

## **What we did in 2020-21**

2020 got off to a dubious start with the threat of bushfires, toxic smoke, damaging hailstorms and the looming COVID19 pandemic, soon to transform the way we lived and worked. Like so many other organisations across the globe, our face to face operations were abruptly suspended and we had to quickly and creatively rethink how to stay connected with our clients and community. For SiTara's Story this meant putting a pause on some outreach projects and shifting our focus to providing a suite of online events that demonstrated how we could rapidly meet the needs of the vulnerable groups in changing times.

We are extremely fortunate to have a team who have been incredibly flexible and resilient throughout this year of change, and whose passion and dedication allowed us to effectively deliver our online sessions about different topics including The impact of COVID-19 on mental well-being, how to stop suicide and the impact of covid-19 on vulnerable groups. We were supported by people like Marian Currie, Monira Rahman, Barrister Sara Hossain, Professor Bina D Costa, Dr Farah Deeba, Farhana Muna and more. We also deeply value the ongoing work of our volunteers who donate their skills and time. Other donors have been truly generous this year also, with our inability to hold fund raising events in its usual format threatening our capacity to fund operations.

Throughout the uncertainty of 2020 our programs in Bangladesh could not proceed, however we continued to assist our community in Canberra and Sydney by providing either mental health or financial support.

Fortunately restrictions had lifted for Mental Health Month and we were able to hold our fund raising High tea event with MasterChef contestant Rashedul Hasan at Hotel Realm in October with community members. What an awesome event it was! We raised \$4000 which will be transferred to our Bangladeshi partner, Innovation for wellbeing foundation (IWF) to run mental health awareness programs in rural areas in Bangladesh in 2021. We were also lucky to receive a grant to celebrate mental health month awarded by Mental Health Community Coalition (MHCC), ACT.

We also formed stronger connections with organisations, like Mental Illness Education, ACT and Canberra Multicultural Women's Forum. We were also lucky to be on air with ABC radio Canberra. We were supported by leading daily in Bangladesh, the "Dhaka Tribune".

Talking through the rollercoaster of 2020 with our team members at the AGM on 17th December, 2020: that the new challenges of this year had brought about new successes, and while we will carry some sadness and bruises from 2020 for some time to come, our team believes overall 2020 will make us more resilient, capable and creative for the future.

We hope that you feel the same, and thank you for sharing this journey with us. Take care!