

Maarga: a bird's eye view

Maarga is a registered Non Government Organisation (NGO) based out of Karnataka since August 2000. It has been working for the marginalised and deprived communities who have been forced to migrate from villages to urban slums. The activities of Marga predominantly focus on empowering women and educating adolescent girls and children in the slum through their unique education models in order to enable them to lead a life of dignity.

Maarga actively involved in supporting the slum dwelling and migrant workers with relief and their other entitlements during the national lockdown due to COVID-19 pandemic. Their work has been featured in [The News Minute](#) and [The Indian Express](#).

Collaboration of Eudaimonic Centre With Maarga : a brief report

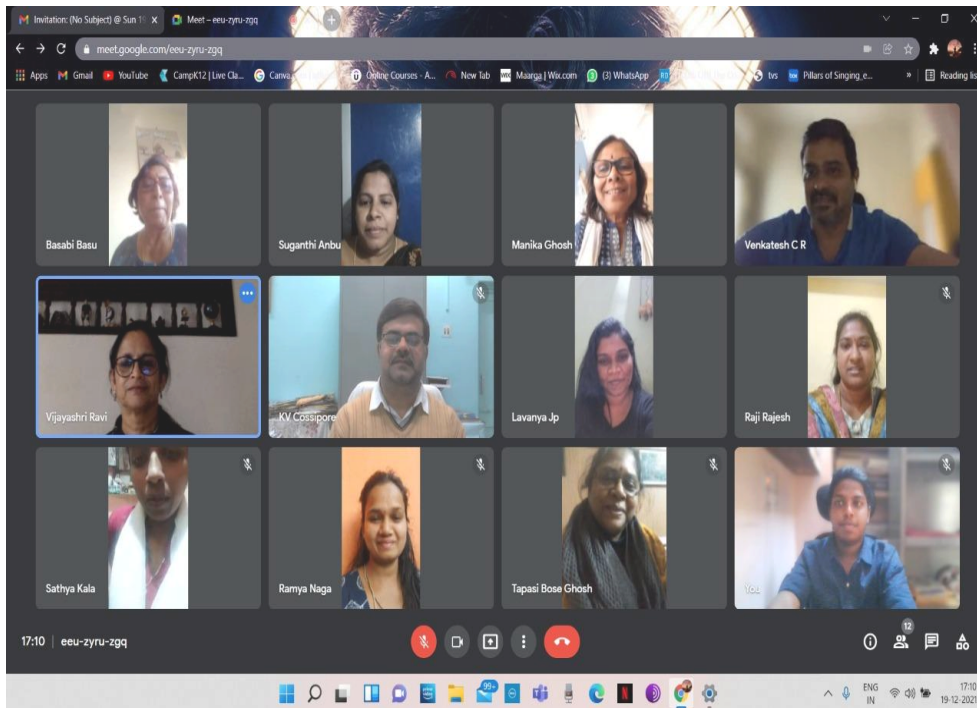
The first exchange between these two organisation was in November 2021 when Eudaimonic Centre in collaboration with Care Institute of Behavioural Science, Chennai conducted an online certificate course in counselling. Maarga sent 7 of their faculty members for this training for whom Eudaimonic Centre provided a concessional fee.

The course was conducted on weekends from 14th November 2021 to 19th December 2021 by senior professors of Psychology. The course that contained practical classes and case presentations by participants was designed to instil basic counselling skills and understanding of human behaviour. On successful completion of the course the participants found themselves better equipped to deal with the children in the classroom and understand their anxiety, fears, depression and other emotional issues.

Names of participants:

1. Adhavi Shantha
2. Lavanya M
3. Rajeshwari
4. Ramya
5. Sathya Rani
6. Suganthi
7. Surya John

Photos of counselling class in progress:



Based on the positive feedback from those who participated in the online course, on 11th February 2022, Dr. Vijayashri and Dr. Manika Ghosh, Directors of Eudaimonic Centre, were invited by Mr. Prabhakar, General Secretary, **Maarga** to meet at the Maarga office to discuss

the ways in which the Eudaimonic Centre can address the huge mental health issues among the children and adolescents in the slum. Possibilities of collaborative strategies and actions were explored in preventing mental illness and promoting robust mental health. Subsequently, the Eudaimonic Centre agreed to roll out the activities in phases.

