Photography projects

Perspectives of the Sierra: Living with mental illnesses in rural communities of Chiapas, Mexico

This public engagement project aims to challenge mental health related stigma in rural communities of Chiapas. Our objective is to empower people living with mental illnesses in these communities to reduce auto stigma, and to engage participants in an open dialogue about experiences with mental illness with peers and family members. To this end, we conduct photography workshops where we teach participants how to use photographic cameras, how to express their thoughts and emotions through images and then use these images to facilitate a dialogue between them. The powerful set of images and messages that resulted from the project allowed us to get a deeper understanding of how this group of people experience their illness, their daily struggles and their sources of support.
CREATORS - Creative Reflection and Expression using Art to Transform Opinion Regarding Stigma associated with mental health

Creative expression or art is a starting point for stimulating innermost perceptions and starting conversations about mental health. A pilot arts-based workshop programme invited undergraduate students in Hyderabad, India to volunteer 12 hours over six weeks to better understand the subject of mental health, confront stereotypes and public stigma. About 124 students observed art and collaboratively created their choice of visual, performing and literary art to reach 330 peers through 150+ drawings and sculpture, eight theatrical plays and three choreographed dances. The exhibit showcases their journey of expressions from the moment they walked in (‘We don’t know anything about mental health’) to improved intended, and helping behaviours towards people with mental health problems. This project was developed and implemented as part of Shivani Mathur Gaiha’s PhD at LSHTM, supported by the PHFI-UKC Wellcome Trust Capacity Building Programme.