

# NEWSLETTER

April - June 2023



## Welcome!

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Welcome to our third quarter Newsletter for the year 2023.

This period has been very successful, and we're proud to tell you all about it in this newsletter. We are very excited about the last period of the year. We are extremely grateful to staff for their continued commitment to our cause and growth. In a special way, I would like to thank our supporters and the general public for your continued support and encouragement. We are confident we can make this mutually rewarding.

One of our major achievements in the last period has been starting a national conversation on decriminalization of suicide in Uganda. Global research has shown that in countries where attempted suicide is criminal, the number of people who die by suicide hasn't reduced either. However, the reverse is true in societies where attempted suicide is no offence. It also helps to build an environment where mental health problems are talked about openly and communities are able to seek timely care and services. Mental Health Uganda is one of the petitioners to the constitutional court to render section 210 in the Penal Code Act unconstitutional.

With support from Operation Days' Work (ODW, Norway) and Agakhan foundation, MHU and SOS are integrating mental health knowledge and care in schools in Gulu and Wakiso. In a KAP survey at the start of this year in Gulu and Wakiso, 20% of the learners reported that they had contemplated suicide at least once in their lifetime. This 3 year grant gives us a platform to register mileage in inclusive education for learners with psycho-social disabilities in Uganda. Our toll free helpline (0800 21 21 21) is available weekdays from 08:00 am till 5:00 pm in the evening. We have aspirations to make it a 24hour service from the start of year 2025. This will enable school going children who are often at home during weekends and late night clients to interact with our professional counselors.

MHU is committed to working with communities to amplify messages about mental health, and pursue sustained advocacy for community mental health care and services. We hope you enjoy reading this updated and improved Newsletter and we look forward to your feedback so we can continuously improve this along the way.

*Derrick Kizza Mbuga  
Executive Director*

# ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES

Some notable activities that took place over the last quarter



*MHU ED speaking to the press at the court premises*

## PETITION TO DECRIMINALIZE SUICIDE

Mental Health Uganda joined other Mental Health Rights Activists to file a petition to the Constitutional Court to decriminalize suicide.

The petitioners included Mental Health Uganda, Sarah Tushemererwe, Raymod Felix Odokonyero the President of the Uganda Psychiatrist Association & John Mary Kumuraheebwe and were represented by AKPIL Advocates, seeking to decriminalize attempted suicide arguing that the law in itself creates stigma around a public health issue and causes an increase in cases of suicide in so doing.

The activists pleaded that the law opens up to allow those ideating suicide to receive help and mental health support from professionals and communities to overcome what they may be going through.



*The petitioners interacting with their lawyer at the court*

## BREAKFAST MEETING ON GDS SUMMIT COMMITMENTS

Mental Health Uganda held a meeting with representatives from the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and Sports and Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development and partners to follow up on the commitments made by the government of Uganda during the Global Disability Summit last year.

This is part of the MHU underlying principle of ensuring that rights of persons with disabilities are respected and upheld in all aspects of society engagement.



*Ministry of Gender representative presenting during the meeting*



*A representative from Ministry of Education sharing during the meeting*

# ACTIVITIES

Some notable activities that took place over the last quarter



*Students from select schools in Wakiso at the official launch*

## YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH PROJECT LAUNCH

Mental Health Uganda in partnership with SOS Childrens Villages launched the Youth Mental Health Project in Wakiso and Gulu districts.

The project targets 8 schools and has since trained 8 'Mental Health Champions' per school to be able to support their peers with psychosocial first aid and factual mental health messages and referral for professional care. The Mental Health Champions are supported by trained 'Mentor Champions', young people with a lived experience of mental health problems who offer guidance alongside the 2 trained focal teachers per school.

We have since held several entry meetings into the schools and mental health awareness activities led by students are underway.



*Group photo of Mt of Olives SS students and teachers at the Launch*

## PARTNERSHIP WITH AGA KHAN



*Group photo of project implementors and teachers at Kitebi SS*

Mental Health Uganda was sub awarded by Aga Khan University to implement a Mental Health Literacy Project targeting 200 students in Kitebi SS who were taken through a series of awareness sessions on mental health.

