

Introduction

The Befrienders Worldwide Board of trustees would like to thank all our wonderful volunteers around the world for their dedication and compassion in helping other who for whatever reason find themselves in some form of crisis and need a listening befriender at the other end of a phone, Email, or web chat service.

On 10th September the world commemorated World Suicide Prevention Day and whilst this is a remarkable day, BW members work selflessly every day of the year. Our Newsletter highlights four BW branches who have done something special on this day. Thank you to them and to all our volunteers.

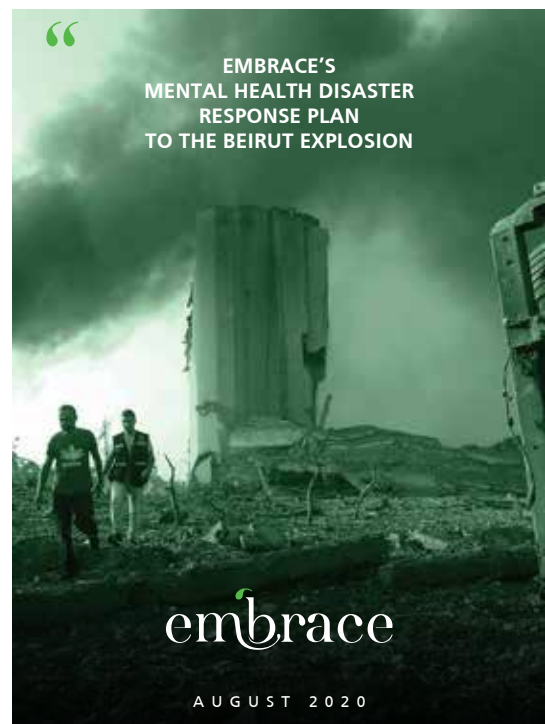
Lebanon, Beirut

BW's Embrace's Mental Health Disaster Response Plan to the Beirut Explosion.

In response to the explosion that hit Beirut on August 4th, Embrace had a rapid and efficient response to tackle the post-trauma stress, as well as the long-term mental health consequences of this mass trauma. Embrace has mobilized a number of initiatives with its response aiming to address the short-term and long-term mental health impact of this collective traumatic event that all Lebanese have experienced. Following the explosion, the immediate response on the ground from the Lebanese citizens, civil society, diaspora, and international organizations has been medical aid, housing, and food security for those in the direct area of the blast. However, the less tangible and visible mental health needs are even larger than those that can be seen by the eye. The explosion which has left an estimate of 300,000 homeless, more than 160 persons dead, and more than 5000 injured, has also left a large number of children and adults who experienced the deafening sound of the blast, the rain of glass, car accidents and loss of loved ones (missing or dead). Parents are at loss of what to tell

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Contact information for the Chair of the Trustees is chair@befrienders.org.

their children, teenagers have lost friends and don't know how to cope, and the elderly have lost their homes where they have lived for more than 30 years, as well as many of their neighbours' and friends.

All of this is happening on top of existing health, social, economic and political stress nationally. The mental health needs post this disaster are both short-term and long-term.

Initial post traumatic reactions in the first 10 days- 77% of respondents reported feeling nervous, anxious or on edge more than half the days or nearly every day of the week. The above data was collected by mysay app in collaboration with Embrace and surveyed a total of 701 individuals in Lebanon between the ages of 24-45.

80% of respondents reported feeling down, depressed, or hopeless more than half the days or nearly every day of the week

We know both from historical events that have affected Lebanon, and similar historical events from the world, that the mental health impact of this trauma is here to stay, at least for the next few years.

Direct Community Intervention

Embrace's experienced team of operators were present on Ground Zero from day one to offer clean-up efforts and emotional support. Psychological First Aid was being provided in a basecamp set up in the area of Mar Mkhayel with the presence of other humanitarian organizations and social initiatives such as Baytna Baytak and Muwatin Lebne who were providing basic assistance, food, and reconstruction services.

In addition to the presence on basecamp, mobile teams were moving around in several of the destroyed locations, helping families clean up their homes and stores, providing a listening ear, and offering referrals to basic needs services and mental health referrals to people as needed.



