

Building Productive Skills of Women, Men and Youth Affected By Mental Disorders in Northern Ghana for Enhanced Recovery and Income

Helen Atindor is 55 years old from Yiheni, near Bolga in the Upper East Region. She has been suffering from severe headache for the past 15 years. She is a breadwinner of a household of five (5). Helen was diagnosed with schizophrenia eight (8) years ago. Through the support of BasicNeeds-Ghana, she has been receiving treatment at the Bolgatanga Regional Hospital and she is now stable. She received two female goats for rearing under this KOICA funded project.

“I am very lucky to have received these animals. I will take very good care of them so that they will grow and multiply. I hope to sell some in order to take care of my medical bills and other domestic needs. I thank BasicNeedsGhana and KOICA for this support.”

A Livelihoods Project Funded by the Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA)

Designed by: Fred Nantogmah

Appreciation

BasicNeeds-Ghana expresses profound appreciation to the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) under whose sponsorship all project activities were carried out.



Implementation Partners



Gub-Katimali Society



Centre for People's Empowerment and Rights Initiatives

Foreword

BasicNeeds-Ghana is proud to present this photo book of beneficiaries of its project titled ***“Building productive skills of women, men and youth affected by mental disorders in northern Ghana for enhanced recovery and income”***. The project was funded by the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA). It marks another successful intervention in BasicNeeds-Ghana’s on-going work to improve the lives of poor people with mental illness and/or epilepsy and their primary carers by empowering them to access treatment and livelihood opportunities.

The publication captures the achievements of mental health and epilepsy service users in pictorial form and provides brief anecdotes of their experiences on the project. By so doing, BasicNeeds-Ghana seeks to demonstrate the innate capacity of people with mental illness or epilepsy to engage in productive work.

Significant improvements has come about in the lives of poor and vulnerable people with mental illness or epilepsy and their primary carers as a result of the work of BasicNeeds-Ghana. They have been supported to access treatment services and advocate for policies that promote their rights and inclusion in decision making. They have also benefited from pro-poor development interventions.

Despite these successes, many people with mental illness and epilepsy still continue to suffer from limitations to achieving self-actualisation. These limitations imposed on them by their condition or by society make it difficult for them to access treatment and livelihood opportunities. For instance, collateral required by most loan granting financial institutions has made it difficult for many people with mental illness to take advantage of their services because they cannot provide the needed collateral. Again, people with mental illness or epilepsy cannot access the same opportunities in income generation as everyone else due to their condition.

The ability of people with mental illness and epilepsy to engage in productive work is, however, evidenced by their involvement in this project. The project builds on BasicNeeds-Ghana’s existing interventions in enhancing inclusion and the ability of the poorest and most vulnerable members of society to access livelihood opportunities.

This project enabled 650 beneficiaries to engage in secure livelihoods of their choice that could guarantee them sustainable income. Some of the options the beneficiaries chose include vegetable farming, livestock rearing and apprenticeship in tailoring and dress making.

The project has contributed to the organisation’s mission of ensuring that people with mental illness are able to live and work successfully in their communities. It has shown that by deliberately including people with mental illness or epilepsy in decision making processes and livelihood opportunities, we promote sustainable strategies in reducing the general level of poverty and improve the lives of all involved.

We hope that you, dear reader, will find the account of these individuals useful. We hope that it will challenge you to reflect on the poorest in society and how their lives can be improved through secure livelihoods interventions.

Badimah Peter Yaro,


Executive Director, BasicNeeds-Ghana



**“ Both
of my pigs gave birth to 11
piglets within five months after I was
supported. I shall sell some and reinvest by
expanding their rooms and getting more feeds.
I am the eldest of my siblings and my
mother’s burdens will be reduced
soon ”**

Ophelius Kuubatarsuur is a 37 year old man living in Gozir-Newtown in the Nandom District. He started showing symptoms of epilepsy when he was 15 years. After several unsuccessful attempts at herbal treatment, he was eventually diagnosed with an epileptic psychosis in August, 2010 by a physician. He started treatment at the Nandom Hospital Mental Health Unit. His health condition has greatly improved. He was given two (2) female pigs for rearing under this project.





