

Help us to Help them - A Request for Funding Support - Our Psychosocial Rehabilitation Centre for

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Overview

Mariasadanam is a non-profit making, charitable organization promoted and managed by Santhosh Joseph in Palai, Kottayam District, Kerala State, India. Now Mariyasadanam is treating feeding and rehabilitating 400+ mentally challenged people and rehabilitating about 24 children of these patients. Mariyasadanam is giving absolute free service to its inmates. Most residents of Mariasadanam were left there by family members or abandoned and left to fend for themselves

On March 14, 1998 as a humanitarian initiative of Santhosh Joseph with the intake of Thomas, a mentally insane destitute who was wandering in Palai town. The first resident was accommodated with the family of Santhosh. With the increase in number of residents given care at home, he re-modelled an abandoned cowshed for accommodating the growing number of destitute mentally ill people from the streets.

Mariasadanam gives more importance to LOVE and CARE and the care givers in Mariasadanam believe that in the case of mental illness, more than medications it is love and care and a family atmosphere which play a major role in bringing the patients back to normalcy. ***The chief functionary, Santhosh, his spouse & their 5 children reside with the inmates as one big family along with qualified Mental Health Professionals and Doctors.***

Mental Health in Kerala – An Executive Summary

Mental Illness, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO), will affect 1 in 4 families worldwide. In India, around 12% of all illnesses are mental health issues and it is cited as the 2nd largest contributor to disability. There are a small number of public health emergency care institutions across the country and only a handful of NGOs working in this field.

The extent of problem of Mental Health in Kerala State

Population in Kerala State (2011 Census) 3,33,87,677

Prevalence of severe psychiatric disorders (20/1000 Population) 6,36,772

Neurosis and Psychosomatic disorders (20-30/1000 Population) 6,36,772 - 9,55,159

Mental Retardation (0-1% of all children up to 6 years) 18,267 - 36,535

A performance audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India has concluded that Kerala, where 5.86% of the population suffers from mental illness, compared with the national average of 2%, is precariously perched in the mental health care sector.

We at Mariasadanam believe that there is a need for radically improving the capacity of India's mental health system to prevent crisis or provide support to enable people to cope with crisis, which currently many are facing.

Currently, Mariasadanam provides Residential Care facilities for about 350+ inpatients through its facility at Palai, Kerala. **In order to achieve the impact we want in the mental health sector, we are reaching out to socially responsible citizens, NRIs, Funding agencies & corporates to solicit guidance & financial assistance towards a noble cause. Timely support through benevolent funds will provide great relief to our functioning and help us in reaching out to more disadvantaged people in the society needing Care.**

Our Philosophy

At Mariasadanam we have often been asked, over the past few years, as to WHY DO WE DO ALL THIS?

There are thousands of destitute out there on the streets, wandering insane, and will treating a few make any difference? How long can we cope with the requirements of food, clothing, medicines, shelter, and the difficulties involved in reaching the patient to his home or native place?

Would our work & our efforts really matter & create that much needed change in the attitude of society towards mental illness?

These are soul searching questions to which we do not have sure answers. Being human, we are incomplete, imperfect and fallible. **"If I look at the mass, I will never act.Â If I look at the one, I will." - Mother Teresa.**

We truly believed what Mother Teresa said when we started all this way back 1998, and we continue to believe it even today. If there exists one category of road-side destitute which needs help, it is the mentally insane; their agony is wrought on their faces, their story written on their tangled hair, their plea reflected from the fear in their eyes, their misery in the nakedness of their being. Blazing heat, torrential rains and chilly winters see them through, year in & year out, And the searing starkness of their existence pounded on us to reach out for them, which we did, which we have & which we will.

How significant are the numbers we have reached out and helped, we know not but our work & our efforts will continue irrespective of the odds. We are also confident to have many like-minded people who will SELFLESS support to our cause.

To us it does not matter whether we leave a mark or not; what matters is our commitment to the plight and the cause of the mentally ill destitute, which our work embodies;

A commitment which will remain, infinitely, eternally and unto the end

REHABILITATION

Mariasadanam model is a unique concept of tackling mental illness. Art, music, yoga, handicraft works, group activities,

prayer, gardening, animal husbandry, mediation and counselling and the like are employed here in treatment and rehabilitation. Even cooking is a joyful experience here. Love and care are the basis of all these initiatives. People who make a recovery from homelessness and mental illness make different choices about their future course of life - some want to go back to their families, some may have resistant families, no families to go back to or may not want to go back to their families and therefore seek employment and others require long term support due to age or profound physical or mental illness.

Mariasadanam facilitates these choices through the following initiatives.

Employment

Recovered patients are engaged in several socially useful works inside the institution. The leadership of cooking is taken up by five recovered patients and eight others help them in sorting the rice and other preparations. Eight others are engaged in candle making; three women in stitching and three others do the general cleaning of the compound.

