

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO SAWAB



35 Years of A Sustained Silent Movement of Healing Rooted
in Compassion, Science, Service and Transformative Change
in Community Mental Health

Years of Silent Service, Scientific Innovation, and Systemic Impact

In the wounded yet resilient heart of Kashmir—where generations have grown amidst conflict, natural disasters, and silence—SAWAB (Supporting Always Wholeheartedly, All Broken-hearted) was born. Not in boardrooms or ivory towers, but in villages, homes, rickety shelters, and valleys, SAWAB began as a lifeline for those psychosocially stranded and weighed down by trauma.

For over three and a half decades, SAWAB (Supporting Always Wholeheartedly All Brokenhearted) has remained a quiet but powerful force in the realm of community mental health — not through headlines or fanfare, but through relentless dedication, scientific innovation, and community-rooted action. Founded by Dr. Mushtaq Ahmad Margoob amidst a time of acute sociopolitical turmoil and humanitarian crisis in Kashmir, SAWAB has since evolved into a globally relevant and locally grounded model of healing, empowerment, and evidence-based service delivery. It is not a conventional charity-based NGO model; rather, it is an out-of-the-box, self-supported innovative, ever-evolving collaborative and sustained community intervention initiative.

From Amelioration to Innovation

SAWAB's journey has been one of addressing the unmet needs of the neglected, needy, and suffering — not just by offering care, but by pioneering cost-effective, scalable, and replicable mental health strategies. These have proven especially valuable in low-resource and conflict-impacted settings. Yet, perhaps more significantly, SAWAB's work has enriched global trauma treatment protocols and influenced community service delivery models — many of which have been

adapted in some of the most developed regions of the world.



A global community of mental health innovators

Testing an Innovative Low Cost Model for Improving Mental Health Services in a Rural District in Kashmir

Project type: Program
Objective: To improve identification and treatment of mental disorders in youth
Brief description: Use of trained lay healthcare workers and technology to overcome limitations in the delivery of mental health services to youth



Asia

The Mental Health Innovation Network is jointly headquartered at:



World Health Organization



Grand Challenges Canada
Grands Défis Canada
BOLD IDEAS FOR HUMANITY

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LONDON SCHOOL of HYGIENE & TROPICAL MEDICINE



Task sharing
Technology
Prevention and promotion
Detection and diagnosis
Treatment, care and rehabilitation
Training, education and capacity building
Children and adolescents
All disorders
Community

<http://mhinnovation.net/innovations/testing-innovative-low-cost-model-improving-mental-health-services-rural-district#.VlnkaHYrKaE>

One more shining example is the 20-year continued follow-up of survivors of the Waltengo Nar Snowstorm (February 2005) -- one of the few such population-wide disaster/trauma studies in the world. This pathbreaking compassionate approach of providing every possible help to the survivors over the years this work has not only helped inform local mental health interventions but also added unique and impactful insights to the global disaster and trauma science discourse.

Capacity Building Amidst Crisis: The Defeat Depression Programme

Between 1998 and 2003, SAWAB ran its valuable Defeat Depression Programme — a strategic response to the severe scarcity of mental health professionals across the region. This programme trained non-psychiatric clinicians, including faculty, medical trainees, and frontline doctors, to identify and manage common mental disorders.



Described by participants as a highly impactful, out-of-the-box initiative, it significantly upgraded the mental health care capacity of general healthcare systems. Even in the absence of formal psychiatric infrastructure, this model empowered general clinicians to provide informed, evidence-based care — a model now recognised as critical in integrated mental health care worldwide.

Sustained CME & Community Engagement

Continuing Medical Education (CME) and community engagement have remained cornerstones of SAWAB's mission across the decades. These efforts have consistently provided scientific, ethical, and culturally sensitive training to medical professionals, civil society workers, and community stakeholders.