The Project was well received by students and teachers who pledged to prioritize mental health since it is such a pertinent issue for young people.

# TRAINING ACTIVITIES

Some notable activities that took place over the last quarter

## YOUTH PROJECT TRAININGS IN WAKISO AND GULU

Mental Health Uganda in partnership with SOS Childrens Villages organized trainings for Mental Health ‘Champions’ who are young people in schools that will be championing mental health conversations with their peers in Gulu and wakiso. The Mental Health Champions participated actively through role plays, sharing and group presentations. The training was delivered by 2 consultants who are specialist in mental health and was guided by topics in the MHU Peer Educators Manual.

Emphasis was also placed on the government circular 20 mandating all schools to adopt inclusion and implementation of Mental Health activities within the curriculum and Focal Teachers pledged to play a central role in championing these within their schools.



*Mental Health Champions during the training in Gulu*



*Mental Health Champions in a group discussion in Wakiso during the training*



*The MHU Project Officer giving his remarks at the close of the Gulu champions training*



*Group photo of Mentor Champions, Focal Teachers and MHU staff after a training in Gulu*

# AWARENESS ACTIVITIES

Some notable activities that took place over the last quarter

## NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH CONFERENCE



MHU staff with the Honourable Prime Minister at the MHU display table

The Ministry of Health, National Mental Health Working Group, Uganda Counselors Association and partners in the Mental Health Space organized a 3 day conference under the theme; "Prioritizing Mental Health Through Community Involvement: Together for Mental Health. The deliberations were fruitful and the Chief Guest, Hon. Prime Minister pledged to lobby for an increase in the budget towards mental health.

## PARLIAMENTARY FORUM CAMP

MHU partnered with Uganda Parliamentary Forum for Mental Health in a Mental Health Awareness Camp at Parliament from Monday 22nd Tuesday 23rd May 2023 targeting the general public.

MHU was well represented at the event that was flagged off by the Right Honourable Speaker of Parliament Anita Among.



MHU staff receiving donations at the MHU display table at Parliament

## ROTARY CLUB MEDICAL CAMP

Rotary Club of Bugolobi held a medical camp at Elyon Primary School in Mutungo in a bid to bring services closer to the slum community.

The Medical camp had a series of services including immunization, HIV counselling and testing, Mental Health Counseling, antenatal services, blood donation, legal aid among others.

MHU provided a talk on mental health and offered counselling support.



MHU staff with Rotary Club Bugolobi Members at the Medical Camp



MHU staff sharing about mental health



MHU and Butabika Hospital Staff attending to client queries at the Mental Health Uganda table

# WOMEN PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Some notable activities that took place over the last quarter

## PEER LED LIQUID SOAP TRAININGS



Peers during a liquid soap training at Komamboga  
As part of sustainability efforts, the 'Women Project' carried out a training for rehabilitated clients and their caretakers in order for them to gain the skills that build productivity to earn a living and make a contribution within their communities.

What was unique about this training is that it was led by peers who were also earlier rehabilitated under the same project and are now leading independent and meaningful lives within their communities.



Peers practically mixing the ingredients during the soap making training

## VOLUNTEERS COUNSELING TRAINING

The 'Women Project' undertook a refresher training on best ways to support our clients whilst protecting their rights for the volunteers placed at the Drop - in Sites of Komamboga, Kiswa and those within the communities who are passionate about supporting the work of rehabilitating homeless women from the streets of Kampala.



MHU staff conducting the training with volunteers



Volunteers conducting a role play during the training



Group photo of MHU staff and volunteers after a successful training

## DONOR VISITS

### SIND MENTAL HEALTH DENMARK



*SIND partners with MHU volunteers and clients at Komamboga*

Our partners from SIND Mental Health Denmark visited Uganda as part of their routine monitoring visits to follow up on progress.

The visit lasted one week and the representatives from SIND spent a lot of time engaging with staff, clients and health providers to have a feel of the day to day running of activities and the impact on clients' lives.

### YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH NORWAY



*Norway Partners with a section of staff during a training session*

Our partners from Norway paid a visit to Uganda to monitor progress and plan for the next phase of the project cycle.