Recovered male patients contribute tremendously in carrying out routine works of the centre. Fire wood supply, room cleaning, helping in the kitchen are taken up by men. Haircutting of all inmates are done by recovered patients.

Art as a Treatment

It is well known that medicine alone cannot cure the ailment of the mind of man. He needs emotional support, acceptance by the society and avenues for self-expression.

Mariasadanam Artistes Troupe

* Mariasadanam Kalasamathi was started with the aim of providing a venue for the artistic expression of the mentally ill. One of the major activities of the Kalasamithi is a full-fledged professional orchestra, which has already performed in more than hundred stages throughout Kerala.

* The Kalasamithy also produced two Tele-films involving the inmates as central characters. The Tele-film "Tharattin Chirakil" depicts the conditions of mentally ill and is aimed at de-stigmatisation.

- Drama Troupe: The artistic talents of the residents are effectively assessed and nurtured to be used as a rehabilitation programme. A professional drama troupe under the Kalasamithi performed eighty programmes at various places. A study among those involved in cultural activities found significantly higher quality of life and level of functioning compared to others involved in other rehabilitation activities. Perhaps this is a pioneering attempt anywhere in the world. The therapeutic power of music is well known and it is increasingly proved here. Once in a week all the residents are asked to participate in a musical session in which well-known singers perform on the stage. It is observed that such sessions soothe the minds of mentally challenged and their recovery becomes speedier. The Music Troupe of mentally ill has been recorded as a unique one in the Limca Book of Records.

- The residents of Mariasadanam performed the "Ganamela" and drama in more than 300 stages

Reintegration

Â One part of rehabilitation is the reintegration of the Inmate with the community at large; this may mean with their family and home or it may be into a new environment and supportive surroundings.

Â Â Â - For Inmates of Mariasadanam, their reintegration is carefully conducted by a team of social workers. When the time comes that a resident is ready and wants to return, the team makes enquires as to the location of their family and makes contact if possible. If it is a local reintegration, the team may visit or invite the family to see the Inmate and facilitate the reunion this way. If the resident is from a different state then arrangements for a reintegration trip are made and the case worker escorts the resident home... however vague the directions may be!

Â Â Â - Part of this reintegration is sensitisation of the family so they can effectively care for the individual so they do not leave home again. Often this means fully educating the family as to the nature of mental illness and the treatment required.

PROGRAM PRIORITIES

Our overall aim is to be an agent for change in the mental health sector. Mariasadanam is a model which demonstrates how mental health solutions could be provided to those from lower socio-economic groups.Â We are also working towards increasing awareness of the issues amongst Inmate and caregiver groups, with the hope that an increased awareness will result increase demand for change.Â And we will help others to take up the responsibility through networking, training and replication.

In our project areas we are working to ensure that the nature of these services is continually honed to make them sustainable models.Â These models can then be promoted as ways in which the system can be changed for the benefit of the poor.

Working in Palai & surrounding Districts – Approach to Urban Mental Health

Our Apex Centre

For the past 20 years, the service of Mariasadanam has been focused on catering homeless men & women with mental health issues who have been rescued from the streets and from the underprivileged sections of the society. Mariasadanam acts as a transit centre; rescuing, treating and rehabilitating those who are brought here.

Over the coming 3 years, in addition to continuing to function as a transit centre for the homeless population, we will seek to open up Mariasadanam to provide more number of in-patient facilities for the community, with referrals coming through the out-patient clinics & for rescues from street.Â The existing expertise will therefore be extended to a wider disadvantaged population through referrals from the primary health care work of District administration & other NGOs.

Current Challenges - Mariasadanam

The need to improve our infrastructure and enhance the quality of medical care is one of the major challenges we are facing currently. Lack of sufficient facilities in the mental health care in Kerala is putting in adverse pressure on Mariasadanam to increase in-patient facilities. The absence of regular & predictable funding throws serious challenges

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- 1) Vocational training and Caring unit for mentally retarded patients with Psychiatric problems. Approx. cost of 50 lacs
- 2) Lisieux Sadanam - Boarding house for children of mentally disabled mothers – Currently there is a liability of 40 lacs towards loans taken from banks and individuals.
- 3) Constructing a Dining Hall with the required furniture & Utensils which could hygienically cater to the needs of 400+ inmates
- 4) Current liability of the centre by means of borrowing from individuals & banks – approx. 1.90 Crs
- 5) Monthly running expenses - Medical expenses and food for 350 inmates – approx. 14 lacs per month

Bank Account Details of Mariyasadanam

I place the above for your favourable consideration and will consider as my privilege if an opportunity is provided to brief you on this socially impactful project.

Thanking You,

Santhosh Joseph

Director

Mariyasadanam

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