



MENTAL HEALTH COALITION OF SIERRA LEONE

An initiative coordinated by Enabling Access to Mental Health in Sierra Leone & funded by the European Union

COALITION NEWSLETTER

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The Coalition is ONE (1)..... What was the Annual General Meeting Like?

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) was preceded by a one day training of leaders and Coalition members in the field of mental health. This major programme was facilitated by City of Rest and had a total of attendees presenting ...organisations.

In their opening statements, Heather Weaver (over all Project Coordinator) and Walter Carew (Mental Health Coalition Chairman) spoke about the state of mental health in the country and opportunities the training would offer. Facilitators were drawn from well known and proven institutions such as the Health for All Coalitions, DIS-CET, NUWACH Outpatient Services to name but a few. These facilitators elaborated on topic such as: **Effective Coalition Sustenance, Stress Management and Dynamics of Team Building.**



The Annual General Meeting (AGM) which was preceded over by the Deputy

Chair of the Mental Health Coalition (Dr. Gladys Palmer), was opened with a Conference Focus as its main talk by Mr. Donald Con-
teh – Acting Head of the Nursing Department (COMAHS). His presentation was focused on - **Depression and Comorbidity.**

Other major activities of the AGM included:
A visit of the Policy Coordinator in the Office of the First Lady (Mr. Sam Bangura).
Business Session.
Review of Terms for Reference Elections

A package was presented to Mr. Sam Bangura on behalf of the Mental Health Coalition by the Project Coordinator (Heather Weaver) for the attention of the First Lady of Sierra Leone. In it was an invitation to the First Lady to be an Honorary Member of the MH Coalition, latest edition of the Men-

tal Health Coalition’s newsletter, report of the previously held Mental Health Conference (ever in the history of Sierra Leone) and an invitation to the 2013 Mental Health Conference. In his promise to relate outcomes of other sensitive issues discussed as well as concerns raised, Mr. Sam Bangura appreciated the Mental Health Coalition for its strides in such a neglected field.



Followed by this presentations, was the first annual business meeting of the Coalition. High-

light of this session included:
An annual report which was presented by the Chairman on behalf of his executive members. In his report he gave a brief synopsis of the activities of Executive for the period September 2011 to then. He also spelt out their mandate which was to help coordinate the affairs of the Coalition in achieving the purpose for which it was created-Hence its main purpose is to advocate for the rights of both the mental health service users and service providers in Sierra Leone and for them to have access to better facilities and working policies.

The strategy engaged by the Executive in trying to achieve its mandate over the year under review was to work through sub Committees which served as task forces in carrying out assignment given to them. In this regard the following Sub committees were formed.

- World Mental Health day
- Mental Health Conference
- Lunacy Act Review
- News letter
- Web Site
- Medicines and drugs
- Awareness
- Raising



Editorial

Welcome to the last quarterly edition of the Newsletter for 2012, on the theme:

Pressing on towards greater breakthrough in the field of mental health.

Though mental health disorder have existed since time in memorial, you will agree with me that in Sierra Leone, not much has been done in making victims of mental health disorders enhance access to medical facilities, in fact most people only come in contact with these facilities when they have a close relative suffering from mental disorders.

It is against the background that the MH Coalition was formed to sensitise and advocate for these category of people in society. This article highlights the achievement of the Project, but leaves room for more to be done.

Hope you enjoy reading this article. Wishing you the best of 2013.



Nancy D. Koroma

Editor in Charge



ENABLING ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH IN SIERRA LEONE (EAMH-SL)



Committee members were therefore also given the opportunities to make reports on their activities since inception.

The TOR (guiding document of the Coalition) was read by the chairman, amended and adopted by members of the coalition.

Election was presided over by Heather Weaver and Joshua A. Duncan had the same leadership being mandated to continue for another term due to their hard work.

**Success achieved so far is encouraging!
Members still dedicated!**

More opportunities still being awaited!

Congratulations to the Mental Health Coalition of Sierra Leone!!!!