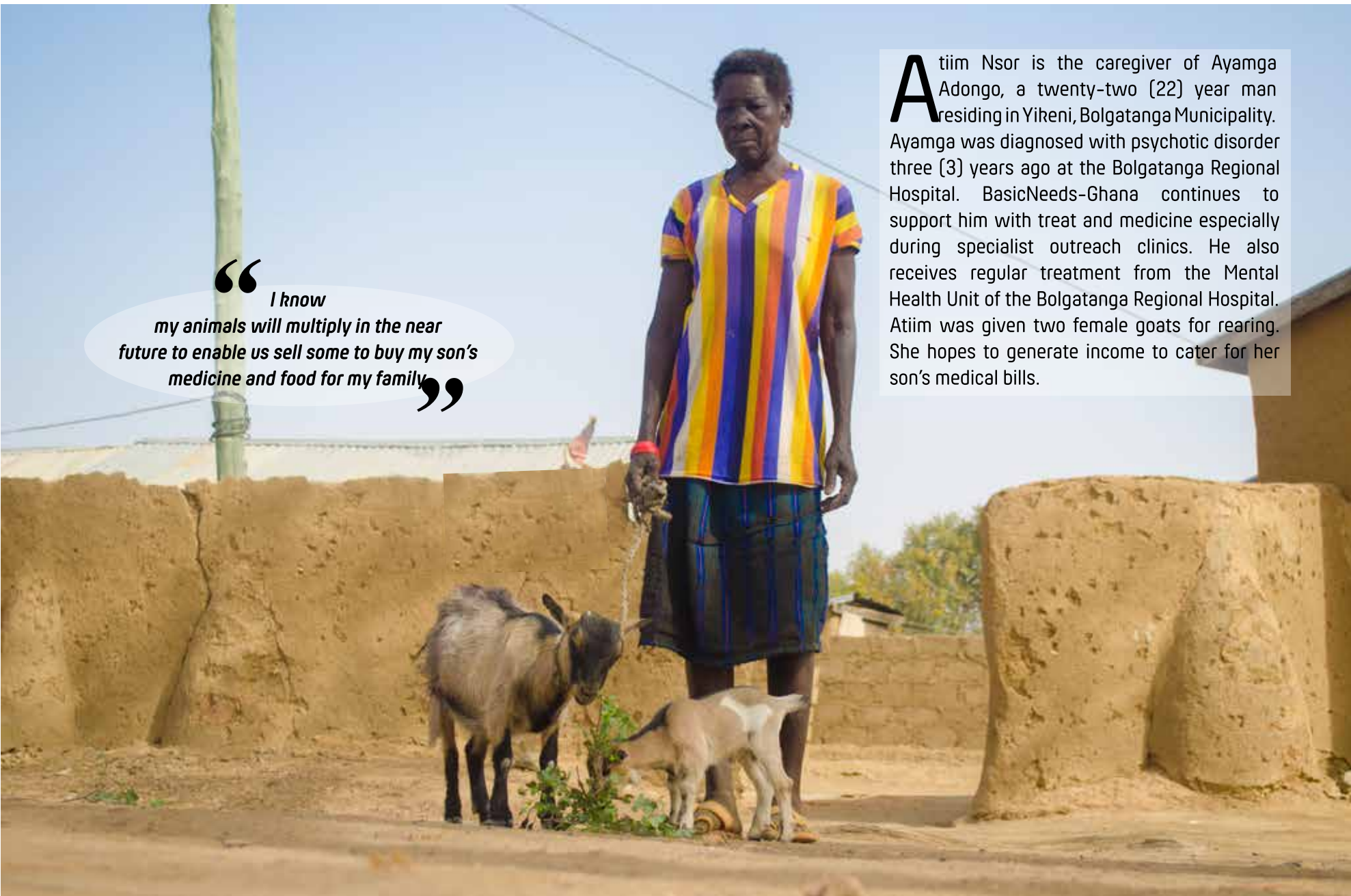
“ The goats have so far produced two kids and it is my hope that the project will enable me generate some income in the near future to continue to cater for my sons needs.”

Asana Kolog is the mother and care-giver of Vitus Kolog. Both reside in Baare in the Talensi District. Vitus was diagnosed with epilepsy in 2014. Because of his condition, Asana spent so much resources in pursuit of treatment for him but to no avail. She heard of a BasicNeeds-Ghana organised specialist outreach clinic and attended with her son. Now, Vitus is doing well. Asana expressed interest in livestock rearing to help her earn some income for their upkeep. BasicNeeds, with funding from KOICA, gave her two female goats.