The proposed 5 phases:

- 1. Capacity Building of grassroots level functionaries/Volunteers**
To this end, the functionaries who were trained in basic counselling by Eudaimonic Centre will be further assisted through follow up review meetings.
- 2. Need analysis:** Focus Group Discussion to be organized in order to understand the problems at the ground level from the volunteer counselor team from **Maarga**.
- 3. Development of a community profile to identify risk & protective factors:** a screening tool to be developed by Eudaimonic Centre to identify the children and adolescents with psychological and emotional issues. Counsellors from **Maarga** and PG students from Bishop Cotton College will form a team to collect data.
- 4. Creation of a community action plan:** A Think tank of experts to be constituted to draw up different Modules/ action plans, resource mobilization from Community, linkages with colleges, offer student Internships, and form volunteer Self care program.
- 5. Train the Trainer workshop:** Eudaimonic Centre will conduct TOT on the basis of ‘**Task shifting model**’ for community workers and the grassroots functionaries in leadership, strength building, emotions health, resilience, life skills, and other psychological and personality domains.

Work has already started on Phase 1 and 2

1. Capacity building:

In order to further empower the trained counsellors of Marga and instill confidence in dealing with mental health issues of children, **Dr. Manika Ghosh and Dr. Vijayashri** personally held online review meetings with the trained counsellors, and **Mr. Prabhakar**, on 17th April, 20th May and 3rd June 2022. This was done completely free of cost. The participants were asked to share case studies, their individual experiences in dealing with them and the challenges they faced. Each case was discussed, guidance and some further counselling techniques were provided.

2. Need analysis:

On 9th June 2022 one day workshop on the theme “**Mental health for all**”, in the format of a **Focus Group Discussion (FGD)** was held in Bishop Cotton Women’s Christian College. It was organised as well as completely sponsored by **Eudaimonic Centre** in collaboration with **PG Centre of Bishop Cotton Women’s Christian College**.

All the trained counsellors from **Maarga** were invited to the college campus to interact with post graduate students and faculty of psychology from **Bishop Cotton College** and participate in the FGD. The participants from **Maarga** shared case studies, their personal experiences and the challenges they face, which provided a glimpse of the wide range of emotional and psychological problems they deal with. Appreciating the efforts of these counsellors the PG students and faculties shared their insights, suggestions and a few research studies conducted on children from similar underprivileged backgrounds. This FGD brought out the prevalence of the following problems in the urban slum that directly impact mental health and behaviour of the children and adolescents:

- a) Poverty
- b) Discrimination
- c) violence, both in the domestic sphere and outside
- d) Alcoholism in adults, especially fathers
- e) Regular abuse and violation of law
- f) Unemployment
- g) Single parent homes and adultery among parents
- h) Teenage pregnancy & sexual abuse
- i) Insufficient discipline and motivation
- j) High suicide rate

Despite the presence of a negative atmosphere, it was overwhelming to learn that many of the children they deal with are found to be highly creative, intelligent, perceptive and stoic.

As the aim was, the FGD proved to be a good lesson in understanding the precipitating factors affecting mental health of children and adolescents in the urban slums. It will be helpful in designing several preventive and promotion strategies for mental health of children and adolescents in the slum. The day-long event concluded with an oath taking for working towards ensuring **mental health for all**.

Participants were also given the screening tool in order to familiarise them with the data collection procedure. A suitable day is being planned for data collection.

Photo gallery FGD



Community Mental health

8TH JUNE 2022



See further a video of FGD created by students of Bishop Cotton College

Click on link below to view [Video from Manika Ghosh](#)

Following these months of engagement with **Maarga**, **Eudaimonic Centre** has evinced its willingness to continue working with the trained counsellors in promoting better mental health and preventing mental health fatalities among its wards. Towards this aim, the first two phases mentioned above have been undertaken and the remaining three phases need to be rolled out, for which process and tools are being put in place.

Apart from the above mentioned initiatives, **Eudaimonic Centre** has also agreed to share their inputs and expertise in setting up a Wellness Centre for **Maarga**. All these activities will require well planned schedules and sustained efforts for a minimum period of 3 years, to make it viable and witness successful outcomes. Therefore, at the outset, both **Maarga** and **Eudaimonic Centre** need to arrive at a common understanding for utmost cooperation, transparency and commitment, for which the process has already started.