

NewsLetter

January - March 2023



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ED'S MESSAGE

Welcome to our latest quarterly newsletter, the first this year where we keep you updated on our latest news and updates on the work we are doing together with our partners here locally and around the world.

We all know that the past couple of years have been challenging with the COVID pandemic. Its after-effects will stay in our faces for many generations to come. Our national toll free line (0800 21 21 21) is always available to provide counseling to those in need.

Some of you may know us well, and some of you may have only heard of us. We are indebted to those of you who work with us regularly including members of the coalition on mental health, Government ministries and departments, local government, disability peoples' organisations and other CSOs. We are also grateful to our international partners- Mental Health Youth Norway, Operation Day's Work Norway (ODW), SIND Mental Health Denmark, Abilis Foundation, and Validity foundation for your unwavering support to our work.

Last but not least, to our readers, I hope you find our newsletter interesting. You can give us feedback through our interactive website and other social media pages- Twitter, Facebook, and instagram. Together we can build an inclusive society that treats people with mental disability as persons of great value!

ACTIVITIES

Some notable activities that took place over the last quarter



Coalition Members During the Press Conference

PRESS CONFERENCE

The Mental Health Coalition led by Mental Health Uganda held a press conference after a series on Butabika Hospital ran in the New Vision, uncovering among other things, rights violations on persons with mental disabilities in the facility.

The coalition members called upon the relevant stakeholders to do their roles in ending such cases and emphasized the need to protect the rights of persons with mental health problems and the fact that mental health issues can affect everyone hence the need to offer care in a manner that protects and honors people's rights.

PARTNERSHIP ENGAGEMENT MINISTRY OF HEALTH VISIT TO MHU

We were privileged to host our partners from the Mental Health Division at Ministry of Health, for a dialogue meeting - Dr. Hafsa Lukwata the Ag. Commissioner for mental health and Mr. Herbert Bwire, a Program Officer at the Division.

They toured the offices and call centre, interacted with staff and the Reference Group members present. They appreciated Mental Health Uganda for its contribution to the sector and encouraged us to spread even further in advancing our cause.



Dr. Hafsa and Mr Bwire alongside MHU's Derrick Kizza and Daniel Lubanga

ACTIVITIES



Group Picture from training

MHGAP TRAINING

In a bid to ensure that we continually improve and serve our clients better, the MHU staff and Reference Group members successfully completed a week long training in the WHO mhGAP Health Practitioners Training Course where they were taken through the best ways to support and offer the best care to clients presenting with a various range of mental health conditions.

The training was led by Mr. Kuule Yusuf who doubles as a board member attached to Bwindi Community Hospital and Mr. Orishaba Georgious attached to Kisiizi Hospital and included group work, case studies and discussions to ensure it is practical to everyday work with emphasis on psychosocial support vs clinical care



Some of the members during a group discussion

LAUNCH OF STUDY REPORT BY NETPIL AND MHU

Mental Health Uganda in partnership with NETPIL launched a study into the experiences with electroconvulsive therapy, seclusion, restraint and psycho-social interventions in Mbarara and Gulu Regional Referral Hospitals.



Panel Discussion led by Ms Patricia Atim

The launch was attended by partners from Ministry of Health, Mbarara and Gulu Mental Health Units, ACTV, Women Probono Initiative, Uganda Human Rights Commission, Free Mind Hive, MHRI, Uganda Psychiatrists Association among others.



Group Photo with partners after report launch

ACTIVITIES



Clients participating in the liquid soap making in
Kiswa

SKILLS TRAINING

As part of the sustainability plan, the Women Project has been skilling its rehabilitated clients with skills to ensure that they can make meaningful contributions to their communities and join the money economy.

In December 2022, the peers who had been trained earlier took on the role of training their peers and their caretakers in Kiswa and Komamboga communities, which is where the drop-in sites are located.

The trainings were engaging and participants appreciated MHU for looking out for them.



Group photo of women after training in Komamboga

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Creating mental health awareness is one of the major activities under access to health is my right (Women Project) in the fight against stigma and discrimination and helping people access services.