Embrace Lifeline (1564) Damage Sustained to the Embrace Office The National Lifeline for Emotional Support

Embrace operates the Embrace Lifeline (1564): The National Emotional Support and Suicide Prevention helpline in Lebanon in collaboration with the National Mental Health Program at the Ministry of Public Health. The helpline, the only one of its kind in the Middle East, has been operational since 2018 and has literally saved lives. The Lifeline provides emotional support through active listening to anyone going through an emotional crisis, whatever the reasons may be. It has received more than 10,000 calls since it launched, with calls peaking following August 4. Despite damages to the Embrace Lifeline's call center as a result of the explosion, and minor

injuries to our staff, our operations were not interrupted, and the Embrace Lifeline continued through its mission to support the community affected by the blast.

The helpline services currently respond to all individuals in emotional distress as a result of the events, or those experiencing suicidal ideation. The Lifeline also provides referrals to mental health professionals and NGOs providing basic assistance. While the Lifeline operates from 12 PM to 5:30 AM daily, as part of our longer-term response to the disaster the Lifeline aims to operate 24 hours a day, 7 days a week in the next few months.

In the month of August, the Embrace Lifeline received 430 calls from persons experiencing emotional distress or thinking about suicide.



More than 200 persons were reached through direct support on the ground.

Face to Face and Virtual Community Support Sessions

Since the first week of the explosion, Embrace has been approached by tens of organizations requesting to provide community group sessions to staff members and groups, aimed at providing psycho- logical support, raising awareness about the psychological reactions post-trauma, the red-flags that might emerge in the coming weeks, and liaising the community to available resources.

Embrace has responded to each and every one of these requests for community support sessions and has held both face to face sessions and virtual sessions as well as virtual support sessions for Lebanese diaspora who have also been impacted by the events in Lebanon. These community support sessions continue to be taking place in the month of September.



Through these community support sessions, Embrace has provided psychological support to more than 300 children and adults in different areas of Beirut and also abroad.



Free Mental Health Clinic for Survivors

In parallel to its on the ground presence, and phone-based services, Embrace has just launched a mental health clinic that is now offering free psychotherapy and psychiatric services to those impacted by the explosion so that children and adults can receive trauma and grief counselling to process the experience they have lived.

The clinic will cater to populations who have been more severely impacted by the trauma and are experiencing symptoms that are affecting their daily functioning.

In the first 2 weeks of its launching, the clinic has served more than 40 persons who have been directly and severely affected by the Beirut blast.

Despite this disaster, we remain hopeful at Embrace and believe that if we cradle these traumatic experiences early on through support and action, we can prevent future mental health consequences for individuals and for the Lebanese community at large.

Donate to Embrace's Mental Health Relief Plan

www.embracelebanon.org | info@embracelebanon.org

T: 00961 81 029 399

BW in Bangladesh:

Snapshot of Kaan Pete Roi's (KPR) Response to the COVID-19 Crisis

By: Yeshim Iqbal & Ashik Abdullah

COVID-19 has been unprecedented global crisis, with researchers and healthcare professionals urgently organizing to meet the demands it has caused. The crisis has exacted a huge mental health toll on populations around the world, and Bangladesh is no exception. Phone and internet-based services have expanded rapidly to meet the growing need, but the context in Bangladesh means that typical working hours and phone lines are not always appropriate for the provision of mental health services: during the lockdown everyone was stuck inside their homes, so there was a lack of privacy for phone calls and a limited ability to add credit to one's phone. Kaan Pete Roi (KPR) is Bangladesh's only Befrienders Worldwide centre, the first and only emotional support and suicide prevention helpline in the country. With support from the SAJIDA Foundation, KPR took two major steps in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in direct response to the mental health demands:

- 1) Expand operating hours-The original hours of 3pm - 9pm daily were doubled to 3pm – 3am every day.
- 2) Provide a WhatsApp service. Callers were able to call on WhatsApp from 9pm – 3am every day.

These steps have led to KPR receiving more than three times as many calls as before, with 65% of the calls are now at night indicating the importance of these expanded operating hours. Additionally, the gender split of callers is roughly equal, a positive indicator of the accessibility of the service, given that other tele-counselling helplines in Bangladesh are heavily male dominated in their usage. It is noteworthy that there has been an overall decrease in the percentage of callers who are suicidal during the COVID-19 lockdown; there are several possible reasons for this. First, given the societal stigma in discussing the topic of suicide, and the fact that there has been a great increase in callers more generally, some callers may be reluctant to disclose their suicidal ideation until they have greater trust in the service. Second, the lack of privacy in homes will make it difficult for callers



with suicidal ideation to call and discuss this. Suicidal callers tend to be the most vulnerable subset of callers; in any crisis situation, those that are already vulnerable become even more marginalized and may have even less access to the resources (including resources such as space and privacy in the home) required to call. Third, it is possible that a greater number of callers are now getting in touch with concerns immediately related to the COVID-19 crisis.

