

The Foundation Report Launch: Mental Health Support in Mumbai for Survivors of CSA



L-R: Dr. Avinash Supe, Mr. Rahul Bose, Ms. Neerja Birla and Ms. Rajeshwari Chandrasekar

The Foundation released the report ‘Preliminary Assessment of Quality and Accessibility of Mental Health Services for Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse in Mumbai’ on 19 December 2017 in Mumbai. Supported by UNICEF, the report throws light on the current state of mental health services available for survivors of child sexual abuse (CSA) in Mumbai.

The founder of The Foundation, Mr. Rahul Bose, Chief of Field Office for UNICEF in Maharashtra, Ms. Rajeshwari Chandrasekar, Founder and Chairperson of Mpower, Ms. Neerja Birla and Director of Medical Education and major BMC hospitals, Dr. Avinash Supe launched the report. Mr. Bose while introducing the work done by HEAL stated, “There are few atrocities worse than child sexual abuse because it robs a child of trust, innocence and wonder. In India, more than half of our children have been sexually abused. We have the second highest rate of child sexual abuse in the world. The only way CSA can be eradicated is to remove the veil of silence, educate, be vigilant, punish perpetrators and most importantly, support survivors with ceaseless love, care and healing.”

Ms. Chandrasekar while speaking of UNICEF’s work in the child protection sphere, highlighted, “Child sexual abuse has a long-term adverse effect on self-esteem, cognitive development, academic performance, social competence and behaviour of the child and may also carry into adulthood. In the wake of a slew of child protection legislations and the POCSO Act, the number of prosecutions has increased. It is equally imperative that quality mental health services are made available and accessible to children, their parents and adult survivors as they try to heal and recover from the trauma that is child sexual abuse.”

Speaking at the launch of the study, Ms. Neerja Birla said, “I applaud The Foundation’s Project HEAL for spearheading this study and bringing to the fore this critical issue of child abuse and its impact on mental health. Providing mental health care is of prime importance in the case of child sexual abuse and trauma, as abusive experiences have a significant impact on a child’s

mental, psychological and social development as well as their adulthood. With the alarming increase in the number of cases, it is imperative to stir dialogue about this serious issue. We believe these issues should be addressed collectively, with schools playing an active role in safeguarding young children as well as putting in place preventive measures to identify red flags in children's behaviour. We also believe that sexual literacy should be introduced as part of the school curriculum to educate children as well as nurture a non-stigmatising environment around child sexual abuse, by sensitising teachers and the students, and promoting a caring, non-judgmental approach."

This preliminary report was developed to pave way for newer researches in the field of CSA, that would eventually match up to the data brought to fore by the study conducted by Ministry of Women and Child Development in 2007. Triangulated data was generated from 61 mental health practitioners (MHPs) across the city of Mumbai, 12 stakeholders within the child protection sphere and 19 survivors of child sexual abuse for the study.

The report highlighted the following aspects of the state of mental health services for survivors of CSA in Mumbai:

1. The 61 mental health practitioners who participated in the study together reported seeing more than 7000 cases of child sexual abuse in their practice.
2. The age group that has the least amount of services available to them are children in the age group of 0-5 years. This gap deserves immediate attention given the increase in cases in this age group as reported in the media in the recent times.
3. An alarming number of practitioners do not feel equipped to provide services to CSA survivors owing to their lack of training in trauma focussed counselling, lack of skills of working with children and the emotionally overwhelming nature of the work.
4. More than 50% of the practitioners in the study have experienced burnout at some point in their practice. This statistic is indicative of the importance of trauma-focussed training for MHPs, such that they are equipped with adequate measures to protect their own emotional equilibrium and this would also help practitioners not shy away from serving child sexual abuse survivors.
5. 91% of survivors sought therapy in adulthood. This is due to a number of factors like fear, shame and unawareness of the traumatic incident being sexual abuse.
6. 83.33% of the survivors who participated in the study never disclosed information about the abuse to anybody. Their reasons were fear, shock, lack of knowledge about who could help, and the most alarming one - that they did not know what was happening with them.

www.healcsa.com

support@healcsa.com

+91 9870989834/ 022 23521643



@HEAL.CSA



@HEAL_01