

VOICES ACROSS OCEANS
RESONANCE FROM THE INDIAN OCEAN



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mental health conference
15 - 16 october 2023
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Outline

- Background
- Changing landscape of mental health
- Challenges
- Opportunities
- The *Oevaru* story
- Way forward



Maldives

1192 coral islands- 26 natural atolls, 187 inhabited

Population- About 520,000 (1/4th Expat.)

Capital- Male' region >1/3rd of population

Geography- Dispersed coral islands, small land mass

Economy- Dependent on tourism

People- Similar ethnicity, language and religion

Politics- Young democracy



Health in Maldives

- Tiered health care system
- Tertiary hospital: Male'
- Primary care delivery
- Curative vs Preventive care
- Governance- Ministry of Health
- Universal health insurance
- Workforce & training issues



Mental Health in Maldives

- Traditional perspectives- rooted in culture
- Stigma, poor awareness & negative attitudes
- History of institutionalisation
- Arrival local health professionals
- Increasing problems of addiction
- 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami
- Systemic efforts- Program & policy drafting
- Early efforts on prevention



Mental Health in Maldives

- NGO sector and grassroots support
- 2017- Policy endorsed and launched
- 2019- Centre for Mental health
- National Mental Health Program
- Covid19 experience- awareness & demand
- Central and Regional Mental Health Plan
- Prevention efforts- Mental health campaigns
- Formation of MH Department
- Mental health legislation drafting



Challenges

- Perceptions of Mental health- different levels, newer issues
- Governance challenges
- Intersectoral collaboration; role vs mandate
- Access to services, SMI, outer islands, treatment
- Human resource capacity
- Addiction services, detached from health sector
- Approach ; curative vs prevention: inverse pyramid
- External threats- climate change, self sustenance
- Lack of local research

Opportunities

- Increased awareness and acceptance
- Grassroots support and advocacy efforts
- Support at policy level and ensuring commitment
- Shaping mental health department with inter-sectoral input
- Robust Policies that need implementation
- Potential to shape the drafted Mental Health Legislation
- Focus and shape prevention efforts
- Innovation and integration
- Opportunities to focus on research and connections





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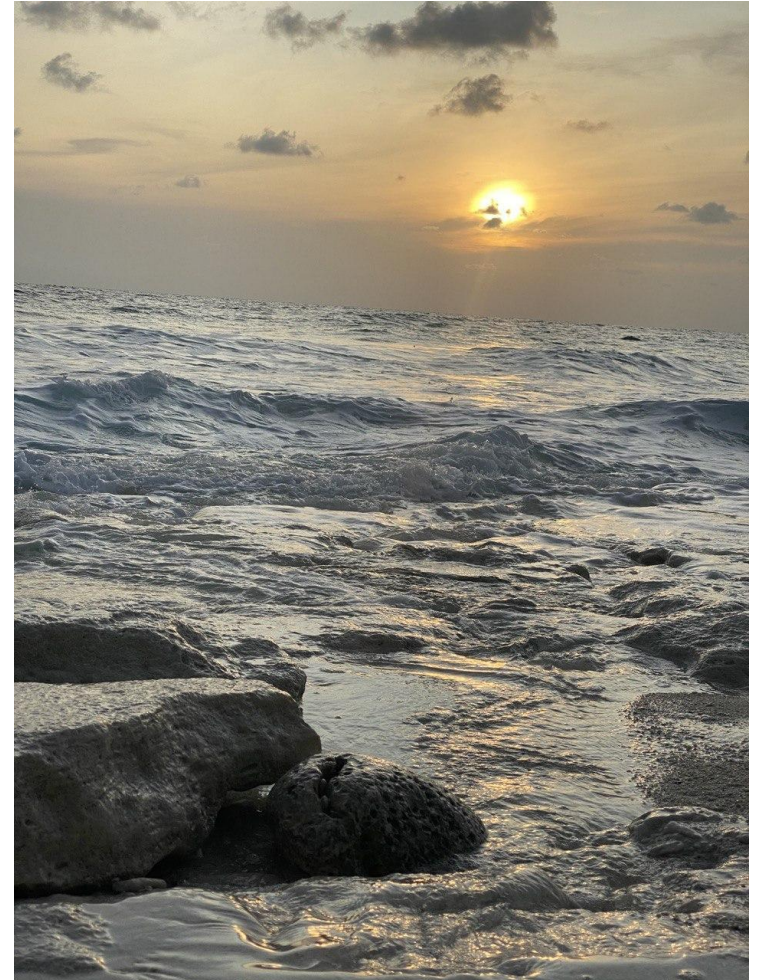
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Oevaru experience

- Oevaru : historically and traditionally significant : mapping oevaru
- Symbolizes : change, movement
- Echoes concept of mental health :
 - as a continuum
 - preparation / planning linked to prevention & promotion
 - changing currents, going with the flow and acceptance



Objectives

- Stimulate & contribute to research culture locally
- Provide a platform for local, national, and global research
- Bring together and connect various stakeholders from different disciplines and sectors
- Create a forum to present and discuss current challenges and opportunities and advocate for evidence-based policymaking and investment.



