

# Launch Event Report

Post Event Summary



# Executive Summary

In 2021 the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS) India, in partnership with the University of Leeds (UoL) UK, hosted their first public event – The launch of Project SAMA.

The public launch of Project SAMA was held on 29th September 2021 (2:00pm IST / 9:30am BST), utilising the online platform Zoom to accommodate the restrictions of COVID-19 that were currently in place throughout India. Key speakers however were invited to participate in the launch event 'offline' by directly attending the NIMHANS institution, accompanying the Indian research team.

A broad audience gathered to witness the launch and hear the introductory speeches of the various guest speakers and research project leads.

A total of 268 attendees joined the event from various locations across the globe.

The event was a great success with the attendees who provided positive feedback on the experience, inspirations and lessons learnt from the launch of Project SAMA.

## Objectives

The objective of the Launch event of Project SAMA was to:

- Raise awareness to the various members of the Bangalore/ Kolar District community of the research Project SAMA will be conducting.
- To highlight the support from local government policy makers (ministers) and emphasise the accredited local approvals that were obtained in order to commence the important research of Project SAMA.
- To mark the beginning of a series of close interactions with the various SAMA stakeholders (adolescents, parents, teachers, head teachers and mental health professionals).
- To build connections and nurture potential future collaborations.

## Programme and Speakers

### Welcome Address

**Dr. Dhanasekara Pandian**, (HOD, Dept. of Psychiatric Social Work, NIMHANS, Bengaluru) – Welcomed the audience and introduced the focus of Project SAMA, highlighting that Project SAMA will concentrate on the prevention of anxiety and depression for school going Indian adolescents.

### Background of Project SAMA

**Dr Janardhana N.** (Professor & Principal Investigator Dept. of Psychiatric Social Work NIMHANS, Bengaluru) – Delivered the background of Project SAMA, emphasised to attendees that anxiety and depression are common in Indian adolescents yet despite this, India is currently lacking a universal school based early intervention to mental health promotion.

Dr Janardhana then went on to provide a background and overview of Project SAMA including:

- The project will run for 36 months
- Recruit and involve schools from across Kolar and Bengaluru.

- SAMA will be co-producing and feasibility testing a suite of four synergistically linked interventions:
  - SAMA with adolescents (Grade 9)
  - SAMA with teachers
  - SAMA with schools
  - SAMA with parents

## Key Aspects of Project SAMA

**Dr Siobhan Hugh-Jones** (Associate Professor in Mental Health Psychology School of Psychology University of Leeds, UK) – Addressed attendees from the UK, expressing delight to see that so many people found the time to join the launch event of Project SAMA. Emphasising the encouragement this provides to the research team seeing so many people interested in supporting the work that Project SAMA is about to undertake on its journey. Dr. Siobhan Hugh-Jones then began to set out the mental health research context to which SAMA is responsive.

The key changes in global mental health research were outlined and the transformations which these have provoked in the field were discussed:

1. Key publications now recognise that the burden of mental health will soon outstrip the burden of poor physical health in many countries this highlights the urgent need for action newer interventions/approaches to address this complex problem.
2. There has been a global transformation as a result of this the field has moved away from simply focusing on 'an individual', this has led to questions such as "what is wrong with this person?" to transition into "What could be contributing to this person's poor mental health, let us understand their context? What has happened in this person's life?"
3. The evidence is now unequivocal that adolescence is a critical time for the deterioration of mental health and well-being and therefore it is also a critical time for intervention.
4. The general movement from treatment of mental health research to prevention research.

Prevention means asking how can we prevent the onset of mental health difficulties in teenagers? How can we safeguard their wellbeing? But also, how can we prevent the escalation of early difficulties to a level of clinical disorder? The WHO has also made a big contribution in the world of mental health research to view schools as important sites where we could optimise youth mental health. Indicating that schools can be seen as places that both increase and contribute to mental health risks (through situations such as bullying, gender inequality, extreme academic stress) but they are also seen as places where a lot of good can be done through increasing positive cultures, education and support for young people. Emphasising schools are places where we could do very crucial mental health intervention work.

Additionally, there is a view that has emerged in the field that when we do research on the mental health of young people, and we try to produce programs and interventions with them (co-producing) the programs and interventions have a much greater potential to be both acceptable and effective in those particular contexts. This has produced a drive in global mental health research to work with youth to design programs that will be directed to them. This reflects a rights-based approach with the mantra "no research about me, without me".