Look forward to our next coalition meeting come 4th October 2012

WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY CELEBRATIONS IN SIERRA LEONE OCTOBER, 2012

A Team of five (5) visited the First Lady as a pre World Mental Health Day planning activity. Major updates were the formation of the Mental Health Coalition of Sierra Leone and the need to



have the Mental Health Policy and the Strategic Plan launched.

The launching of the above documents was warmly accepted by the First Lady to be done on the 10th

October (World Mental Health Day).

Sierra Leone launched its National Mental Health Policy and Strategic Plan at the commemoration of World Mental Health Day on 10 October 2012. The documents and the commemoration were launched by the First Lady of Sierra Leone, Mrs. Sia Nyama Koroma in a function attended by government functionaries and non-state actors including UN agencies and other development partners, mental health advocates, the civil society and the media.

Delivering the key note address, Mrs. Koroma stated that mental health is still largely a neglected problem with a high social and economic impact. She described the occasion as an opportunity to demonstrate support for people affected by mental health disorders. "We must commit ourselves to improve the lives of people impacted by mental disorders, and join the global fight for mental



ENABLING ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH IN SIERRA LEONE

The Enabling Access to Mental Health (EAMH-SL) project in Sierra Leone is a partnership between the City of Rest Rehabilitation Centre, Community Association of Psychosocial Services, and the University of Makeni. International partners are the Global Initiative in Psychiatry and CBM.

EAMH-SL is a European Commission-sponsored project, design to meet mental health needs in Sierra Leone. It is a five year project that began in April, 2011.

This newsletter serves to facilitate communication and information sharing among Coalition members; raise awareness on activities related to mental health in Sierra Leone; update and present progress on the National Mental Health program and on the Enabling Access to Mental Health Project; in addition to providing notification on upcoming events.





health”, she added.

The Deputy Minister of Health and Sanitation Mr. Tamba Borbor Sawyerr reiterated the need for a concerted effort to address the burden of mental health in the country. The WHO Representative, Dr Teniin Gakuruh who delivered the message on behalf of the WHO Regional Director for Africa on the occasion, called on Member States to increase support to mental health programmes by “allocating adequate human and financial resources for responding to depression”. The same was emphasized by Heather Weaver, the Project Coordinator of the Enabling Access to Mental Health in Sierra Leone in her statement.

In his capacity as Chairman of the Mental Health Coalition of Sierra Leone, (Walter Carew), he said that they are very much excited to join the world to commemorate October, 10th 2012 as World Mental Health day under the theme: “**Depression- A Global Crisis**”. He further reiterated that the coalition which came in existence a year ago through the effort of the Enabling Access to Mental Health Project in Sierra Leone, adapted this year to also serve as the stakeholder council of the Mental Health Leadership and advocacy Program (mhLAP) and is happy to join in the commemoration of World Mental Health Day this year for two main reasons:

Firstly, it gives the opportunity to show solidarity and support to the hundreds of millions of people worldwide who suffer mental disorders of various types.

Secondly, it is focused on the achievement of having two important documents (the Mental Health Policy and the Mental Health Strategic Plan) launched. These documents would serve as a guide in the building and running of a strong Mental Health delivery service in the country.

The ceremony was concluded with a press conference which was aimed at facilitating sensitization and awareness through the media. Seventeen local press men representing different press houses were in attendance. The panel which was chaired by Joshua A Duncan (the Coalition’s Coordinator and mhLAP country Facilitator), had Dr. Gladys Palmer (Vice Chair of the Coalition and Director of NUWACH Outpatient Services), Dr.

Andrew T Muana (Focal Point for Non- Communicable Diseases in the Ministry of Health and Sanitation-Sierra Leone and Superintendent of the Sierra Leone Psychiatric Hospital) and Mrs. Aminata Kobie (Mental Health Focal Person of the World Health Organization) in attendance.



The different types and stages of mental illness and their corresponding effects were fully discussed. Also the intervention of the Mental Health Coalition of Sierra Leone, the government of Sierra Leone and the World Mental Health Organization included major among other issues discussed.