“ I’m
clapping hands and thanking
BasicNeeds-Ghana and KOICA for the support. I hope
to sell the offspring in future to cater for my domestic
needs ”

Amobire Apanga, 65 years comes from Yikeni, a suburb of Bolgatanga. She was diagnosed with schizophrenia in 2012. She is the breadwinner of her household of four (4). After sometime of undergoing treatment at the Bolgatanga Regional Hospital, she joined the self-help group of people with member mental illness or epilepsy which had been formed by BasicNeeds-Ghana. She was assessed for capacity and later supported with two female goats under the KOICA funded project.

A woman with short dark hair, wearing a colorful vertically striped short-sleeved shirt and a dark patterned skirt, stands in a dry, dusty outdoor area. She is holding a small plant in her right hand. In front of her are two goats, one larger and grey, the other smaller and white. Behind them is a wall made of mud-brick. A utility pole is visible in the background to the left.

“ *I know
my animals will multiply in the near
future to enable us sell some to buy my son's
medicine and food for my family* **”**

Atiim Nsor is the caregiver of Ayamga Adongo, a twenty-two (22) year man residing in Yikeni, Bolgatanga Municipality. Ayamga was diagnosed with psychotic disorder three (3) years ago at the Bolgatanga Regional Hospital. BasicNeeds-Ghana continues to support him with treat and medicine especially during specialist outreach clinics. He also receives regular treatment from the Mental Health Unit of the Bolgatanga Regional Hospital. Atiim was given two female goats for rearing. She hopes to generate income to cater for her son's medical bills.

“ My
dream is to establish a shop
and sell confectioneries in this community in
the future. With this support, I will put in my very
best so that the goats will multiply so that I
can realize my dream ”

Twenty-two (22) year old Zuberu Alhassan experienced his first episode of seizures when he was just twelve (12). His parents sent him to see several herbalists for treatment without success. His plight worsened when he developed a condition that made him unable to walk. He was officially diagnosed with epilepsy in 2015 at the Takpo community mental health unit. As a member of the Sungbaala SHG, he was supported with two female goats under this project.



Bondaan Yin, 46, comes from Baare community in the Talensi District. He was diagnosed with schizophrenia in 2012. He is breadwinner of a household of seven (7). Bondaan was supported by BasicNeeds-Ghana to access regular supply of medicines at the Tongo hospital and is now very stable. Through the intervention of the KOICA funded project, Bondaan, who is a member of the Timaaltaba Self Help Group, was supported to undertake dry season gardening. He cultivated okro, kenaf and beans on the share of the plot allocated to him.

“ I can harvest at least 2 buckets of okro every Tongo market day, which occurs every three days. On a good day, I am able to get Gh¢ 15.00 per bucket. This means I make at least Gh¢ 30.00 every market day and in a month, I can make at least Gh¢900.00 from my plot. This has brought huge relief to me and my family.”



A man in a white polo shirt and blue jeans is watering a field of green okra plants with a red watering can. The field is in the foreground, and there are trees and a building in the background. The man is looking down at the plants he is watering.

**“ I
make over Gh¢ 900.00
every month and use some of the
vegetables to prepare food for household
consumption. This project has been
of immense help to me and my
household ”**

Kolzie Tii lives in Baare a community in the Talensi District in Upper East Region of Ghana. He was diagnosed with seizure disorder in 2009. He is a member of the Baare Timaaltabe Self Help Group that was supported under the KOICA funded project to do dry season gardening in the Baare community. He has cultivated only okro on the field allocated to him. According to Kolzie, he harvests at least 2 buckets within every three days which he sells for Ghc 30.00.

Gumah Saibu (right) and her carer/mother, Zalia, hail from Takorayiri in West Mamprusi District. Gumah, who has been diagnosed with epilepsy, initially sought treatment from traditional healers to no avail until she was convinced to participate in a BasicNeeds-Ghana organised psychiatric outreach clinic. Since then, she has been regular at outreach clinics. Her condition has now stabilised. Gumah and Zelia are beneficiaries of the KOICA funded gardening project. They received watering cans, and vegetable seeds for sowing.

“ People initially thought my child was useless and cannot contribute anything meaningful and economically to my family but she has proved them wrong. I work with Gumah in our vegetable garden which is the family’s main source of income and livelihood. I am able to buy medicine for her and pay the school fees of my other three children all from the sale of produce from this garden which makes me happy. God bless BasicNeeds Ghana and KOICA ”



