

NARRATIVE REPORT TEMPLATE AND GUIDANCE FOR THE AWARD RECIPIENT

Recipient name: MindFreedom Ghana

Country: Ghana

Title of Project: “*Provision of Covid-19 Information and Services for Persons with Mental Health Conditions and Caregivers*”

Effective dates of Project: March 1, 2022 to April 6, 2023

Total FAA amount: \$60,000

Narrative Report for Milestone 5

Dates covered: from February 20, 2023 to April 4, 2023

**Note: A narrative report should cover all activities for a single milestone.*

I. Context

There were no political, social, security and/or other developments that in any way impacted during the period under review and for the total duration of the execution of the yearlong project.

II. PROJECT OBJECTIVE(S)

State the project objective(s) from the award:

To initiate advocacy activities aimed at raising awareness on the plight of persons with psychosocial disabilities and their caregivers as well as persons who have recovered from COVID-19 and to advocate social inclusion strategies to improve their quality of mental well-being during this pandemic.

III. PROJECT ACTIVITIES

A. Disbursement Of Funds to the Community Support Networks & Their Activities

Following the successful inauguration of the Community Support Networks (CSNs) in six (6) regions (viz. Ashanti, Greater-Accra, Northern, Upper-East, Eastern, Ahafo Regions) of the country between November and December 2022, they drew up a schedule of activities which were implemented during the period under review. This was after our organization had disbursed various sums of monies totalling \$1,619 to five (5) of the groups on February 20, 2023 to implement the activities in their various communities. It must however be mentioned that some of them had had initial meetings prior to the receipt of the funds.

The activities were centred mainly around the following:

- Media engagements
- Life skills training
- Health walks to sensitize community members
- Health screening of members and sections of the community
- Engagements with social welfare staff to access government Disability Common Fund and other social interventions

That of the Northern Region Network did not receive any of the monies. The reason was that their Coordinator had indicated to us just at the beginning of the year that they were still mobilizing to get many more of persons with mental disabilities and their caregivers to join the group. However as at the end of the period, not much progress had been made in this regard.

Please find below the links to the news publications on the disbursements we made to the Networks and the activities some of them implemented:

- <https://gna.org.gh/2023/02/mindfreedom-ghana-finances-community-support-networks-in-six-regions/>
- <https://www.gbcghanaonline.com/news/health/mind-freedom-ghana-funds-six-community-support-networks/2023/>
- <https://www.graphic.com.gh/news/general-news/mindfreedom-ghana-supports-mental-health-education.html>

There was also a radio news broadcast on the disbursements, a clip of which has been attached to this report.

B. Activities of the Community Support Networks

I. Amanfrom Community Support Network – Greater-Accra Region:

1. The group on March 16 featured in a health talk at *HY TV*, on schizophrenia awareness and stigma in mental health. Two mental health nurses viz. Beatrice Danso and Mumuni Alimatu and two clients viz. Jemima Awuku and Silifat Alao participated. The talk show lasted for about 35 minutes
2. On March 17, the group organized life skills training on ice cream and liquid soap making. Venue was Amanfrom Polyclinic and the facilitators were mental health nurses. There were fourteen (14) clients and five (5) caregivers as well as some staff at the facility who benefited from the training
3. The group on March 24 organized a health walk on mental health awareness at Amanfrom and its adjoining communities. Almost all members of the group including some staff from the facility, MindFreedom Ghana staff, the media and Police personnel participated in the event which lasted for over one (1) hour amidst slight rains on the way. It must be mentioned that the group had ‘T’ shirts printed with inscriptions on mental health on them which were distributed to members to wear for the walk. Flyers were also printed and distributed to members of the public during the walk.

