

Southeast Asia Region 2025 Annual Report

The South-East Asia Region (SEAR) continued to strengthen its commitment to suicide prevention and mental health advocacy throughout 2025. The regional coordination team comprised of Dr Anish V Cherian, SEAR Coordinator and National Representative of India for the International Association of Suicide Prevention (2024–2027), Dr Vikas Menon and Dr Lakshmi Vijayakumar as Co-Coordiators for the International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP). Ayona B R, Athira G Nair as Regional Assistants, and an active Leadership Team who worked collaboratively to expand the reach and impact of the Partnerships for Life Global Initiative network.

The SEAR network includes active participation from countries such as India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Indonesia. Collaborative efforts have enhanced regional engagement and knowledge exchange across these countries.

At the same time, efforts are ongoing to establish stronger connections in countries where Partnerships for Life engagement is still limited, including Myanmar, Bhutan, Maldives, and Timor-Leste. Strengthening partnerships in these regions remains a key priority for the coming year.

1. Leadership

- Regional leadership assumed by Anish V. Cherian.
- Lakshmi Vijayakumar and Vikas Menon continued as part of the leadership team.
- Appointment of Regional Assistants:
 - Ayona B R
 - Athira G Nair

2. Programme Implementation

- Expansion of the N-SPRITE programme in collaboration with the Government of Karnataka:
 - Extended to 13 additional hospitals in 2025
 - Target to support approximately 1,500 suicide attempt survivors
 - Provision of brief interventions and 24-month follow-up care

3. Research and Situation Analysis

- Stage-3 Situation Analysis initiated across SEAR countries; several reports submitted, with efforts ongoing for completion.
- Research paper on priorities and gaps in suicide prevention (PfL field) finalized for submission to The Lancet (SEAR edition).

4. Events and Knowledge Sharing

- The region co-hosted a global webinar on 9 December 2025. Global Webinar- The bi-monthly Partnerships for Life webinar series promotes learning on best practice and effective interventions in relation to the implementation of suicide prevention strategies and programmes. This session was co-chaired by Professor Vikas Menon and Professor Paul Yip. The program featured guest speakers; Dr Kamal Gautam and Professor Ying-Yeh Chen. The webinar had been successful, with around 70 in attendance.
- Proposal by N-SPRITE to organize a 1st International N-SPRITE Conference on Suicide Prevention (November 30—3 December, 2026).

5. Partnerships and Resource Mobilization

- Ongoing discussions with potential donors to support regional activities.
- Identification of an NGO partner to facilitate funding.
- Progress towards establishing a regional hub in Bengaluru in collaboration with Chintana Trust.

At National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS), World Suicide Prevention Day 2025 marked the first anniversary of N-SPRITE (Suicide Prevention, Research, Implementation, Training and Engagement Centre). The event highlighted progress in research-based suicide prevention and strengthened commitment to community mental health.

1. Milestone Event

- First Anniversary of N-SPRITE observed on World Suicide Prevention Day 2025.
- Event highlighted progress in research-driven suicide prevention and reaffirmed institutional leadership in mental health.
- Included expert discussions on data-driven prevention, public health integration, and community outreach.

Key Achievements

- USHAS (Urban Self-Harm Study)
 - Implemented across 16 hospitals in 11 districts of Karnataka
 - Registry includes 20,000+ self-harm cases
 - Re-attempt rate reduced to 1.19%
 - Fatality rate reduced to 0.2%
- Expansion of related initiatives:
 - YASHAS — youth mental health and self-harm prevention
 - SURAKSHA — community-based suicide prevention

N-SPRITE (Launched 2024)

- Coordinates suicide prevention efforts across hospitals, workplaces, and communities
- Focuses on:
 - Early identification and intervention
 - Public awareness and stigma reduction
 - Follow-up care and surveillance systems

Community Programme: Mano Sangama 2025 (Ramanagara)

- Conducted on September 11, 2025 with 4,200 participants
- Organized in collaboration with government departments and partners
- Key activities:
 - Awareness stalls (SURAKSHA, USHAS, YASHAS, workplace mental health)
 - Street plays, film screenings, and youth workshops
 - Launch of Suicide & Self-Harm Registry
 - Walkathon with 2,400+ students

Gatekeeper Training (SURAKSHA Initiative)

- Conducted in Bengaluru South District
- Trained 4,020 participants, including:
 - PHC staff, ASHA workers, police, teachers, students
- Focus areas:
 - Identifying warning signs
 - Providing immediate support
 - Referral to mental health services
 - Reducing stigma and supporting families

Workplace Mental Health — PROMOTE Programme

- Implemented in industrial settings (TVS Group-supported)
- Provides mental health services through “Agam” clinic
- 499 employees accessed services (2022—2025)
- 37% cases addressed in 2025 alone

Digital Innovation

- Global Mental Health Assessment Tool (GMHAT) introduced
- Kannada version developed for use by non-specialists
- Implementation planned from January 2026

Certificate Course in Suicide Prevention

N-SPRITE Centre

The three-month certificate course has completed a total of 15 batches to date, including 4 batches in 2025. The programme strengthens professional capacity through evidence-based knowledge and practical skills in suicide prevention, training participants in crisis intervention, risk assessment, and real-world applications to enable confident and compassionate responses in critical situations.

Gate Keeper Training

The gatekeeper training programme aimed to strengthen participants' understanding of key concepts such as identifying warning signs and risk factors for suicide, recognizing vulnerable individuals, and the critical role of gatekeepers in providing timely support, empathetic listening, and appropriate referrals to professional services. A total of 17 trainings have been conducted to date, including 10 in 2025 (8 offline and 2 online).

IASP Visit

Project Suraksha received international recognition from the International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP) in March 2025. As part of this recognition, the IASP team visited the Nagavara Panchayat, the Primary Health Centre (PHC), and the Panchayat office to review the programme implementation at the community level. This visit provided global validation of Project Suraksha's community-based suicide prevention model, highlighting its effectiveness in strengthening early identification, surveillance, and referral systems through integration with primary healthcare and local governance structures. The recognition underscores the project's success as a grassroots intervention and its potential to serve as a replicable model for suicide prevention in other regions. The project was also featured on the IASP website, further reinforcing its alignment with international best practices in suicide prevention.

Conclusion

The SEAR region has made significant progress in 2025 in expanding its network, strengthening collaborations, and advancing suicide prevention efforts. Through a combination of dissemination, advocacy, and research, the region has enhanced awareness, built capacity, and fostered meaningful partnerships. Moving forward, the focus will be on deepening engagement in underrepresented countries, scaling up training initiatives, and strengthening policy-level impact. The continued commitment of regional leadership and country partners will be essential in sustaining and expanding these efforts.