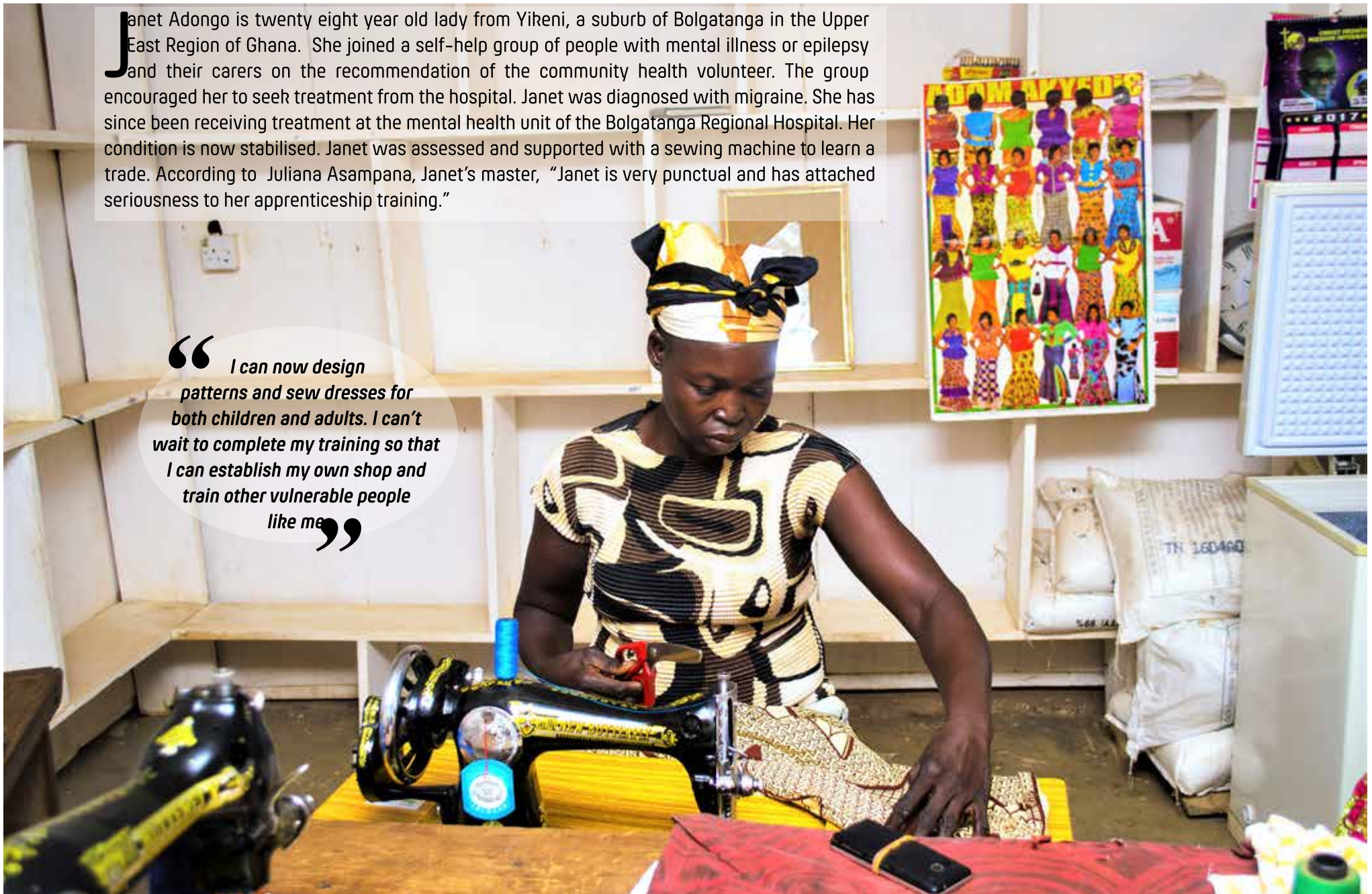


“ I
make at least Ghc
35.00 every month from
the sale of the okro I harvest
from my field. I can now cater for
my daughter's needs. My family
now enjoys Tuo Zaafi with
sauce prepared with fresh
vegetable ”

Mammoya Baan (middle) hails from Baare, a community in the Talensi District in Upper East Region of Ghana. She is the carer of Lahare Buliktee who was diagnosed of epilepsy in 2009. With the support of BasicNeeds-Ghana in organising outreach services and supply of medicines in the district, Miss Lahare has been receiving regular supply of medicines from the Tongo Hospital. Through the intervention of the KOICA funded project in the community, Mammoya, on behalf of her daughter was supported with wallington booths, vegetable seeds and other tools to undertake vegetable farming. Mammoya harvest at least 2 buckets of okro and a basin of kenaf every market day.