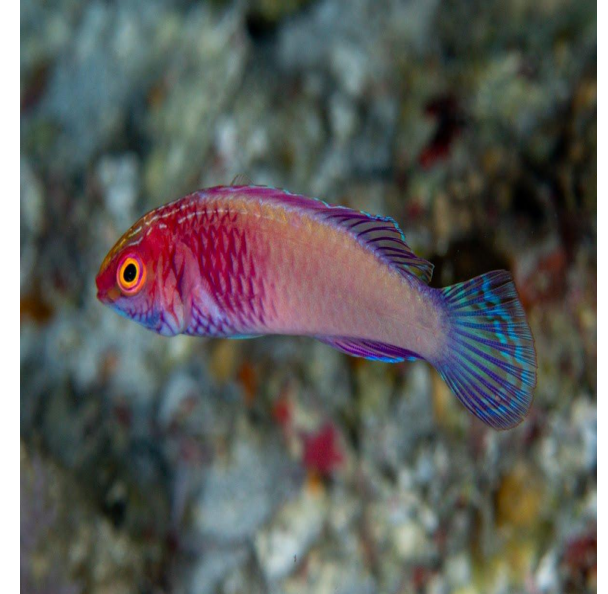
Oevaru experience

- Oevaru 2023 ~ changing currents: forming connections
 - Need and direction for change
 - Dynamic : social, ecological impacts across the lifespan
 - Need for broad range of stakeholders to come together
 - Connections in our brain , each other, systems and connections with environment and a higher purpose



Oevaru experience

- Subthemes
 - Holistic care of mental disorders across lifespan
 - MH prevention promotion and continuum of care
 - Innovations in MH
 - Investing



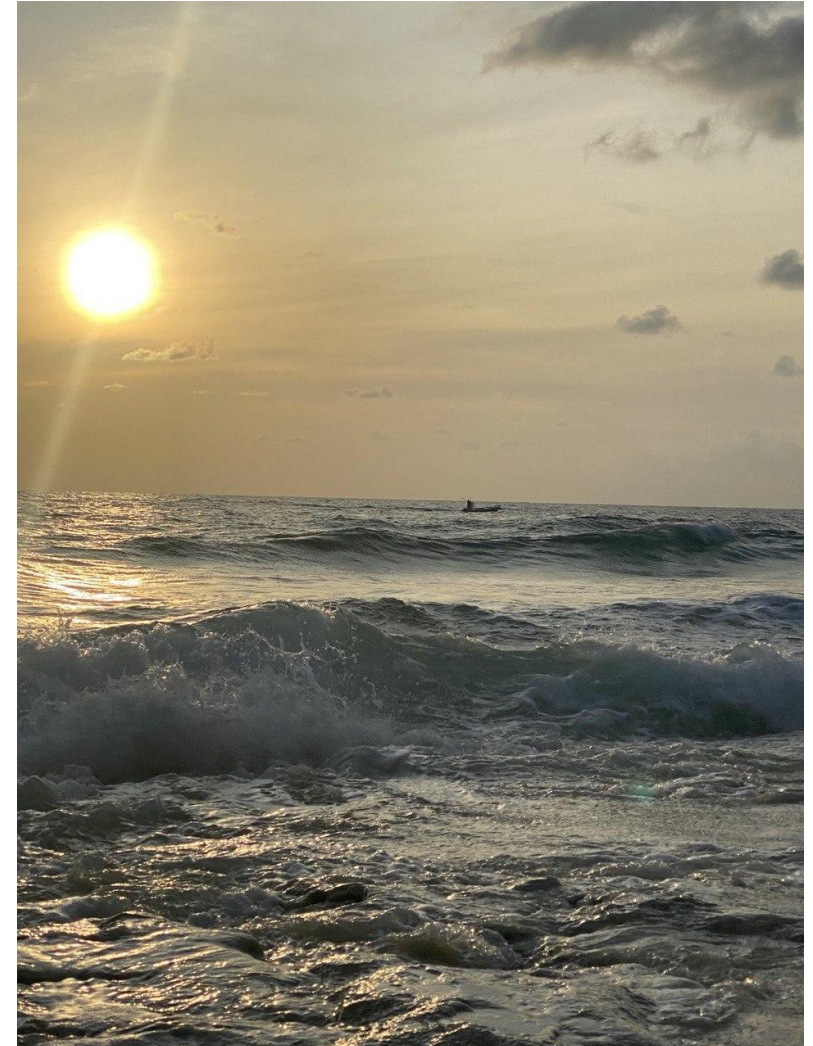
Oevaru experience

- Content of program + support, participants
 - Pre-conference workshops
 - Keynote and invited speakers
 - Oral and poster presentations
 - Panel discussions
- Overlap session with Creating Futures : Voices across the oceans



Resonance across the oceans

- Global advocacy : focus on existential threats
- Recognize common challenges
- Focus on resource sharing and pooling
- Draw from experiences
- Explore innovative methods- digital technology
- Strengthen and nurture existing connections



Creating futures and Oevaru



As we reflect and voice our experiences; it is evident that there are common threads that connect our island nations, paving a path towards working together with a shared vision and a unified voice .



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Thank you