Mental Health Case Studies

Abida, 55, Pakistan

Photo © BasicNeeds Pakistan

Abida, 55, a primary school teacher and mother of seven, suffered from depression. Her family believed that her illness was due to evil spirits and took her to various shrines, but she showed no signs of improvement. She felt like leaving her home and running away and attempted suicide several times.

One of Abida’s colleagues told her about a mental health outreach camp run by BasicNeeds Pakistan. There, a psychiatrist diagnosed severe depression. Abida started attending counselling sessions and taking medication. In six months, her condition started to improve. After three years of medication and regular follow up from BasicNeeds workers and partners, the doctor advised that she could stop her medication.

Since 2016, Abida has been working at the Centre for Women’s Enterprise and Development (CEED), launched by BasicNeeds Pakistan, where she trains women recovering from mental illness and their caregivers to learn a trade and develop small businesses.

Hari, 36, Nepal

Photo © CBM

Hari was harvesting potatoes when the devastating earthquake struck on 25th April 2015. He rushed back to find his house razed to the ground with his parents buried under the debris. His parents were rescued but Hari started displaying symptoms of Post-traumatic stress disorder.

"I kept hearing my son’s voice as if he is calling for help," recalls Hari. As well as experiencing hallucinations, his behaviour became irrational,
Convinced he was going to lose his piece of land he would hide his ownership papers. He took to drinking alcohol and roamed aimlessly without sharing any whereabouts to his family living in a temporary shelter. His wife, teenaged son and daughter watched helplessly as he kept living a nightmare.

Hari was referred to a CBM-supported emergency mental health project. After monthly session with a psychiatrist, subsidised medication and regular home visits from a counsellor he began to recover from the trauma and is working on a construction site. This support has also helped Hari realise that he is not alone and has nothing to be ashamed of: "I now know that there are many other people who are mentally affected due to the impact of the earthquake. I am also able to speak in social gatherings, allowing me to share my feelings."

Francis, 29, Ghana

*Photo before intervention © Nyani Quarmyne. After © BasicNeeds*

Francis was discovered by a BasicNeeds team in 2010. The 29 year old primary school teacher had developed the symptoms of mental illness after his marriage failed and he began smoking cannabis. His behaviour changed – he became aggressive, disappeared from home for days on end and didn’t wash. He even started killing his own domestic animals, believing it was a ritual to protect himself, and left home to live in the market square as he felt his family disliked him. Eventually the community forcibly took him to a traditional healer as his family couldn’t afford treatment. The traditional healer drilled a hole in a huge log and forced Francis’ leg through it, imprisoning him. He was kept like this for nearly a year and a half.

After the BasicNeeds workers discovered Francis at his home, they referred him to a Community Psychiatric nurse. He was diagnosed with substance-induced psychosis caused by smoking cannabis and began treatment. With medication and support from a loyal friend and his second wife, Francis has returned to teaching and is looking to rebuild his life.

For more information visit:

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