



*Loving Hearts, Beautiful Minds*



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**Date: 24 September 2013**

### **Inaugural Asian Community Mental Health Leadership Forum**

Regional hospital leaders and officials to address mental health needs and challenges in better managing crises and disasters  
24 – 26 September 2013, Singapore

1. Thirty-eight year old Thai farmer and village leader Chusee Treenapa, was devastated when her rice field, vegetable farm and fishpond were completely destroyed in 2011 by the country's worse flood crisis in more than 50 years. Overnight, schools were shut; houses and temples submerged underwater; crops wiped out; lives disrupted, and life came to a complete standstill for thousands like Chusee Treenapa.
2. Natural calamities and man-made disasters such as social unrests and conflicts of war are often unpredictable, and when they happen, they can bring about physical, psychological and emotional damage to the victims. Thus, building mental resilience should be part of emergency planning during peace time as this will help the community to return to normalcy faster in the event of a crisis.
3. From 24 to 26 September 2013, over 80 leaders and officials from Thailand, Indonesia, China and Singapore will converge in Singapore for the inaugural "Asian Community Mental Health Leadership" (ACMHL) Forum. The three-day event is hosted by the Institute of Mental Health and funded by Temasek Foundation. Themed "Leading Change, Strengthening Resilience", the forum serves as a platform for these regional leaders to share experience and learn from international experts in addressing mental health needs, challenges and opportunities for growth in the post-traumatic phase. The delegates will discuss policy development, planning and implementation of integrated community mental health services to support Asian communities affected by crises and disasters.
4. The ACMHL Forum is organised as part of the "Disaster Mental Health Programme for Communities in Asia" initiative that IMH and Temasek Foundation are jointly supporting with tertiary healthcare organisations in Thailand, China and Indonesia to develop a training programme to build the mental well-being and resilience of communities affected by disasters and crises.
5. The total cost of the three-year training programme for these three countries is S\$2.38 million, largely enabled by a grant of S\$1.96 million from Temasek Foundation. The training programme was first conducted with Galya Rajanagarindra Institute in Bangkok, Thailand in 2012, and will subsequently follow with West China Hospital, Sichuan University in China, and Rumah Sakit Dr Cipto Mangunkusumo in Indonesia, and eventually benefit a total of 840 participants.

6. Disaster-affected communities may face prolonged challenges to community-wide recovery due to limitations in local resources, infrastructure, and leadership. Southeast Asia is home to about 620 million people<sup>1</sup>, boasting a kaleidoscope of cultures, heritage, race, and languages. Spread across approximately 1.6 million square miles<sup>2</sup>, our geographical expanse also makes us vulnerable to natural calamities such as tropical storms, typhoons, floods and droughts, volcanic eruptions and earthquakes. In addition to natural calamities, Asian countries have also faced health-related crises such as the SARS and H1N1 epidemics and dengue outbreaks which have caused great economic, social and psychosocial impact to the countries affected.
7. NHG's Group CEO, Prof Chee Yam Cheng, the guest of honour for the event said: "Given the dense population in Asia, there is much to be done to build mental health services and programmes to support our local communities in times of crises. Building mental resilience should be part of emergency planning during peace time, as this will help the population return to normalcy faster when a crisis befalls us. A resilient population has a lower risk of developing emotional difficulties such as chronic post-traumatic stress disorder."
8. As the challenges, scenarios and coping strategies are all unique to each country, the training programme will be customised to be relevant in reaching out to the communities in each of the three countries to improve the mental well-being and resilience in populations affected by disasters and crises.
9. Dr Lee Cheng, Vice Chairman (Medical Board), Institute of Mental Health, Singapore, who is also appointed as Chief CARE Officer (Caring Action in Response to an Emergency), National CARE Management System, Singapore; highlights the need to share best practices amongst Asian neighbours. He said: "Other than collectively increasing our capabilities, we can create a platform for different countries and professionals to interact and be comfortable with sharing best practices and develop training. This knowledge sharing puts us in good stead to support and progressively develop mental health services to support a resilient population."
10. Mr Benedict Cheong, Chief Executive Officer, Temasek Foundation Singapore said, "Communities in Asia face disasters from time to time, suffering damage to their homes and disruption to their family lives and livelihoods. One of the key components of recovery is the mental well-being of the affected communities. Hence, it is important to strengthen the capabilities of regional mental health professionals to share their knowledge and experiences, and assist Asian communities to respond to disasters."
11. Since the programme was initiated, the first batch of 40 master trainers from Thailand has completed their training and is now equipped with knowledge and skills to share their knowledge with other trainers. This will enable a network of trainers to support the community to respond appropriately when incidents occur, help them to cope in crisis and work on recovery.
12. "When your field is ruined, it is just like being born again. You have to count from one again. It makes me tougher. I have to put up a brave front so that I can help other villagers. What we've lost, we gained back in terms of unity and willingness to help one another," Mdm

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<sup>1</sup>Source: <http://latitudes.nu/introduction-to-southeast-asia-11-countries-593-million-people/>

<sup>2</sup>Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southeast\\_Asia#Geographical](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southeast_Asia#Geographical)

Treenapa noted poignantly. The programme will certainly help villagers like Mdm Treenapa to bounce back from her adversity and to start afresh, long after the flood waters have subsided.

