

Alliance for Mental Health and Development

at its Planning and Review Meeting in Sunyani on Wednesday, 7 July 2021.

The Alliance for Mental Health and Development (Mental Health Alliance), a national network of CSOs, NGOs, and CBOs engaged in mental health advocacy in Ghana, held a planning and review meeting in Sunyani on Wednesday, 7 July 2021 to deliberate on issues of mental health and psychosocial disability, human rights, and inclusion of persons with psychosocial needs in public health policy and services.

The Mental Health Alliance noted, with grave concern, the Government's exclusion of people with mental health disorders from its COVID-19 relief package and vaccination programme. The Alliance considers this a serious oversight by the Government given that they are among the worst affected by the pandemic and among the most vulnerable to contract COVID-19 because of their poor income and health status.

The Mental Health Alliance is also alarmed by the current de-congestion exercise going on in Accra which has clearly not taken into consideration the needs and livelihoods of homeless people with mental health and psychosocial conditions. Also, of concern is the unresolved and protracted encroachment of lands belonging to Pantang Psychiatric Hospital by private real estate developers which led staff of the hospital to lay down their tools in protest to the armed attacks from thugs. The increased spate of murders and suicides, and brutalisation of ordinary citizens by State security which resulted in the death and maiming of ordinary citizens are also a source of worry to the Mental Health Alliance.

The Mental Health Alliance believes that these incidents, altogether, have the potential to negatively impact on people's mental health, especially, poor and vulnerable people with pre-existing mental health and psychosocial conditions in Ghana.

While we acknowledge the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources' 21-day ultimatum to private developers who are encroaching on land belonging to Pantang Psychiatric Hospital to vacate and that security personnel have been deployed to ensure the protection of life and property of residents and staff of the hospital, the Mental Health Alliance encourages the Lands Ministry to follow through with its intentions to forcibly evict all encroachers and fence the land in question to protect it from future encroachment.

The Mental Health Alliance further proposes that the Government takes the following immediate steps to address the highlighted issues:

1. Reassurance from the President of the Republic of Ghana of the safety, emotional and psychological wellbeing of all citizens
2. Inclusion of persons with mental health and psychosocial conditions, especially those who are homeless and destitute, in Government's COVID-19 relief package and vaccination programme to protect them from infection and ensure their survival and wellbeing.
3. Publication of a clear plan for the Accra decongestion exercise which indicates how the protection and safety of destitute and homeless people in the metropolis will be ensured with measures to reunite them with their families where possible or provide them with assisted housing, food and medical care.

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4. Resourcing existing mental health facilities, especially in district and community health facilities, to provide mental health care services to those who require it.
5. Expand and ensure that National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) and other social protection schemes cover poor and homeless people with mental health conditions.

In the medium to long term, the Mental Health Alliance expects Government to make sustained investments to support mental healthcare services in Ghana and ensure that existing safety nets (LEAP, NHIS, 3% DACF) realistically cover poor and vulnerable people, particularly those with mental health and psychosocial disabilities.

The Mental Health Alliance believes that if Government commits to investing in mental health development, it will empower the citizenry to contribute more to national development as demonstrated in the Return on Individual (ROI) report¹, the Ghana Mental Health Investment Case² and Benefit-Cost Analysis of Mental Health Interventions in Ghana³, among others. The Mental Health Alliance remains committed to collaborating with the Government, well-meaning institutions, and individuals to promote the mental health, wellbeing, and human rights of all, and particularly of people with mental health conditions and psychosocial disabilities.

Signed:



Peter Badimak YARO (Executive Director, BasicNeeds-Ghana)

National Convenor, Alliance for Mental Health and Development

Date: 28 July 2021

¹ gospeakyourmind.org/sites/default/files/2020-09/ROI_FullReport_0.pdf

² <https://bit.ly/3iB2iUz>

³ <https://bit.ly/3ruc9ji>

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