An important point about the above data is that all of these calls were taken from home, with KPR staff and volunteers working around the clock to rapidly devise a strategy to provide supervision, peer support, and necessary technology to allow volunteers to take calls from home. Now, in Bangladesh we are slowly starting to re-open offices and hope to all be together in person in the office again soon. But the toll that COVID-19 has taken is not yet over; we see that in the calls, and in our own hearts and minds as we continue with our work. We will be back in future newsletters with more updates. Until then, we send all the other BW networks our love and solidarity from Bangladesh!

The Samaritans Stand

Ready to Listen by Denise Panichas executive director of The Samaritans of Rhode Island

Samaritans, can I help you?

That opening line when calls are answered at The Samaritans remains as relevant today for the hopeless, alone and suicidal as it was when local visionaries began our Rhode Island-based charity more than 43 years ago. As September is Suicide Prevention Awareness Month, we want to remind everyone of our historic role in the state's efforts to save lives.

Today, our mission statement includes to be the "agency of choice" for individuals, families and other community stakeholders who seek information relating to suicide prevention, grief support, education and resources. And while our website is now our largest, most accessed learning tool, clearly nothing has replaced the voice of a kind and caring volunteer.

Wars, political strife, economic hardship, grief and loss, sickness and broken relationships are just a few of the burdens influencing thoughts of suicide and, sadly, completed suicides. Now, with the pandemic, we can add the emotional burdens of job insecurity, social isolation, fear of infection, and the grief of losing loved ones to COVID-19.

There is no single profile describing our callers. They come from every generation and walk of life.

The experts tell us that for the truly suicidal of all ages the commonality is they are hopeless, believe no cares if they live or die, and in the end, truly believe they are a burden to loved ones and friends. In their darkest hours, the truly suicidal believe that ending their life would be doing everyone else a favour. We have also learned that the truly suicidal do not want to die; they just want to end their pain and can think of no other options.

It may come as a surprise, however, to know that most callers are not suicidal; they just need and want someone to listen without judging their feelings, emotions and pain. Some call just once, others daily and others call until we are no longer needed.

While our listening line does not replace professional services, speaking with a volunteer "befriender" can ease anxiety and loneliness when family, friends and professionals are not available. A call to The Samaritans can also be the first step in seeking professional care or lead to the resumption of lapsed care.

Other callers are caregivers and third parties concerned about loved ones or clients. Since our inception, our policy is to not call rescue unless requested to do so by the suicidal caller.

Since its founding, The Samaritans of Rhode Island has received nearly a million calls. Who answers the listening line?

Our legion of 1,762 current and alumni volunteers represent a cross-section of local, national and international undergraduate and graduate students, including residents from Brown University medical school, as well as adults of all ages and backgrounds, who, after meeting volunteer requirements and training, receive no accolades for service other than the satisfaction of knowing they tried to make a difference in the world. They are truly remarkable people who carry their befriending skills with them for a lifetime.

At the Samaritans, we realize it is not easy to survive the test of time. But through decades of wars, recessions, disasters and now a pandemic, neither our board members nor our volunteers have ever been daunted by the challenges. Today, we are taking steps to ensure our anonymous befriending line endures for decades into the future.

Feeling lost? Need to talk? Call a friend at The Samaritans at (401) 272-4044 or 1-800-365-4044. Want to quietly explore suicide prevention information and resources? Visit www.samaritansri.org. For all emergencies, please dial 911 directly.

World Suicide Prevention Day

10th September

a. New Zealand- It's ok not to be ok

Here's the link to the World Suicide Prevention Day video that was made by the volunteers at the Palmerston North Centre New Zealand. Thank you, Leola, and Keisa for your dedication to helping those that are not ok.

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=318935442746553&extid=AetPHINRQB4RWiyw>

b. Samaritans of Singapore (SOS)

Every year on 10 September, we commemorate World Suicide Prevention Day. The Samaritans of Singapore (SOS) has been working to help erase stigma surrounding conversations about suicide and mental health since 2015.

