

PRESS RELEASE

April 28, 2020

Contact Information:

Ravina Anand, ravinacanand@gmail.com

Serene Singh, serene.singh@chch.ox.ac.uk

Nandini Kochar, nk2385@nyu.edu

The logo for "Hello South Asians" is located in the top right corner. It consists of the words "hello", "south", and "asians." stacked vertically in a sans-serif font. "hello" is in orange, "south" is in blue, and "asians." is in orange. The text is set against a solid orange square background.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Three South Asian Women from the U.S.A, Canada, and Botswana Develop “Hello South Asians” an initiative that provides free and accessible COVID-19 Informational Media Content in 20+ South Asian Languages to Challenge the Spread of Misinformation and Decrease Panic in South Asian Communities Around the World

Three postgraduate South Asian women – [Serene Singh](#) (University of Oxford), [Ravina Anand](#) (University of British Columbia), and [Nandini Kochar](#) (New York University Abu Dhabi), have created 100+ COVID-19 [Informational Media Content and Infographics](#) in 20+ South Asian languages with the help of students from over 53 countries worldwide in an aim to address misinformation, reduce panic, and provide free, accessible, and accurate content for South Asians everywhere.

Despite living in three different parts of the world, we have identified one common issue: South Asian families, parents, and youth are not getting correct information about the pandemic. This has manifested into many negative effects in our communities across the globe including panic attacks among other mental health issues, discrimination between South Asian community members and neighbors, and inadvertently making the job and responsibilities of public health workers more difficult in a multitude of ways. With many South Asian families on social media platforms including Whatsapp group chats increasingly sharing contradictory and inaccurate information, this team of women sees this as a major threat to the public health systems and the mental health of South Asians globally in the coming future.

Singh states, “South Asians are remarkably diverse worldwide from every angle of the word - technologically, linguistically, culturally, socially, etc., but often live in shared areas. This means that any misinformation has intensified and echoed negative effects throughout communities. Without *first* having accurate information in the language of a community, our world can’t address the myriad of issues related to the pandemic we are now seeing. COVID-19 doesn’t discriminate and as such, neither should access to information about it.”

To challenge this issue, the team has developed interactive infographics in 20+ languages widely spoken by South Asians worldwide. Additionally, the team has created 100+ shareable media content for easy printing in areas without widespread technology, as well as distribution on all major social media channels. The languages included are as follows: Arabic, Assamese, Balochi, Bangla, English, Farsi, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Malay, Malayalam, Marathi, Nepali, Odia, Pashto, Punjabi, Sindhi, Sinhala, Tamil, Telugu, and Urdu.

While these languages do not represent all South Asian linguistic diversity and breadth, Hello South Asians is hoping to continue to add languages, make changes, and help this project reach more of our communities with your support. We welcome any individuals or organizations who are interested in helping us become even more inclusive - an element critical to our mission and vision.

The infographics have been prepared with the guidance and advice of reliable sources like the World Health Organization, the Center for Disease Control, among others. Within the team of students from around the world, we have medical professionals, trained journalists, doctors, policy analysts, and public health experts. Students from 53+ countries have helped translate the documents to their native tongues. Their goal with these infographics is to make accurate information, from reliable sources, to go viral in our South Asian communication streams.

Moreover, the team is in the works of developing their Ambassador Program for young people around the world to get involved in the project from the comfort of their homes. With the accessible material made by Hello South Asians and the many translators, the Ambassadors will be tasked to ensure the safe and effective delivery of this information in their various communities. This will require creativity and a diverse range of solutions to ensure those who cannot access the internet regularly and/or do not understand English can receive the necessary information to keep safe and stay positive in this difficult time.

Kochar states, “The growing issue of misinformation and misleading journalism can have grave effects on all of us, especially communities with little to no access to reliable sources of public health information. This is precisely the gap we are trying to fill - creatively and digitally. Through evidence-based and culturally-relevant information, we are aiming to reach every region, village, household, and Whatsapp group in South Asia.”

To learn more about Hello South Asians and how you can support them with additional South Asian language translations or other content to challenge misinformation and promote positive mental health and curate factual information across our diaspora in this challenging time, please email hellosouthasians@gmail.com.

Anand states, “ We believe it is our duty to protect our community globally and do our part to help make life better for one another. Our work exists but we are relying on you all to help us get our message out there so it actually can help the people who we are hoping it will help. Join our team and support our vision - we are always ready to do more to strengthen our community.”