Dr. Siobhan Hugh-Jones explained that it is against this backdrop of global mental health research agendas and the way the field is changing that Project SAMA has emerged, containing its four main pillars that are responsive to the transformations in the global mental health research field.

Four pillars of SAMA:

- 1) **Evidence based prevention and early intervention** – SAMA is very focused on evidence based practices. SAMA will develop interventions that have global or Indian effectiveness evidenced and will be building on the work of the SEHER program. SAMA will also be using an established global adaptation framework to guide how we culturally adapt a global intervention into a particular cultural setting.
- 2) **Systems based (person in context)** – SAMA is uniquely drawing on implementation science which is very much asked for in global mental health research to ensure that the implementation of global mental health research into complex settings is supported to enhance sustainability in the long term. SAMA will be considering prevention from a systems perspective; this means asking what are the circumstances that people are living that may be adaptable or improved to protect their mental health. SAMA will specifically be focusing on the systems in schools that surround their young people such as, school culture/ environment and parent and teacher mental health literacy.
- 3) **Co-produced** – SAMA will be working with a range of stakeholders from mental health professionals, teachers/head teachers and also with youth to co-produce the actual intervention content. Similarly, the implementation approach will also be co-produced to allow SAMA to gain insight from the schools to further understand what is feasible for them when delivering the interventions in their school setting. In addition, SAMA will also be co-producing the evaluation framework asking stakeholders how should we evaluate the effectiveness of these types of programs and let the communities construct evaluation questions. Finally, SAMA will be co-producing a youth safeguarding protocol which will be a unique contribution to the field, both for mental health research and for schools in general India.
- 4) **Youth centered** – meaning, that SAMA is passionate about learning directly from young people about their lives and their needs.

Importantly across SAMA there will also be a youth advisory board (YAB), which will be involved in a film-making component, capturing lived experience which will later be used to convey this insight to key stakeholders and policy makers. They will also be involved in social media and advocacy to promote understanding and action for youth mental health.

## Launch of Event

**Dr Pratima Murthy** (Director NIMHANS Bengaluru) – Delivered an address.

"Adolescence is generally a period of transitioning from childhood to adulthood and if it is well lived – well experienced a person grows up to be very confident, builds up self esteem and learns to establish relationships. But this is also a time of stress because there are a lot of biological changes psychological, social and interpersonal changes also so potentially there can be difficulties. We also know that stress does not automatically lead to only depression and anxiety it can also transform into anger into inter personal difficulties, substance use etc. Therefore adolescence is a very critical period where we need to support adolescents through all these changes."

**Dr. Sathyaprakash** (Retired Headmaster and President's Awardee, Bengaluru)

"Adolescence is considered to be the dynamic stage of one's life span... during adolescence, there is a dynamic brain development along with complex socio-environmental interactions that impacts an individual's capabilities for future life. Therefore, vulnerabilities and mental health issues during this phase can impact the adult life... As students spend most of their hours in schools, they are a great platform for early intervention and prevention... School mental health programmes should be frequently conducted by trained individuals or professionals. Life skills development, building coping skills, easing the process of studying, building emotional well-being should be the focus of school mental health programmes. Teachers and parents are also to be educated about mental health and should be trained to adopt healthy methods in managing some of the student behaviours... SAMA are very much required and I am highly appreciative of this initiative by NIMHANS in collaboration with the University of Leeds. It is amazing that the project covers interventions with so many components... You have my support in this endeavour towards prevention of adolescent anxiety and depression. I wish the team a good luck and success."

**Dr. B. S. Shankaranarayana Rao** (Registrar NIMHANS Bengaluru) – Delivered a vote of thanks.

"From Last one and half year the COVID has affected both schools and children especially the adolescents. I am very sure that SAMA programme will provide a direction in catering the needs of our young children. I am sure this programame is going to be a wonderful milestone. The modules you develop would be applicable to all over the world. I wish all the best from NIMHANS to each one of you"

**Hon'ble Minister, Sri B.C. Nagesh** (Dept. of Primary and Secondary Education, Government of Karnataka) – Inaugural Address.

