

Hugh-Jones, S., Duara, R., & Madill, A (Oct, 2019). Substance use disorder in young people in Assam, India: Using participatory visual methods to understand their experience of risk, resilience and recovery. European Conference on Mental Health, International Convention Centre, Belfast, 2-4 October, 2019.

Low and middle income countries face significant challenges to improving mental health care. We report on an ongoing UK-India collaborative study, funded by the Global Challenges Research Fund, which responds to the “serious concern” in the National Mental Health Survey of India 2015-16 about the high prevalence of substance use disorders (SUDs). SUDs and mental health have a complex bidirectional relationship, yet support for SUDs in India is hampered by lack of research and poor access to, and uptake of, effective treatment. Our project seeks to generate new evidence on how people manage risks of, and recovery (via treatment) from SUDs, so that services and policy can better reflect people’s lived experience and build on what works. We are examining the lived experience of two groups of Indian young people: (i) those who remain resilient to SUD despite being at increased risk and (ii) those who have recovered from SUDs via a treatment facility. The project aims to increase knowledge about how diverse young people negotiate risk, resilience and recovery from SUDs, and equally, to increase the visibility of young people’s voice in Indian mental health research, services and policy where it is currently highly underrepresented. We are utilising visual methods (photo elicitation interviews) as an engaging, participant-led method that has the ability to engage marginalised groups, to reconfigure power in interviews, to cross psychological and cultural boundaries, and to generate new insights that ‘break the frame’. We showcase the method and early findings from two resilient-to-risk participants and two resilient-for-recovery participants, with attention to [ask Raginie for some headline findings]. We illustrate how we will be using the data to develop films, social media campaigns and public exhibitions in order to encourage new conversations about mental health and SUDs at both research, public, treatment and policy levels in India and the UK.