Presented

Salifu Samura

Secretary Mental Health Coalition of Sierra Leone

THE SIERRA LEONE MENTAL HEALTH LEADERSHIP AND ADVOCACY PROGRAM STAKEHOLDERS COUNCIL LAUNCHED

Mental Health Leadership and Advocacy Program (mhLAP) is an Australian sponsored Aid Project designed to promote advocacy through the forming of a stakeholders’ council. It also encourages and facilitates leadership training as a means



of empowering interested persons in the field of mental health.

(Prof Gureje Making a presentation & Launching of the Stakeholders Council)

Through its recently conducted situational analysis, major challenges in the said field (mental health) are identified and converted to advocacy issues in a bid to bring about the much needed change in the country-especially in terms of policies,



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treatments and other such related facilities.

This project is not only implemented in Sierra Leone but in four other West African English Speaking Countries (Nigeria, Ghana Liberia and the Gambia)

The project is also designed to form a stakeholder's council through which effective advocacy work could be done. The council in order to avoid duplication and competition, the project decided to absorb the already existing council formed by the Enabling Access to Mental Health in Sierra Leone.

The Launching/adoption was formally done on Friday, 17th August, 2012 at the Christian Health Association of Sierra Leone (CHASL), 4b King Harman Road, Freetown, Sierra Leone.

The Launching hosted thirty-eight (38) Participants representing twenty-three (27) different organizations. Inclusive is the Parliamentary oversight Committee on Health, Ministry Of Health and Sanitation (Government of Sierra Leone), The Human Right Commission of Sierra Leone, The College of Medicine and Allied Health Sciences (University of Sierra Leone), The World Health Organization, King Georges Old Peoples' Home, The Central Medical Stores of Sierra Leone, Service Users, Representatives of Government Hospitals in Sierra Leone, Enabling Access to Mental Health in Sierra Leone, Health for All Coalition, Other (Local and International) Non Governmental Organization such as Child Slavery, GOAL-SL, Christian Health Association of Sierra Leone, Traditional Healers, City of Rest and other Faith-Based institutions-to name but a few.

The Launching was preceded by a two day Stake Holders' Building which was held at the same venue for the Launching on the 15th and 16th August, 2012. Different topics treated by a carefully chosen team of facilitators formed the main content of the workshop.

Presentation of mhLAP in Sierra Leone:

After a well slide-screened presentation by Prof: Oye Gureje on reasons for the project and the need for Sierra Leone to be a beneficiary, the mhLAP project and Stake Holders' Council was launched. It was indeed a very relieving moment for those present as this was indeed a fulfilled desire by most mental health stakeholders as well as the EAMH-SL who was a major body that believes in the power of such a council.

The program also had the attention of the national radio and television as organized interview sessions with the International Project Coordinators (EAMH-SL and

mhLAP) and Chairman of the Stakeholders Council-Sierra Leone were done.

Presented by
Joshua A. Duncan

A TRUE LIFE STORY

It was a big step for me to approach NUWACH for counselling. I've never received counselling before but I recognised that I needed help to deal with some personal issues - help that I didn't feel comfortable approaching friends or family for.

From our first session, Gladys proved very professional and supportive. She guided me throughout my time with her, giving me the awareness and tools I needed to think differently and more positively about myself and others.

I would thoroughly recommend NUWACH to anyone in need of confidential advice and professional support. I particularly liked their holistic approach of coupling counselling with reflexology to treat body and mind.
From an Anonymous Service User
Via NUWACH Outpatient Services

Our quarterly newsletter offers you the opportunity of making contributions to its periodic bulletin. You can send in identified challenges that need to be reviewed or changed, available opportunities that could be seized, and information for dissemination. You can take advantage of this opportunity by sending your contributions to the contact information below:

**City of Rest Rehabilitation Centre, 34 Fort Street, Freetown, Phone: +232 (0) 78 982 554, Email:
info@enablingaccessstomentalhealthsl.com**

**Please enter comments, views, observations, and input at:
http://enablingaccessstomentalhealthsl.com/**



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