MHPSS through Helpline

Background

TPO Nepal started its helpline services after the 2015 earthquake with the aim of enhancing the psychosocial wellbeing of survivors. In the COVID-19 context, TPO Nepal has extended its helpline services i.e. 7 days a week from 8 am to 6 pm with designated staff to ensure the quality of service. During this period, four callers were able to receive services at the same time. The helpline service has been found to be more effective for those people who were not able to come to the center to receive services and for those who did not wish to reveal their identity. Helpline service works effectively as a remote service as well. Digital and online platform services (Viber, Messenger, WhatsApp) has also been promoted as per the comfort of the callers, but somehow in the Nepali context, this type of platform was found not very user-friendly.

Methodology and services

Through the helpline, we were able to provide immediate services as well as service on an appointment basis via tele-counseling and physical counseling. In the intervention part, we focused on the following:

- Emotional Support
- Problem Solving
- Behavior Modification
- Psychiatric Consultation
- Empathetic Listening
- Psycho-Education
- Relaxation Exercise
- Sleep Hygiene and Self-Care Tips
- Linkage/Referral to Other Related Agencies Through Information Giving

Results

Two years of data has been presented here i.e. 2020 and 2021. Till December 2021, 1921 cases called the helpline. Among them, 1069 were male, 805 were female and 47 were others. Under the age of 18 years, 88 boys and 54 girls benefitted from the helpline services. Total 3,746 sessions were provided.
In terms of the incoming helpline calls, the highest number of calls were received in the month of June in both 2020 and 2021. But the highest number of calls related to suicide were received in August/September in 2020 and April/August in 2021. The highest number of calls were from educated, male, and Brahmin/Chettri communities. Similarly, if we look only at the cases of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), the highest number of calls were received in December 2020 and February/March 2021. More than 50% of these cases were from Brahmin/Chhetri communities. In terms of education level, most of them were highly educated i.e. Bachelor’s and Master’s level. Age-wise, people between 21 to 35 years age group called the most. SGBV cases called from all provinces whereas suicide cases were more in Bagmati Province.

Nature of cases
- Stress/anxiety related cases
- Mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, panic attack, conversion disorder, suicide, and substance abuse
- Sexual and gender based violence cases

Major symptoms
- Sleep disturbances
- Low appetite, irritation, mood swing, headache, body pain, difficulty in breathing, relationship problem
- Worry, stress, concentration problem