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### **Quotations from the Country Representatives:**

- West China Hospital's Professor Deng Hong from the Mental Health Centre who heads multiple teams in supporting recovery work following the 2008 Sichuan earthquake which claimed 69,195 lives, with 18,392 missing, highlights that: "The work we carry out as mental health professionals in different communities will vary according to community needs. Post-disaster rehabilitation work, for example, has to be localized. We need to implement it in ways that the locals can accept and understand."
- Dr Pitakpol Boonyamalik, Director, Galya Rajanagarindra Institute's concurs with the need to train at community level. "Mental health workers who serve in the community are a valuable resource. They can provide support to the villages, to the network of people in local communities to promote mental health resilience and be a resource in preparing communities to be ready for crises. Secondly, they can be relied upon to move in quickly to help when an incident occurs in the local area," he shared.
- Dr Agung Kusumawardhani, Chief, Rumah Sakit Dr Cipto Mangankusumo's Department of Psychiatry highlights the need for collaboration given that there are many parties involved in supporting crisis and disaster recovery efforts. He said: "While it is important to build capacity, it is important to bring organisations and stakeholders together in peacetime. Cooperation is the key to optimising our scarce resources. As long as we share the same vision and have the right intentions, we will be able to progress to maximise results."

### **About the Institute of Mental Health, Singapore**

The INSTITUTE OF MENTAL HEALTH (IMH) is the only tertiary psychiatric care institution in Singapore. Located on the sprawling 25-hectare campus of Buangkok Green Medical Park in the north-eastern part of Singapore, IMH offers a multidisciplinary and comprehensive range of psychiatric, rehabilitative and counseling services. The 2010-bedded hospital aims to meet the needs of three groups of patients – children and adolescents (age below 19 years), adults and the elderly. Besides providing clinical services, IMH also leads in mental health research and training the next generation of mental health professionals in Singapore.

For more information, visit: [www.imh.com.sg](http://www.imh.com.sg)

### **About Temasek Foundation, Singapore**

TEMASEK FOUNDATION is a non-profit philanthropic organisation anchored in Singapore that seeks to contribute to sustainable growth and a bright future of hope and opportunities for people in Asia. The foundation works with partners to support programmes that develop people through health care, education and research, programmes that build bridges between peoples, programmes that build institutions of excellence through governance and ethics, and programmes that rebuild lives and livelihoods affected by natural disasters. For more information, visit [www.temasekfoundation.org.sg](http://www.temasekfoundation.org.sg)

### **About Galya Rajanagarindra Institute, Bangkok, Thailand:**

**GALYA RAJANAGARINDRA INSTITUTE (GRI)**, established since 2002, started as the only forensic psychiatry hospital (with the name Mental Forensic Institute, Kalaya Rajanakarin Institute) providing forensic inpatient services for Thailand. Since the tsunami that affected Phuket in 2004, GRI has been entrusted with the responsibility to coordinate crisis mental health intervention through its Mental Health Crisis Centres located in various hospitals around Thailand. GRI is one of the 10 agencies in Thailand, together with Department of Mental Health, Ministry of Health Thailand, responsible for developing and transferring knowledge and technologies relating to the promotion of mental health, treatment and rehabilitation services. For more information, visit: <http://www.galyainstitute.com/>

### **About West China Hospital, Sichuan, China:**

**MENTAL HEALTH CENTRE OF WEST CHINA HOSPITAL (WCH)**, Sichuan University, established since 1938, is the first institute for mental health in South-western China and one of the four major bases for mental health in China. A centre of excellence in mental health education and international research, WCH is authorised to coordinate mental health training to other general hospitals and specialist hospitals from over 20 of China's provinces, under the mandate of the National Committee of Education. The leadership in WCH plays a part in coordinating mental health policy development at provincial and national level, providing guidance and assistance in setting of mental health standards. For more information, visit: <http://eng.cd120.com/a/aboutus/>

### **About Rumah Sakit Dr Cipto Mangankusumo:**

**RUMAH SAKIT DR. CIPTO MANGUNKUSUMO (RSCM)** or Cipto Mangunkusumo General Hospital located in Jakarta is one of the largest public hospitals in Indonesia. RSCM is the main teaching site for the Faculty of Medicine, University of Indonesia (FKUI). RSCM achieved Joint Commission International (JCI) Accreditation in July 2013, the first public hospital in Indonesia to do so. For more information, visit: <http://www.rscm.co.id/>