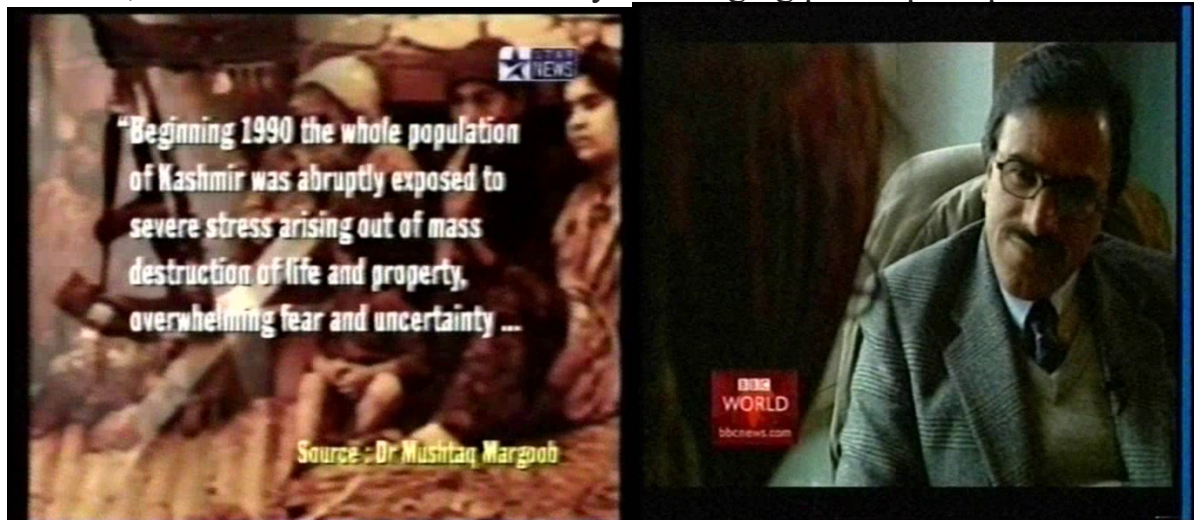


The momentum has only grown — as evident in the CME events conducted in the current month of September 2025 only, which stand as yet another clear testimony to SAWAB's enduring relevance and commitment to creating evidence, sharing knowledge and building capacity.

The Role of Media: Partnering for Awareness and Advocacy

Media — from the earlier print journalism days to today's digital platforms — has played a pivotal role in SAWAB's outreach and advocacy efforts. By

demystifying mental health issues, reducing stigma, and amplifying voices of the affected, media has served as a vital ally in changing public perceptions and



nudging policy action. SAWAB also proved instrumental in holding governments accountable for their obligations toward mental health including SAWAB, s PIL in late 2003, in the High court about the most pathetic and poor facilities existing at the sole psychiatric care facility for Kashmir, Ladakh and adjoining areas of



Jammu province. — an area long neglected despite its foundational role in overall human wellbeing.

Looking Ahead: From Healing to Holistic Wellbeing

As SAWAB steps into its next chapter, the vision remains clear: to deepen its engagement with scientific knowledge generation, advance evidence-based

community interventions, and foster a culture of emotional resilience and holistic wellbeing across all segments of society.

It is not just a legacy; it is a living, breathing movement. One that continues to quietly but resolutely touch lives — restoring dignity, health, and hope where it is needed the most.

SAWAB — Because healing is not a moment. It's a mission.

Present Vision and Strategic Collaborations

Today, SAWAB is a movement of restoration and resilience. It functions as a school, a sanctuary, and a symbol—educating, healing, and empowering communities through robust partnerships:

Key Collaborations:

- **Voluntary Medicare Society (VMS):** SAWAB plays an active role in providing **mental health care-services** and neurorehabilitation, ensuring mental health is embedded in recovery and long-term care. Thankfully **Voluntary Medicare Society** is the **first NGO** to have implemented and adopted the SAWAB model of holistic rehabilitation including through



its very helpful livelihood programs resulting in complete transformation the lives of the challenged persons and their families through restoration of self-respect, confidence and mental wellbeing of the physically or mentally challenged person.

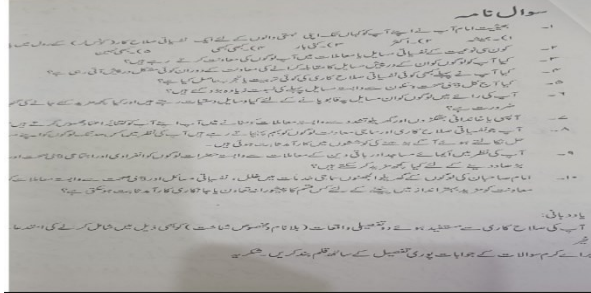
- The **Institute of Mental Health & Neurosciences, Kashmir (IMHANS-K)** GMC Srinagar and the **Department of Psychiatry at SKIMS Medical College**, Bemina as the eminent Government centers for mental health care and post-graduate training in Kashmir have been the significant partners in developing and disseminating state of the art medical educational programs and protocols over the years.
- **Kashmir Welfare Trust:** SAWAB, in collaboration with Kashmir Welfare Trust (KWT), has been a pillar of unwavering support, especially during times of extreme economic and socio-economic vulnerability, when even the best-designed mental health interventions face challenges. Together, they have assisted families left homeless, destitute, or living in undignified conditions, with KWT providing housing, rehabilitation, and emergency support. More recently, they launched **MISSION SHAFQAT**— a school mental health initiative that builds resilience through emotional education and preventive measures from the grassroots level.
- **CHINAR International – (Child Nurture & Relief)** : Collaborating on community psychosocial transformation, especially for youth education and resilience-building.
- **Faith Leaders & Religious Institutions:** Transforming mosques and pulpits into platforms for compassion, awareness, and de-stigmatization.