This year, we put focus on an age-old stereotype - "Men don't cry". For decades, boys have been told they should never be caught shedding a tear or to appear incapable of handling their own problems.

Men who showed the slightest signs of weakness are quickly met with judgment and prejudice, creating a psychological barrier that prevents them from seeking help.

The awareness campaign this year, #SuicideSeesNoGender features a two-part film that aims to break down the societal stigma and highlight the importance of both reaching out and seeking help – regardless of gender.

From 6 September 2020, we invited the community to show their support through social channels via our community hashtag and digital hope repository - #HopeThroughTheNight.

Part 1 of #SuicideSeesNoGender - <https://youtu.be/3rsPA09JVyE>

Part 2 of #SuicideSeesNoGender - <https://youtu.be/rgErCZ1cLTg>

#HopeThroughTheNight - <https://www.instagram.com/p/CE1hGkGnPeP/>

Mr. Ryan Tan and his team of volunteers hope you find this campaign meaningful and will appreciate if you can help share this around on social media and/or amongst your colleagues.

Many thanks!

c. Bangladesh Kaan Pete Roi- Musical messaging

A big thank you to Yeshim Iqbal and Samir Obaid for arranging an online event with a popular musician for suicide prevention day. They will be talking about mental health and suicide prevention broadly and in the wake of COVID-19, and Samir will treat everyone attending to a couple of his most popular songs.

d. France SOS Help

Greeting from the City of Light!

To mark World Suicide Prevention Day, we at SOS Help normally start the promotion campaign of our sale of donated books. This helps raise awareness of suicide, of our confidential listening line, promotes engagement with the community we serve and - raise some funds! Early September is not an ideal time to organize an event as families are only just back from holiday and the return to school (an important moment here) has just started.

In this exceptional year we hope to mark Suicide Prevention Day by re-starting our listener training which came to an abrupt halt in February.

UNPS is running campaign (in French) from 6 September "Suicide, let's talk"

and they will be answering questions from the public via Facebook on September 10th. They estimate that in France 25 people die by suicide per day and that 685 people attempt to do so. The death rate by suicide at 14.1% is higher than the European average of 11.3%

About us: SOS Help is the English emotional support line in France, and the Anglophone Post of France's SOS Amitié. We were co-founded by Chad Varah in 1974 and we are delighted to "keep listening".

www.soshelp.org



Australia Tasmania

Farewell to Lifelink Samaritans

For over 50 years Lifelink Samaritans Tasmania has been providing an emotional support service throughout Australia. It is with regret and a heavy heart that Kim Brundle-Lawrence President, and Helene Whitehead, Vice President pictured above, are having to close down the branch which has provided so much support to those in crisis.

The BW Board of Trustees would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone at Lifelink Samaritans Tasmania for the tireless contribution of their volunteers for giving those in need of emotional support a place to contact when they were in need of someone to listen to them. Well done to all of you; you will be missed.



The BW Client Help App - Update

It is very pleasing to report that the app has received over 8000 contacts since its launch on 21st June 2020. 26% of the contacts have made direct calls to member branches either by phone, Email, Skype or to their website. On 10th September World Suicide Prevention Day, the App received 3.5 times its normal daily contact numbers.

It is encouraging to note that every BW member branch has been accessed using the Help App. We are pleased to report

that two more languages, Simplified Chinese and Tagalog are being added to the App and more languages will be added in due course.

Our Website continues to have large number of users with current numbers at just under 1.4 million users year to date which is up 65% from last year.



BW Global Webinar Samaritans UK Digital E-Learning

BW and Samaritans UK are working closely together on arrangements for hosting a Global Webinar for BW members with a date set for Thursday 19th November 2020 at 09:00 hrs GMT.

During this planned Webinar Conference the Samaritans UK Learning and Development team will present their recently developed digital E-Learning training package to BW members. As far as possible the training package will be tailored to take into account local cultural differences in delivering emotional support around the world

Licences to use this training for BW volunteers will then be

available for purchase by BW members and this will also be explained during the Webinar.

During the Webinar there will be plenty of opportunity to type in questions which will be answered during a Q&A session at the end

Further information on the Global Webinar Conference will be provided in the next few weeks when a separate newsletter / flyer will be sent to all members explaining in detail how the Webinar will work. Please keep the Webinar date in your diaries free, thank you.