"The findings from Project SAMA will help inform national policy"

## Scientific Sessions

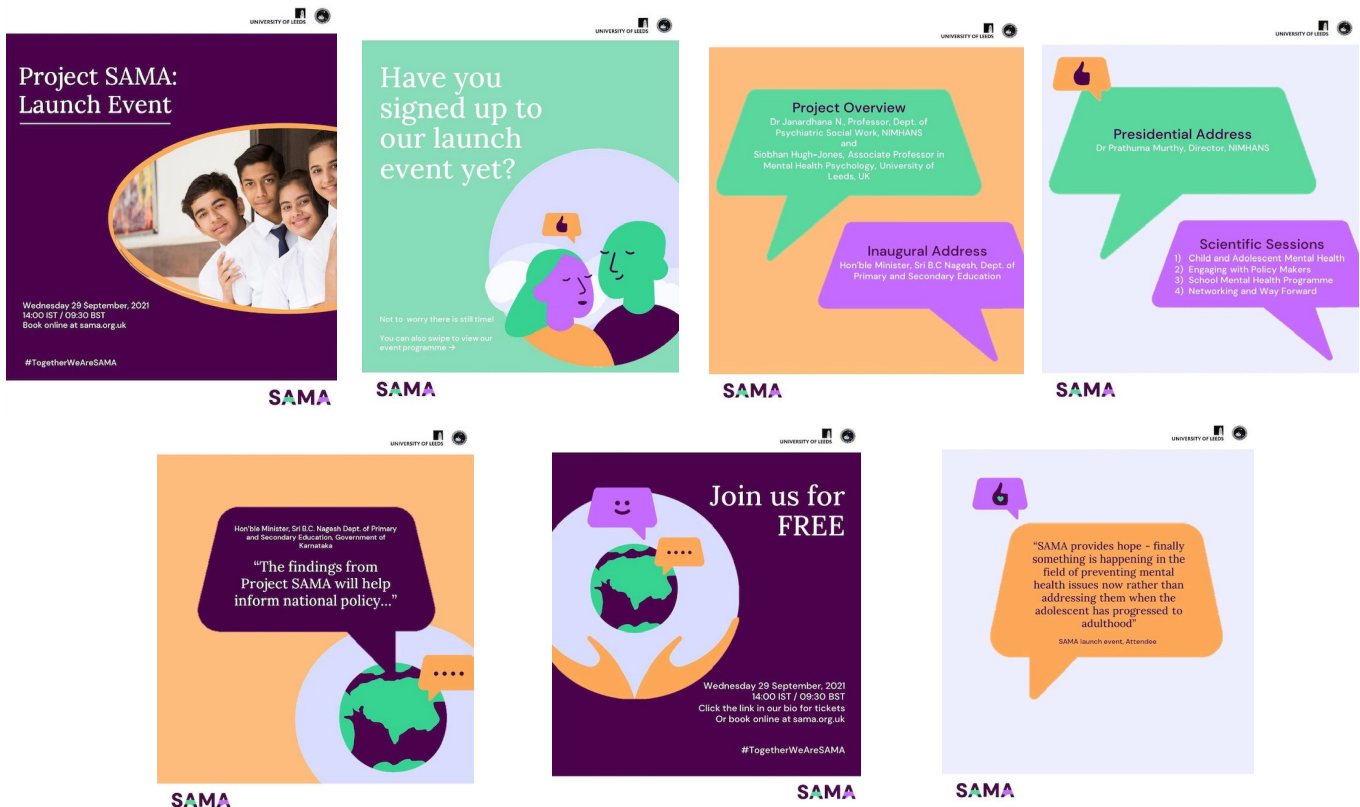
Session 1: Child and Adolescent Mental Health – Dr. Janardhana N (Professor Dept. of Psychiatric Social Work NIMHANS, Bengaluru).

Session 2: Engaging with Policy Makers – Dr Tolib Mirzoev (Professor of Global Health Policy Department of Global Health and Development London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine).

Session 3: School Mental Health Programme – Dr Rameela Shekhar (Mental Health Professional, Manashanthi Clinic, Mangaluru).