یہ سوالات اور جوابات اس بات کی عکاسی کرتے ہیں کہ ائمہ کرام کا کردار صرف مذہبی رہنمائی تک محدود نہیں بلکہ وہ اکثر نفسیاتی اور معاشرتی مسائل میں بھی کمیونٹی کی رہنمائی کرتے ہیں۔

اکثر ائمہ نے کہا کہ وہ ہمیشہ یا اکثر یہ کردار ادا کرتے ہیں، جیسے: پریشانیاں، تشہ، جھگڑے، ڈپریشن، صدمہ، نوجوانوں کے مسائل وغیرہ۔ مگر انہوں نے کہا کہ وہ کبھی کبھار ایسا کرتے ہیں، خاص طور پر: روزگار کے مسائل اور عمومی رہنمائی میں۔

نتیجہ:
ائمہ کرام غیر رسمی طور پر لیکن بنیادی طور پر نفسیاتی مشوروں کا کردار ادا کرتے ہیں۔

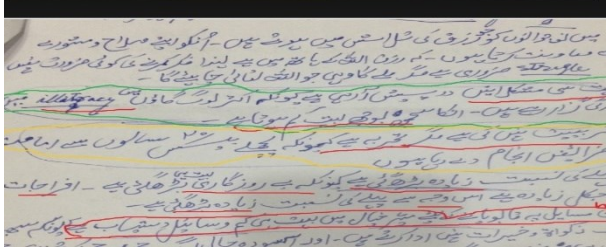


آپ نے کن قسم کے مسائل میں مدد فراہم کی؟ 2:
اقسام: باہر کی طرف ظاہر ہونے والے مسائل (تشہ، سگریٹ نوشی، شراب نوشی، خودکشی کے خیالات، اندرونی ذہنی مسائل (ڈپریشن، پریشانی، صدمہ، ذہنی دباؤ، سماجی و معاشرتی مسائل (خاندانی جھگڑے، گھریلو تشدد، بیروزگاری، غربت، تعلیم۔

نتیجہ: ائمہ کرام کثیر جہتی نفسیاتی و سماجی مدد فراہم کرتے ہیں، یعنی وہ مذہبی رہنما ہونے کے ساتھ ساتھ کمیونٹی میں ذہنی صحت اور سماجی مسائل کے حل میں بھی کلیدی کردار ادا کرتے ہیں۔

سوال: کیا آپ نے مشاورت میں باقاعدہ تربیت حاصل کی ہے؟

زیادہ تر ائمہ نے کہا کہ انہیں کسی قسم کی رسمی تربیت حاصل نہیں ہوئی، جو صلاحیتیں ہیں وہ ذاتی تجربے یا مشاہدے/ذاتی واسطے سے حاصل کی گئی ہیں۔



نتیجہ / تجزیہ:
ائمہ کی قابلیت کا انحصار تجربے پر ہے، نہ کہ کسی باقاعدہ تربیت پر۔ یہ ایک بڑی کمی ہے، خاص طور پر جب ائمہ کو ذہنی صحت اور مشاورت جیسے حساس موضوعات سے نمٹنا پڑتا ہے۔

اگرچہ ائمہ کرام کمیونٹی میں اہم نفسیاتی مدد فراہم کرتے ہیں، لیکن پیشہ ورانہ مشاورت کی تربیت نہ ہونا ان کی تاثیر کو محدود کر سکتا ہے۔ اس سے ظاہر ہوتا ہے کہ ائمہ کے لیے مخصوص مشاورتی تربیتی مواد و پروگرامز ممکنہ ذرائع کرنا وقت کی اہم ضرورت ہے، خاص طور پر ایسے معاشروں میں جہاں وہ پہلا رابطہ نقطہ ہوتے ہیں۔

2015

2025

- **Educational Institutions:** With schools across the valley, SAWAB conducts preventive mental health workshops, trains teachers, and integrates early detection and referral systems. This is in addition to ensuring free admission to marginalised and poor students in private schools through a mutually agreed understanding between Private Schools Association and SAWAB going on for more than a decade now.
- **Other NGO Collaborations:** In 2000, Kaz de Jong of MSF Amsterdam inaugurated Kashmir's community mental health program at SKICC, citing Dr. Mushtaq Ahmad Margoob's landmark study, *Psychiatric Disorders Among Children in Kashmir*, reflecting profound psychological impact of conflict on children. SAWAB's ongoing collaboration with such international eminent NGOs to generate knowledge and shape interventions is reflected in today's conference as well.

These partnerships ensure that healing is not limited to clinical settings, but woven into homes, schools, mosques, and rehabilitation centres.

Conclusion: Toward a Dignified Future

SAWAB is not just a program—it is a movement rooted in dignity, science, service, and compassion. In the face of layered trauma, it offers community-rooted solutions that are scalable, replicable, and sustainable. Its work challenges conventional models by showing that healing must be embedded in the very social and spiritual fabric of life.

SAWAB's continued evolution reflects an unwavering belief: that every broken-hearted soul is worthy of wholehearted support, and that resilience is not just possible, but inevitable—when nurtured in compassion and care.

COMPILED BY SAWAB TEAM MEMBERS:

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