

# MENTAL HEALTH COALITION OF SIERRA LEONE

*City of Rest, 34 Fort Street, Freetown*

*Tel: +232 (78) 463 323 / +232 (30) 408 100 / +232 (25) 268 606*



27<sup>th</sup> February 2013

## **ANNOUNCING: THE 2<sup>nd</sup> ANNUAL MENTAL HEALTH CONFERENCE, 2013**

Dear Sir/Madam,

The Mental Health Coalition of Sierra Leone is pleased to invite you to Sierra Leone's 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Mental Health Conference on the **19<sup>th</sup> March 2013**, at the British Council in Freetown.

The theme for the 2013 Mental Health Conference is '**Mental Health & Society**'. As Sierra Leone recovers from the 11 year-long brutal conflict that not only destroyed the physical body and infrastructure of the nation, but also damaged the country's very psyche, the social inclusion of all, including those affected by mental ill-health, is paramount for continued peace and stability.

Mental health activities should not only be integrated within the health care delivery system but be part of a multi-sectoral response. All sectors, including social welfare, education, industry (both public and private) and youth, influence and are influenced by mental health outcomes in Sierra Leone. They can support efforts to challenge stigma and discrimination; sensitize individuals and communities; raise awareness of mental health issues; provide high quality mental health care and support; improve the quality of life and opportunities for people affected by mental ill-health; conduct mental health research; and advocate for improved services across communities and at policy levels. The Mental Health Conference of Sierra Leone brings stakeholders together from around the world as an opportunity to learn and create solutions.

Conference activities will include an opening statement from H.E. Mrs. Sia Nyama Koroma (The First Lady of Sierra Leone), a keynote address from Dr Janice Cooper (Mental Health Program, Carter Centre, Liberia) and a musical performance from the winners of GOAL's 2012 'Fight Drugs with Music' competition. Mental health professionals from within West Africa will be providing short presentations on related issues including substance abuse; child development & mental health; stigma & discrimination related to mental health; and integrating mental health into primary health care.

As there are a limited number of spaces available, the Mental Health Coalition requests that guests planning to attend **RSVP by 12<sup>th</sup> March, 2013** by dropping off a completed registration form at the EAMH Project Office (Bass Street 3, Off King Harman Road, Brookfields, Freetown) or by emailing an electronic copy to [enablingaccesscorpa@gmail.com](mailto:enablingaccesscorpa@gmail.com). A registration fee of 110,000 SLL (\$25) applies to all international participants and will be accepted in advance at the EAMH Project Office or on the day of the conference.

Please contact Isata Bunduka at 078 692 269/033 450 912 regarding any questions about registration. If you would like to make a financial contribution to this exciting event; please also use the above contacts; the coalition welcomes donations in cash or kind.

Health is wealth, but there is no health without mental health.

We look forward to hosting you at the conference,

Walter Carew, Chairperson, Mental Health Coalition of Sierra Leone

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## BACKGROUND INFORMATION: THE MENTAL HEALTH COALITION OF SIERRA LEONE

### Country Status

Mental Health is largely ignored or neglected in Sierra Leone even though it is estimated that 420,000 people (13% of the adult population) in Sierra Leone suffered from a mental health disorder (severe depression – 4%; severe substance abuse – 4%; psychosis – 2%; mental retardation – 1%; and epilepsy – 1%) in the year 2002<sup>i</sup>. Globally, four out of the six leading causes of years lived with disability are due to mental ill-health; one out of four people have suffered from a mental health condition in their lifetime; and mental ill-health contributes to 12% of the burden of disability worldwide<sup>ii</sup>.

People with mental health problems are extremely vulnerable and among the most marginalized and excluded in society. They are subject to stigma and discrimination on a daily basis, experience high rates of physical and sexual victimization, and encounter restrictions in the exercise of their civil rights and access to essential health and social care.

### Background

The Mental Health Coalition of Sierra Leone was established with the support of the EU-funded Enabling Access to Mental Health in Sierra Leone (EAMH-SL) in 2011. In 2012, it was adopted as a stakeholders' council by the Mental Health Leadership and Advocacy Program (mhLAP - a project facilitated by Australian Aid and Christian Blind Mission (CBM) through the University of Ibadan, Nigeria).

The Coalition aims to advocate for the human rights and dignity of all those affected by and working to improve mental ill-health; including service users, their families, and service providers. Its overall objective is to raise awareness and campaign for increased national commitment to mental health issues in Sierra Leone.

### Our Vision

A society which protects the human rights and dignity of people with mental health problems, their families, and service providers; and provides non-discriminatory and high quality mental health care and support to all those who need it.

### Our Mission

To raise awareness around the burden of mental illness in Sierra Leone and campaign for increased national commitment to, and resources for, mental health issues and services in Sierra Leone whilst building national capacity to care for and support those with mental health needs.



*Mental Illness Is Not A Curse*

<sup>i</sup>World Health Organization. Mental Health Atlas. Geneva: World Health Organization, 2005.

<sup>ii</sup>World Health Organization. Investing in Mental Health. Geneva: World Health Organization, 2003.