**Networking and Way Forward** – Dr Poornima Bhola (Professor Dept. of Clinical Psychology NIMHANS).

# Social Media Promotion



# Attendee Survey

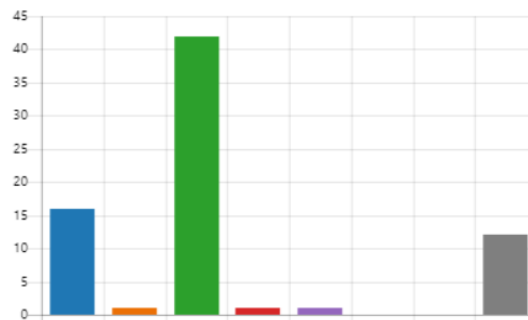
A total of 75 anonymous responses were received.

## 1) What is your job title/role?

Responses included: Educator, Principle, Counsellor, Professor, Student and Mental Health Professional.

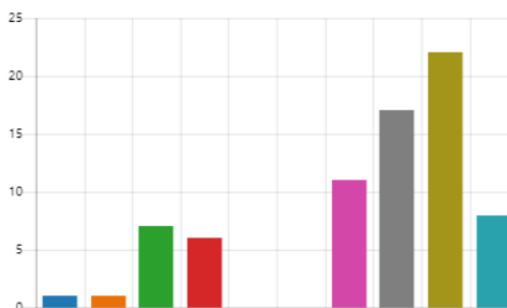
## 2) Where is you work mostly based?

Bangalore	16
Kolar	1
Karnataka	42
Another Indian state	1
Multiple Indian states	1
UK	0
Other international	0
Other	12



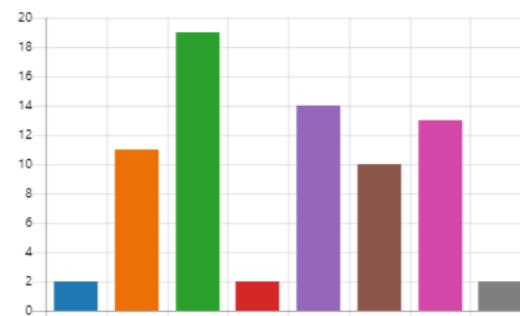
## 3) What is your main area of work?

Research (India)	1
Research (beyond India)	1
Education (eg headteacher, bl...)	7
NGO (India)	6
NGO (beyond India)	0
Government (National)	0
Government (State)	11
Youth representation / advoca...	17
Mental Health Professional	22
Other	8



## 4) What attracted you to the event?

I was an invited speakers	2
I was interested in the researc...	11
I was interested in the plans f...	19
I was interested in potential i...	2
I was interested in potential i...	14
I was interested to learn about...	10
I was interested to learn how t...	13
Other	2



## 5) How well did the event help you understand the main aims of Project SAMA?

Responses: 4.41 average rating out of 5

## 6) To what extent do you think Project SAMA is addressing a major youth mental health challenge?

Responses: 4.19 average rating out of 5

## 7) What was of most interest to you in the event?

Main themes from responses included: "co-production", "the range of upcoming sessions that addresses how policy should be inclusive and the youth filmmaking aspect are two of the most exciting parts of this event. The concept of co-production was something that aligns with my idea of taking the concept of mental health interventions forward", "the involvement of youth", "hearing about the goals of project SAMA", "the youth representation."

## 8) How interested are you in hearing about the progress of Project SAMA?

Responses: 4.34 average rating out of 5

## 9) What particular aspect of Project SAMA would you like to find out more about?

Main themes from responses included: "the implementation of Project SAMA", "the results from the co-production workshops", "what the youth think of Project SAMA."

## 10) Was there anything that you felt was unclear or confusing about Project SAMA?

Main themes from responses included: "No", "A summary of the program would be helpful", "How lay counsellors will be trained."

## 11) How satisfied were you with the online platform experience?

Responses: 3.94 average rating out of 5

## 12) If you encountered any problems with the online platform, what were they?

Main themes from responses included: "Connection issues", "language issues would have preferred more in English."

## 12) Would you like to sign up to our quarterly newsletter?

Responses: Yes = 80% of respondents

## 13) Would you like to collaborate with project SAMA?

Responses: Yes = 78% of respondents

## 10) Are you interested in joining our professionals' network for youth mental health in schools?

Responses: Yes = 85% of respondents

# Future Recommendations

More of the sessions in the English language or at the very least a summary of what was said in English.





# SAMA

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