Prayas:

Project Background
A team of researchers affiliated with University of Oxford, funded by Green Templeton College’s Global Health policy programme grant, undertook a research project that focuses on mental health in India and is entitled: **Overview of mental health in Tamilnadu and Bihar: A situational analysis.** Briefly, the project aimed to examine the extent to which existing mental health systems in the included states are equipped to address the needs of individuals with mental Illness. The project was initiated in Tamilnadu in Jan 2015. On 17th March 2015 our team members Professor Premila Webster (University of Oxford), Dr.Anup Karan (IIPH-Gujarat) and Dr.Anees Pari (University of Oxford) presented the project to the Health Secretary of Tamilnadu and other Government officials and got approval to conduct research in Tamilnadu. On 1st July 2015 we received the permission letter from the Health and Family welfare department (Letter no. 866).

The objectives of this formative research project are:
- To collect baseline data on the current state of mental health care funding, services and provision in two Indian states with diverse health systems;
- To determine existing pathways to access mental healthcare;
- To identify the challenges involved in implementation of the DMHP;
- To provide examples of best practices and recommendations to address the potential barriers.

For the initial phase of this project we focused on collecting data from Tamilnadu because that is where we had greatest access to people and institutions who could assist us in collecting quantitative and qualitative data.

Methodology
We adopted a mixed methods approach as recommended by the Medical Research Council (MRC) framework. It included a quantitative component supplemented by qualitative interviews with key stakeholders.

Ethics
We obtained the ethical approval for this study from the University of Oxford’s Social Sciences & Humanities Inter-divisional Research Ethics Committee (SSD/CUREC1A/14-191) and BE 317/13) on 4th November 2014 and the Institutional Ethics Committee of the Indian institute of Public Health, Gandhinagar, India (REC Ref: TRC-ICE No: 32/2014) on 24/12/2014. Furthermore, all participants involved in semi-structured interviews consented to participating in the studies using approved informed consent procedures.

Data collection
Qualitative field work was conducted in Tamilnadu from January 2015 to September 2015 with regular feedback and logistical support from researchers based in the UK. Quantitative field work begun in July 2015 after we received the permission letter from the Tamilnadu Ministry of Health (letter no. 866). Quantitative data collection had to be suspended in November 2015 due to severe flooding in Tamilnadu and will resume in March 2015.
**Team**
Our team consists of:
- Prof Premila Webster: Senior Advisor
- Dr Anup Karan: Advisor
- Dr Anees Pari: co-PI
- Dr Anant Jani: co-PI
- Sindhu Ravishankar: Qualitative data coordinator (GTC alum)
- Abigail Taylor: Policy analysis coordinator (GTC alum)
- Naresh Kumar: Research Assistant based in Tamilnadu
- J. Vimitha: Research Assistant based in Tamilnadu

Weekly calls between the co-PIs, research coordinators and research assistants were conducted to monitor progress and IT tools such as Dropbox, Google docs and regular email exchanges were used to coordinate activities.

**Policy Analysis**
India signed the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) on 30 March 2007 and ratified the Convention on 1 October 2007. In doing so, India made a commitment to ensure that persons with disabilities enjoy all human rights and freedoms on a par with others. The Convention came into force in May 2008 but India is yet to adopt new mental health legislation to bring the treatment of persons with psychosocial disabilities in line with the CRPD requirements. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare have been drafting a Mental Health Care Bill (hereafter MHCB / “the Bill”) since 2010 to promote a rights-based approach to psychosocial disabilities. The Bill was introduced in the Rajya Sabha on the 19th August 2013 and is expected to be passed by the Lok Sabha this year. The MHCB will replace India’s existing Mental Health Act (MHA) 1987. A paper has been drafted, and is nearly finalized, which examines the differences between the old and new mental health legislation, the extent to which the MHCB fulfils the requirements of the UN CRPD norms, and the practical implications of this policy.

**Quantitative Data**
For the quantitative aspect of this project a questionnaire was developed based on the World Health Organization Assessment Instrument for Mental Health Systems (WHO-AIMS-V2).

**Qualitative Data**
For the qualitative aspects of this paper we were interested in understanding the perspectives of the key stakeholders in mental healthcare services to gain insight into the problems faced by these stakeholders and steps that could be taken to overcome these problems. To capture these perspectives, we did 10 Interviews with health professionals and policy makers and 5 Focus group discussions (FGD) with Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) staff and clients. All the interviews and FGDs were conducted in Tamil, translated into English and then transcribed and the data are currently being analysed and compiled for a manuscript which will be ready by March 2016.