

‘Share-Learn-Share’

BasicNeeds Ghana Newsletter

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BLF Director Inspects BasicNeeds-Ghana Project

BasicNeeds Ghana was pleased to welcome Melissa Eaglesfield, a Director at Big Lottery Fund (BLF) on October 1, 2016 in Accra. It was a great opportunity for her to meet the team and interact with some participants in our projects.

The Pantang Horticultural Project, set up by BasicNeeds, was one of the first stops of her visit. This project was set up to promote therapeutic interventions for patients admitted to the Pantang Psychiatric Hospital. The farm manager briefed the team on the history of the farm and the crops grown. He also showed them around the vegetable plots. The service users indicated that they valued the opportunity of coming out of their wards to work in the fields and grow the crops that were used in their meals. A number of users who have been discharged have now established their own vegetable gardens.

Ms. Eaglesfield was also able to meet 30



Mel listening to a nurse who supports service users on the Pantang horticultural project

members of the Nima Self-Help Group. The members, which included affected people and their carers, shared their experiences as a support group and how

they were fortunate to receive training, tools, equipment and funds to engage in livelihood activities. Members also spoke about how they have educated families in their community to disabuse their minds on mental illness and the need to bring out relations with mental illness for support and treatment.

With the support of BLF, BasicNeeds-Ghana is currently supporting people recovering from mental illness or epilepsy and their carers in the Northern, Upper East and Upper West Regions of Ghana through the acquisition of skills that would make them productive and useful to themselves and their families. Not only does this aid recovery, it helps to eliminate the stigma within the community that has traditionally been a barrier to people seeking treatment and participating in community life.



Mel (2nd from right) also visited the Nima SHG

Basicneeds-Ghana Celebrates 2016 World Mental Health Day

The 2016 World Mental Health Day was celebrated on the theme “Dignity in Mental Health-Psychological and Mental First Aid For All”. BasicNeeds-Ghana organised three main activities to mark the occasion. They were a quiz competition, a route march and a symposium. Activities to mark this year’s celebration were funded by UK aid.

On October 9, a “What-Do-You-Know” quiz competition was organised in Accra and broadcast live on national TV. The quiz competition marked the grand finale of the inter-school quiz competitions which was organised for school-based Mental Health Clubs. Five contestants eventually qualified from the zonal competitions which saw champions from 15 senior high schools battle each other to obtain one of the five available slots for the national event. In the end, contestants from Oti Senior High School,

Walewale Secondary Technical High School, Salaga T.I Ahmadiya Senior High School, St Annes Girls Senior High School and Ntruboman Senior High School successfully qualified to take part in the “What-Do-You-Know” quiz competition.

After three keenly contested rounds, Oti Senior High School emerged the winner. Susan Clapham of UK aid’s Department for Foreign and International Development (DFID) was among honoured guests who presented prizes to the contestants. Each competitor received a cash prize and a computer and its accessories as well as BasicNeeds-Ghana branded souvenirs.

People With Mental Illness or Epilepsy, as well as their carer-givers and other stakeholders thronged the streets of the Upper East capital, Bolgatanga, to participate in the route march to grace the Mental Health Day. Amidst cheers and the melodious tunes from the brass

bands, the marchers made their way through the principal streets Bolgatanga towards the Catholic Social Centre where a symposium was held. Their placards bore several issues facing mental health in the area including substance abuse by the youth, stigma, low prioritisation, among others.

At the symposium, speaker after speaker reiterated the state of mental health in the region and how it was fast becoming a public health disaster. Local government officials and other stakeholders who were present were entreated to be proactive about mental health.

Ardent followers on social media were not left out of the celebrations. Regular updates were shared via Twitter and Facebook. Many media outlets reported extensively on mental health issues and usually cited BasicNeeds-Ghana as a leader in the mental health campaign.



Contestants in a pose with Quiz Master, Dan Afari Yeboah (middle), Susan Clapham of DFID (2nd right), Peter Yeboah (left) of CHAG & Adam Dokurugu (2nd left) of BNGh after the “What-Do-You-Know” Quiz Competition

KOICA Funds Livelihood Support For People with Mental Illness/Epilepsy

BasicNeeds-Ghana has supported persons with psycho-social needs and their primary caregivers in the Northern, Upper East and Upper West Regions to earn an income. This support was made possible with funding from Korean International Corporation Agency (KOICA).