In February, the project held community dialogues in Kawempe and Nakawa Divisions of Kampala, targeting people of different statuses in the communities around Kampala with information on mental health

About 100 people attended the dialogues and were sensitized about mental health, its causes, signs and symptoms as well as how they can support persons with mental health issues in the challenges they face.

There were counselling sessions with clients that reached out for help and discussions on different referral areas and service providers where community members could seek help.



A market vendors sharing her thoughts during the dialogue in Kitintale Market

ACTIVITIES



Women Project Officer Presenting during the meeting

STAKEHOLDERS MEETING

MHU held a breakfast meeting to share Women Project outcomes and the Plight of Homeless Women with Mental Disabilities on the streets of Kampala . The project is supported by SIND Mental Health Denmark.

The meeting was also to engage partners on how they can support this cause.

Project beneficiaries had an opportunity to share how the project has impacted their lives and encouraged community members to support persons with mental health problems so that they can get the help they need..



A project beneficiary sharing her story during the meeting



A project beneficiary showcasing some of the products she has made since being trained with support from MHU

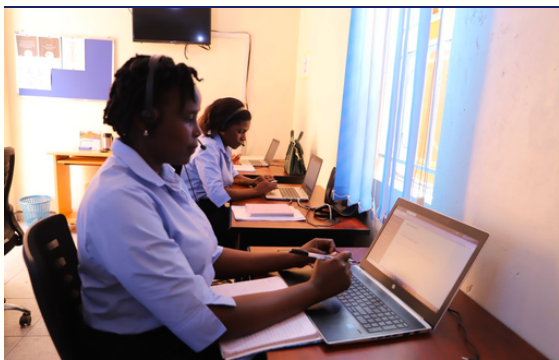
The different stakeholders present appreciated MHU for the work done to empower these women and pledged to find ways to partner and support this work.



The head of The Child and Family Protection Unit of Police at CPS sharing during the meeting



Partners, staff and beneficiaries in a group photo



COUNSELLOR'S CORNER

We talked to our counsellors to hear their thoughts

How has the last quarter been?

M: The last quarter there has been an improvement in terms of the people calling. They call and really want counselling. They know why they are calling. Also, our data collection tool was improved, the information is being tracked better and we can see what is happening better. This enables us to support our clients well.

I: Last quarter was great, we have gotten feedback from the clients who call back and update us on their prognosis, especially the referrals. They are stabilising. When we talk to the families, e.g. when a caretaker calls, it gives us an opportunity to teach them about psychosocial support systems. That helps the recovery because it gives them a chance to be supported.

There is an improvement compared to when we started. People were using stigmatizing language when referring to clients but now that we work together with families and educate them, they relate better with the person and know that they eventually come out of the mental illness.

What stood out to you this quarter?

I: What stood out for me was a boy, whose mother had called. This boy was a graduate but could not get a job after university. This boy got overwhelmed and got depression, so the mother took him to a witch doctor and also to the Mosque. But he withdrew from everyone. The mother reached out to me and said: 'my son seems to be mad'. But I educated her and empowered her to help her son to seek help. So I referred him to a nearby health facility. When they reached there, the boy was supported. Within one month the mother called to say thank you. To me it was outstanding because a mother who was not believing in modern medicine and psychosocial support eventually saw it worked. It was evidence-based. Now she is empowered and was able to befriend her son and he accepted to go to the hospital. I'm glad he's fine.

What is your mental health advice?

M: My tip is for everybody to prioritise mental health. Do this with self-care. Every time you prioritise yourself, you can prioritise others too. Be kind to one another. The more I am kind, the more someone can open up to me. The other message is that as we make decisions, let us look at both the long-term and the short-term. How will a choice affect you? Your mental and physical health will be better, and the community will be happier.

THE CHANGE WE MAKE



JANAT'S STORY

"I am so thankful to Mental Health Uganda because I was able to achieve my dream and be a graduate! They supported me to do a course in Tailoring and I am so proud of myself because I can make some materials and people are even willing to buy them which makes me so happy.