Janet Adongo is twenty eight year old lady from Yikeni, a suburb of Bolgatanga in the Upper East Region of Ghana. She joined a self-help group of people with mental illness or epilepsy and their carers on the recommendation of the community health volunteer. The group encouraged her to seek treatment from the hospital. Janet was diagnosed with migraine. She has since been receiving treatment at the mental health unit of the Bolgatanga Regional Hospital. Her condition is now stabilised. Janet was assessed and supported with a sewing machine to learn a trade. According to Juliana Asampana, Janet's master, "Janet is very punctual and has attached seriousness to her apprenticeship training."

“ I can now design patterns and sew dresses for both children and adults. I can't wait to complete my training so that I can establish my own shop and train other vulnerable people like me ”



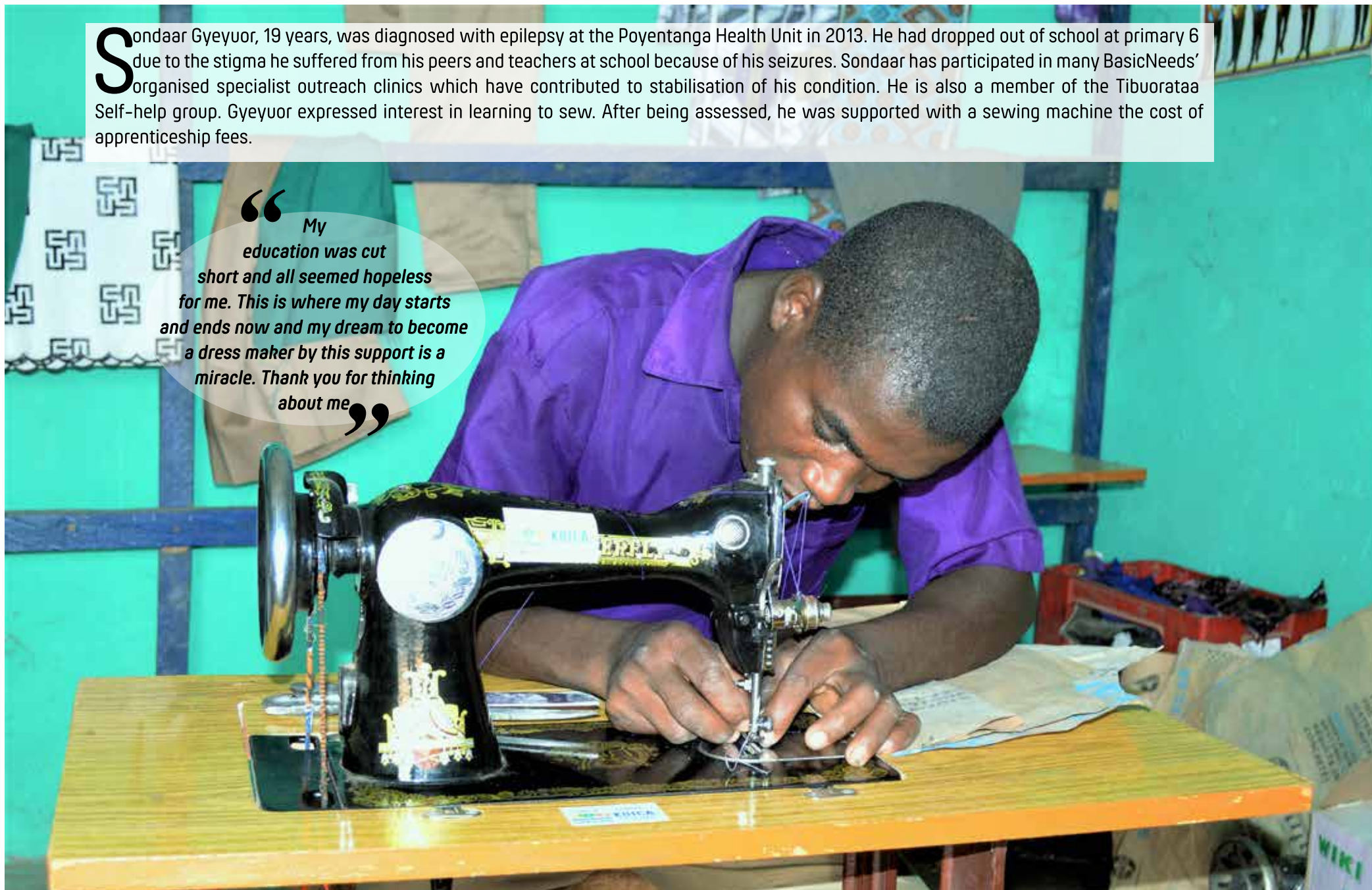
Iddi Bintu (right) comes from Tinguri, a community in the West Mamprusi District. She is married with three (3) children but had a divorce as a result her illness. Iddi Bintu suffered from epilepsy since childhood. The family started treatment with traditional herbs but her condition did not improve. She joined the intervention program of BasicNeeds Ghana and received a sewing machine which she express interest during individual need base assessment.

