with, get informed and get trained, but fundamentally, assume a much more comprehensive and compassionate attitude to those with emotional problems.

This will allow all of us to actively listen and support those who need it. If each one of us did this, we would be able to alleviate the effects of this mental health crisis and help create a more understanding society.

**BW Thailand Bangkok. Listening to the Community**

Since early 2020, Thailand was one of the first countries to be affected by the spread of virus, COVID-19. Due to the government’s clear policy on public health, coupled with the hard work of medical personnel as well as public cooperation, the epidemic rate has been checked. For this achievement, Thailand has received appreciation from the World Health Organization.

Excursion at the woods before the workshop started. The scientific name of the tree is: Ficus albipila (Miq.) King. Kew Science
A large part of this achievement has been brought about by influential Health Volunteers (HVWs) whose work, mostly in the provinces, districts and villages and who are familiar with village culture and speak the same language, have been making a significant contribution to controlling the spread of the virus by communicating the guidance on reducing the spread of the virus.

Samaritans (Bangkok center) has been running a project to enhance these HVWs by organizing workshops in effective listening skills. We have conducted 2 workshops, one in Nong Bua Lumpoo in North East Thailand and another in Uthai Thani in North Central Thailand. A further workshop is planned in Nan province soon.

Since we believe in listening therapy, our workshops aim at empowering these HVWs in “Listening without Prejudice”, and deep listening to their inner self. In exchange, we have learned how they cope with long hours of work, and how they adjust their outreach activities due the different cultures and social life of the villages.

We learned that we should let these individuals search for their needs, instead of just giving them what we think they should have. For example, one health volunteer told us that when he visited the community, he saw a person without legs, therefore he made a request for prosthetic legs. However, the villager still did not look very happy. So, he asked what he wanted. He said, he wanted dentures to chew properly.

Since these HVWs have been working very hard and many of them get burnout, our workshops are also aim at empowering them with encouragement. We also plan a follow-up program for these HVWs in the hope that they will retain the listening skills received during their workshops.

**Workshop in a new normal way, wearing masks at all time.**

Some feedbacks from the participants

- Listen to others starts from listen to your inner feelings.
- The disabled need to take responsibility for themselves. I don’t want to be a burden. (comment from a disabled participant)
- I learned that a good listener needs to be clam. Once, the person you talked to realized that you’re not prejudice, (s)he will say what’s in her/his mind.
- Firstly, I didn’t know why I should attend this workshop, I had been listening every day. I am here with full of doubt, then I realize my doubt is one of the listening barriers.
- I always listen to others but not myself or my family members.
- I worked with a case who finally committed suicide; it was traumatic
Uruguay BW Ultimo Recurso Associate Member

Hopeful Message in Pandemia

The NGO Ultimo Recurso was born in Uruguay, a heart shaped country, in the very South of America, 32 years ago. Our first step was the creation of the first crisis phone Help Line which, was inspired by The Samaritans of Chad Varah and adapted it to our cultural identity.

Other services were added according to the needs of the Uruguayan population such as clinical assistance in our offices, survivor groups, suicidology training workshops plus several successful suicide prevention plans in zones of the country where there was a high incidence of suicide. The LAW 18.097 NATIONAL DAY OF SUICIDE PREVENTION was approved by the whole Parliament on 27th December 2006 with Ultimo Recurso’s staff as co-authors of this law. In 2009 the IASP CONGRESS was held in Montevideo organised by Ultimo Recurso.

Uruguay was in the past, referred to as the “Switzerland of America”, because of its democratic tradition, its legislation on human rights, and stable economy. In Uruguay, public health services cover the whole territory. There are also numerous private health-care institutions as well as effective emergency ambulance services. The latest technology is employed in all medical institutions, be they public or private. Cholera, yellow fever, malaria, typhus is completely inexistent, and Uruguay has suffered no outbreak of the SARS virus, nor have any cases been reported.

Uruguay is the country with best internet access in Latin America, however, the development of a suicide prevention culture has been hard. We have a high suicide rate, the second worse in Latin America. However, our underestimated figures are low compared to other LA Countries.