They believed in me to be someone of value and didn't give up on me and now I am. I am forever grateful."

Janat was found on the streets of Kampala during one of the street outreaches by the Women Project. She was engaged by the project team who offered a drink and what to eat alongside psychosocial support.

She was later taken to Butabika National Referral Mental Hospital for rehabilitation where the project team did regular visits to check on her.

During this time, the MHU team got in touch with her family which was supportive. Upon her discharge from hospital she was reunited with her family. The interaction with the project team went on including home visits. It is during these interactions that she showed interest in going back to school. With support from SIND Mental Health Denmark, MHU paid for Janat to attend a tailoring course which she successfully completed and graduated in January 2023.

CONTINUATION....



Janat with project team during a home visit



Janat showcasing some of her products during the Women's Day symposium last year



Janat showcasing one of her products

"Nothing brings more joy and meaning to our work than seeing the impact our work has on the lives of the women we interact with.

To see their lives change from hopelessness to lives filled with hope for the future keeps me going. It is the role of all of us to end the stigma around mental disabilities in our communities and support any persons with mental disabilities to get the necessary support because they can recover and make meaningful contributions to their communities."

Women Project Officer

SPECIAL FEATURE

RITA NABWIRE WENNY

Rita sits on the Board of Mental Health Uganda as a Youth Representative.

She is also a member of the Reference Group under the Youth Project representing the Board of Directors.

She joined MHU as a champion in 2019 as part of the Anti Stigma Campaign.

Rita is passionate about mental health and engaging young people and communities to end stigma.



I am passionate about mental health because experience has taught me that when we do not understand our own thoughts and feelings, we tend to suppress them, we suppress our capabilities and when we are faced with emotional, mental and physical challenges we fail to take action.

Being a voice for myself and others gives hope and support to others who may not have the courage to share their stories or voice their thoughts and feelings.

I advocate for mental health so that we all can be able to pin point why we are stressed out, understand how to deal with and better still where to find the help that we all so much need. I get involved in awareness creation so that we can all understand that stigma limits those who would have loved to be part of the fight to reduce the effect of mental health challenges.

This is why I take this opportunity to appreciate our donors, WHO and Mental health Uganda for the recent mhGAP training which has equipped us with the knowledge and tools to support, assess and manage some of these challenges.

OUR PROGRESS



CALL CENTER

Over the last quarter, we have continuously worked to improve the quality of our toll-free helpline. Our helpline has remained popular, with over 1,150 calls received during the quarter. From the data collected;

- 36% of clients received a referral
- 82% of clients received psychosocial Counselling and support
- 45% of clients received information to help them make informed decisions

WOMEN'S PROJECT

Our women's project took up again in September 2022 after a pause. Since effort have recommenced, we:

- observed **63** women
- contacted **39** women
- saw **38** homeless women who came to the drop in centres and accessed services
- referred **35** women to specialised health service providers



FUTURE PLANS

PROJECT ON MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS RAISING IN SCHOOLS IN WAKISO AND GULU

With funding from Operations Day's Work (ODW) in Norway, MHU in partnership with SOS Children's Villages is implementing The Youth Mental Health Project in the districts of Wakiso and Gulu.

The 3 years Project is aimed at building Mental Health awareness among approximately 4,400 youth between the ages of 13 – 19 years in 8 secondary schools that have partnership with SOS in Gulu and Wakiso districts and their respective communities.

The awareness raising will help increase student's knowledge of mental health problems, create and avail avenues where to access mental health services, build confidence of the students affected by mental health problems to discuss their mental health problems thereby normalizing mental health problems and reducing stigma and discrimination.



MHU and SOS staff with Wakiso District Officials and Partners after a stakeholders meeting



MHU and SOS staff meeting one of the school heads in Wakiso

QUARTER 1
2023

MENTAL HEALTH UGANDA



KEEP IN TOUCH WITH US!

TALK TO US

✉ Email: info@mentalhealthuganda.org

☎ Telephone: 0392178953

SOCIALS



Facebook: Mental Health Uganda



Twitter: @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



www.mentalhealthuganda.org