“ I
no longer send my
materials to other seamstress
to sew dress for me. I can sew my
own dress now and my children as
well. Thank God for the support
of BasicNeeds-Ghana and
KOICA ”



Sondaar Gyeyuor, 19 years, was diagnosed with epilepsy at the Poyentanga Health Unit in 2013. He had dropped out of school at primary 6 due to the stigma he suffered from his peers and teachers at school because of his seizures. Sondaar has participated in many BasicNeeds' organised specialist outreach clinics which have contributed to stabilisation of his condition. He is also a member of the Tibuorataa Self-help group. Gyeyuor expressed interest in learning to sew. After being assessed, he was supported with a sewing machine the cost of apprenticeship fees.

“ My education was cut short and all seemed hopeless for me. This is where my day starts and ends now and my dream to become a dress maker by this support is a miracle. Thank you for thinking about me ”



Vida Adopaya is from Sirigu in the Kassena Nankana West District. She was diagnosed with epilepsy seven years ago. She dropped out of school due to her condition. Vida was invited to attend a specialist outreach clinics by a community mental health volunteer. She has since been receiving treatment at the Sirigu Martyrs of Uganda Health Centre and her condition is now stable. Vida was supported with a sewing machine to learn dressmaking after she was assessed.

**“ I
am full of joy and
excitement because my dream
has come true. I have learnt how to cut
material and can sew dresses for women
and babies with little supervision.
I am so grateful to KOICA and
BasicNeeds-Ghana for their
support.”**





*“ I have
been an apprentice for six
(6) months now. I can cut and sew
shirts. I look forward to when I will
complete my training and open my
own shop ”*

Cletus Kuupiel is a 21 year old man from Danko in the Nandom district. He dropped out school in Junior High School form because he had regular seizures. Cletus was supported by his uncle to learn masonry. However, he was advised to stop his training by the mental health officers who had began treating him for his seizures. Cletus was given a sewing machine to undergo dress-making apprenticeship.

Reflections

Over the years, the model for Mental Health and Development has been the driving force behind BasicNeeds-Ghana's efforts to provide access to holistic health care and services to people with mental illness or epilepsy throughout the country. The organisation's commitment stems from its dedication to ensuring that people with psychosocial needs are sufficiently healthy to function as productive members of their communities.

BasicNeeds has enjoyed tremendous support from donors and organisations who share in its belief that everyone matters, especially those who are impoverished and vulnerable through illness and disability. The investments made by donors have been vital in the activities of BasicNeeds and its implementing partners towards significantly improving the lives of poor and vulnerable people with mental illness and epilepsy.

Through the generous sponsorship of the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), 650 people with mental illness or epilepsy and their primary caregivers from selected districts in the three (3) regions in northern Ghana have been supported under this project to engage in a variety of productive and potentially income-generating activities. For some of these beneficiaries, this is an opportunity to regain control of their lives and overcome the many disadvantages they face because of their illness.

For BasicNeeds, this project was another opportunity to innovate and learn. Lessons from over 15 years experience implementing interventions specifically designed to address identified needs of poor people with mental illness and

epilepsy were brought to bear.

Innovative solutions were also engineered to address specific project challenges. Project beneficiaries had been empowered by their membership in self-help groups to self-advocate. They identified the specific livelihood options they were interested in. They led in efforts to secure arable lands from local landowners for establishing their vegetable gardens; They chose which animals they wanted to rear; and they identified the master artisans they preferred to be trained by.

The project has also enhanced the self-esteem of beneficiaries by reinforcing their self-confidence, engaging them in activity and enabling them to do things for themselves. Having animals to rear, sewing machines to learn sewing and gardens to cultivate vegetables for food and money has given the beneficiaries a sense of pride, belongingness and accomplishment. This has ultimately contributed to the improved attitudes and behaviour beneficiaries now enjoy from their families and their community.

In essence, the project has provided extra evidence to support the fact that persons with mental illness or epilepsy can engage in productive work when they are supported to access the necessary opportunities and resources. Once such linkage is established, they become a source of support to themselves and their families.

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