NGOs such as Ultimo Recurso, with ordinary citizens, suicide survivors and others, have worked hard for more than 32 years claiming the State for suicide prevention policies.

Crisis Telephone Service, created by the Government and inspired by Ultimo Recurso’s Hotline, have since March to June 2020 seen the number of calls compared to the previous year tripled without an increase in suicide rates. We are now entering the Fourth Wave of the pandemic and we anticipate the suicide rate will increase.

During this global pandemic, without financial support, our staff is working, ad honorem, helping people in crisis and suicidal, offering free training courses, and providing food and medicines in order to improve their feelings of hope.

TO BE EMPATHIC WILL BE YOUR OWN VACCINE AGAINST COVID-19.

AUTHORS OF THIS ARTICLE- MA JOSÈ DI AGOSTO AND SILVIA PELÀEZ

Befrienders Worldwide
December 2020
The Importance of the Annual Returns

The BW Trustees would like to thank everyone who has submitted their annual returns this year. We understand that a significant number of centres are unable to access their centres to retrieve the necessary data due to the pandemic. BW does need this data in order to have the necessary oversight on how our BW centres are providing emotional support globally especially to monitor the number, mode and trends of contacts at all our centres. BW will use the current data and provide analysis from the Annual Returns which have been submitted this year. BW wants to try to make the data gathering simpler and will introduce an e-form for recording the data; this will allow much faster analysis of the data from across all our centres with the findings collated into an annual report. We will be introducing this new E-form in April 2021.

Insights from analysis of the BW Help App

Since the Help App launch on 21st June 2020 there have been over 17,000 contacts made to the Help App. In order that we keep track of the APP’s usage we have asked our Help App’s provider, Base Creative to analyse the data. Please find a sample of some of the data which has been analysed.

BW wants to increase the Help App’s circulation and will be using the BW Website to provide a direct link to the Help App. A full review of all the data will be made available in June 2021

Visitors by country (There have been users from 189 countries around the World).

The top 10 countries that visit the BW app are:
United States (10.14%)
India (4.82%)
United Kingdom (4.56%)
Turkey (4.27%)
Peru (3.29%)
Indonesia (3.27%)
Egypt (3.20%)
Iraq (2.62%)
Bangladesh (2.51%)
The Philippines (2.41%).

Visitors by language
The majority of visits are in English (78.81%)
Arabic (7.89%)
French (4.36%)
Japanese (2.45%)
Portuguese (2.03%)
Thai (1.66%)
Lithuanian (0.91%)
Swahili (0.58%) Chinese (Simplified) (0.45%)
Hindi (0.32%)
Filipino (0.26%)
Spanish (0.01%)
Insights from analysis of the BW Help App

Age & Gender
Of the 2,217 users that the data is available for (19.61% of total users):
● 37.94% of users are aged between 18-24
● 27.81% of users are aged between 25-34
● 13.91% are aged between 35-44
● 9% are between 45-54
● 6.62% are between 55-64
● 4.73% are 65 or older
Of the 2,778 users that the data is available for (24.57% of total users):
● 54.04% are female and,
● 45.96% are male

Traffic trend
● From 22nd June 2020, the number of daily visitors using the app significantly changed, reaching an average of 70 per day.
● In June 2020, there were 960 users recorded - a trend that has, for the most part, continued to rise month on month
● On 10th September 2020 (Suicide Awareness Day), there was a spike of 347 users recorded - media coverage from CNN.com, which was syndicated in other publications, lead 100 of these users to the website
● On 10th October 2020 (World Mental Health Day), there was a spike of 466 users recorded

Engagements
Out of all the sessions that have taken place on the BW App, 28.3% of them have resulted in a meaningful action: (data correct to 31st December 2020)
● 62.2% result in a click on a centre's website address
● 18.4% result in a click on a centre's phone number
● 17.6% result in a click on a centre's email address
● 1.8% result in a click on a centre's Skype details