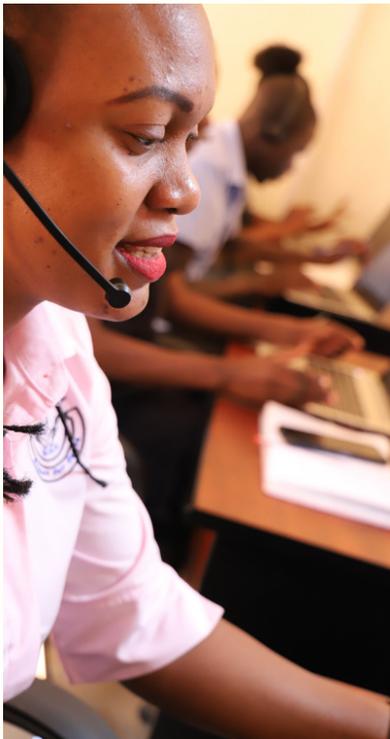
The visit focused on the continued growth in a sustainable manner for MHU (strategic choices), discussions to inform Phase II of the project, building firm collaboration with other local actors supported with Norwegian Aid, among others



*SIND partners engaging with an MHU volunteer during the visit*



*A project beneficiary sharing during an engagement with SIND partners*



# COUNSELORS CORNER

**What stood out for you this quarter?**

*E: What stood out for me was the importance of community support for someone battling with mental health problems. I got into contact with client who was battling suicidal thoughts and felt like all hope was lost. We held several sessions to work through what was causing these feelings and what kind of support she could get to work through the situation.*

*In addition to therapy she attributes her new found mental wellbeing to her mother's support. Her mother reached out to us to guide her on how best to support her daughter through this phase of her life and was so delighted to see the positive impact on her daughter's life and pledged to advocate so that families of persons with mental health problems may educate themselves and play supportive roles as opposed to judgment which makes situations worse.*

## VOICE PROJECT

Mental Health Uganda (MHU) is implementing a 15month project funded through a grant from Voice Global aimed at improving access to social services, health, and education. To achieve this, MHU will implement a ‘Social Contact” project in Jinja City with the aim of normalizing mental health conversations among People living with disabilities, women facing exploitation, abuse, and/or violence, vulnerable youth

The project aims at improving the capacity of people with lived experience of mental health problems in order for them to challenge mental health stigma and discrimination, demand their rights and lead change

It is also aimed at improving the public’s knowledge on mental health, change their behaviours towards people with experience of mental health problems and enhance access to care for the affected persons and promoting evidence-based data, Monitoring and Evaluation.



*Champions sharing during the project launch*



*Deliberations from a stakeholder during the launch*

# THE CHANGE WE MAKE



**Kidega Mark Sunday**  
**Mental Health Champion**  
**Gulu SS**

I am so excited to have been selected as part of the mental health training for champions. I am so sure that it will not only benefit me but also the rest of my community.

As a Mental Health Champion, I will be able to help my fellow students and the entire community where I live and with this knowledge. I will be able to provide Psychological First Aid to my peers who may be in need of mental health support.

I will also be able to identify my own problems and find ways of dealing with them and sharing information about mental health to dispell myths and misconceptions that I have seen while growing up in my community.

I am so thankful to Mental Health Uganda and SOS Children's Villages for this initiative because the impact it will have on the Northern region is so vast. I am humbled to be a part of the efforts because mental health is a subject that everyone should want to familiarize themselves with.

*Mark is one of the 32 students trained from 4 schools in Gulu City which is one of locations where the Youth Mental Health Project is being implemented*

MENTAL HEALTH UGANDA



# KEEP IN TOUCH WITH US

## TALK TO US

✉ Email: [info@mentalhealthuganda.org](mailto:info@mentalhealthuganda.org)

☎ Telephone: 0392178953

## SOCIALS

 Facebook: Mental Health Uganda

 Twitter(X) @MentalHealth\_Ug

 Instagram: mental\_health\_uganda

 Youtube: Mental Health Uganda MHU

**TOLL FREE NUMBER: 0800 21 21 21**

AVAILABLE

MONDAY TO FRIDAY 8.30AM TO 5PM

## OUR PARTNERS