Beneficiaries are part of a BasicNeeds-Ghana project titled "Building productive skills of women, men and youth affected by mental disorders in Northern Ghana for enhanced recovery and income".

It aims to secure the livelihood of 600 beneficiaries and reduce the level of vulnerability of People With Mental Illness or Epilepsy (PWMIEs) and their primary carers. The project is also to enable beneficiaries take up skills training.



Some beneficiaries received equipment to learn trade

In the Northern Region, 35 people given gardening tools, whilst 31 received sewing machines. 15 were small ruminants for rearing.



Beneficiaries receive livestock to rearing

In the Upper East Region, 95 sewing machines were given to individual beneficiaries, 61 PWMIE received small ruminants, and 23 people were supported with gardening tools.

Beneficiaries in the Upper West Region, numbering 99, received similar support with 26 taking home ruminants for rearing, 38 receiving gardening tools and 35 receiving sewing machines.

Fifty (50) Master artisans have also been identified to take on PWMIE as apprentices. They will undergo training on how to work with PWMIE.

Maternal Mental Health Stakeholders Attend Forum in BAR

Municipal/District Directors of Health, senior mid-wives and public health nurses as well as Municipal and District Planning and Budget Officers in the Brong Ahafo Region have participated in a two (2) day forum on Maternal Mental Health in Sunyani.

The stakeholder engagement, which took place on September 22 and 23, 2016, allowed the health management teams and their counterparts in local government to discuss issues that affected maternal mental health services in their various districts.

The Chief Executive Officer of Mission of Hope for Society (MIHOSO) International Foundation, Gabriel Gbiel Benarkuu, addressing the participants, highlighted the fact that health management teams

in the Brong Ahafo Region had always welcomed collaboration. He emphasised that this had ensured that the region was counted as one of the most responsive in terms of adapting to changing trends in health service provision.

He cited examples of successes that had been chalked in dealing with health related incidents within the region as a result of collaborations between the Ghana Health Service (GHS) and MIHOSO International, which implements mental health activities in the Brong Ahafo Region on behalf of BasicNeeds-Ghana.

The occasion was used to brief the participants on a UK aid funded project titled *"Enhancing Maternal Mental Health of Vulnerable pregnant women and mothers and their children."*

The project is being implemented in 74 districts in Northern, Upper West, Upper East, Greater Accra and Brong Ahafo Regions. Eighteen (18) districts of the Brong Ahafo Region fall within the catchment area of the project.

The participants were also made aware of the key targets to be achieved and the main activities planned. They were further informed about activities carried out and their resulting achievements. After the exposé, it became clear to the participants that there was still much to be done to address the obvious shortfalls.

From the discussions, the stakeholders were led in a process to identify potential problems in their respective districts based on which action plans were developed to tackle them.



Participants of the Maternal Mental Health Stakeholder Forum in Brong Ahafo Region

Press Release

The Situation Of The Accra Psychiatric Hospital And Mental Health Matters In Ghana

The Ghana National Mental Health Alliance (GHAMHA) has taken note of worrying developments at the Accra Psychiatric Hospital resulting in the management and staff of the hospital embarking on a strike action. The facility lacks basic working tools and equipment.

In a press release, it drew Government's attention to this emergency and the imminent disaster that awaits the country should mental health continue to suffer such neglect. It called on the President to direct the immediate release of funds to cater for the needs of the hospital to ensure continuous treatment of the many people who rely on the hospital for their mental health care.

The Alliance entreated the staff of the hospital to be open-minded and work with the government towards finding a lasting solution to this recurring problem.

It used the opportunity to request the Minister of Health, the Attorney General's Department, the Health Select Committee of Parliament and the entire legislative body to pass the Legislative Instrument to ensure the effective implementation of provisions of the mental health Act, 2012 (Act 846).

The Alliance further called on health policy authorities, particularly, the Regional and District Health Management Teams of the Ghana Health Service, Medical Directors and Health Administrators to individually and collectively set about the establishment of Community Psychiatric Units (CPUs). It implored them to expedite the deployment of mental health professionals to the CPUs to provide the needed services.

It also requested District, Municipal

and Metropolitan Assemblies to make investments towards creating and resourcing the community psychiatric units to run mental health services.

The Alliance reminded families to live up to their responsibilities by caring for their relatives with psychosocial needs and support them in their treatment.

The group said it was hopeful that everything will be done to improve the lives of women and men, girls and boys with mental health care needs to ensure total human development.

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