Here is a link news publication on the walk:

<https://www.publicagendagh.com/amanfro-community-support-network-embarks-on-mental-health-sensitization-walk/>

II. Bechem Community Support Network – Ahafo Region:

1. On January 5, the group met for the first time and elected a five (5) member executive to steer its affairs. The group among discussions at the maiden meeting, drew up plans to engage the relevant government agency to enable them to access the 3% Common Fund for persons with disabilities
2. The group had on three (3) occasions organized media engagements at the local radio station in the community known as *Bechem FM*. Some members of the group who featured on the shows were personnel of Ghana Health Service, Dept. of Community

Development and Social Welfare, rep of a locally based NGO, persons with mental disabilities and caregivers, mental health staff. Some of the issues discussed included the need to come together as a network to fight for a common goal, the challenges of stigma and discrimination the persons with mental disabilities and their care givers are facing in the society

3. Health screening was organized on March 30 for members of the group at the health facility in the community. Some of the conditions screened were for mental health conditions, hypertension, diabetes, malarial and other infections.

III. Barikuma Community Support Network – Ashanti Region

1. The group, after the inauguration held its first meeting on December 4, 2022 where some members were appointed as executives. They outlined some issues such as stigma and discrimination as factors which impede persons with mental health conditions from seeking treatment and that these should take centre stage in the activities that would be implemented
2. On February 21, two caregivers were sponsored to undergo skills training in liquid soap making and beads weaving. Thereafter they were given the platform to impart the skills that they have learnt to the other group members
3. The group organized health talks at the community information centres (i.e. the community radio station) at three (3) communities viz. Barekuma, Anyinkroma and Maban

IV. Nsawam Community Support Network – Eastern Region:

1. The group had its maiden meeting on December 31, 2022 where executives were appointed and plans drawn up to implement in the ensuing year. In attendance were thirty-three (33) mental health staff, fifty-three (53) persons with mental disabilities and caregivers and staff of the Social Welfare Dept.
2. Activities implemented by the group led mostly by mental health staff were community durbars, health counselling and media engagements. The activities, which commenced on February 21 and ended on March 31 were carried out simultaneously in all the seven (7) sub-districts of the municipality viz. Nsawam, Djankrom, Adoagyiri, Pampanso, Darmang, Fotobi and Kwakyekrom. It must be mentioned that the total population in these areas are in excess of 150,000.

V. Zorko Kodorogo Community Support Network – Upper East Region:

1. From February 21, the group organized life skills training for the members in basket weaving. In all, a total of fifteen (15) of the members comprising persons with mental disabilities and caregivers received the training
2. On March 21, some members of the group comprising a woman with mental disability and two mental health workers featured on Bongo Community Radio (the only station in the community). Some of the issues they discussed were:
 - To make administration and treatment of mental health conditions easily accessible and affordable for persons with mental health conditions and caregivers
 - To minimize stigma by not keeping persons with mental conditions in the rooms without seeking treatment for them
 - Government inability to provide adequate mental health services and the need for these to be improved so that people will have access to the medications

- Negative effects of shackling and the psychological effects these eventually have on persons with mental disabilities aside the stigmatizing effects
- Low productivity due to non-treatment of mental health conditions to the detriment of the family, community, district, region and the country as a whole
 - Stigma impedes recovery of the patient as he or she will not forget of the situation, he or she was tagged to.
 - Violations of fundamental human rights which the Mental Health Act, 2012, Act 846 seeks to address must be taken seriously
 - A risk of attracting other physical illnesses looking at the nature of the squalid environment where some persons with mental health conditions live in
 - Immunization services offered by Expanded Programme on Immunization of the Ghana Health Service for Covid-19, guinea worm infections and other conditions must still consider persons with mental health conditions as a vulnerable group and given the necessary attention always

C. Media Engagements of MindFreedom Ghana:

Our organization had five (3) engagements on radio and two (2) on TV which details are as below:

- Dan Taylor was interviewed on Radio Ghana, the government owned radio station on March 9 on issues of psychotropic medications at the health facilities for use by persons with mental health conditions and the project as whole. Link to the publication on the interview is as below:
<https://www.gbcghanaonline.com/news/health/mindfreedom-ghana-urges-govt-to-make-available-psychotropic-medications/2023/>
The sound clip of the interview has been attached to this report
- March 16 saw Dan Taylor and Ms. Beatrice Danso, Head of Mental Health Unit, Amanfrom Polyclinic, Ga South feature on Flak TV, an online TV station. They spoke about issues of mental health in relation to the project and generally. The mediums of expression used for the show were English and Akan, one of the local languages. The recording has been put on YouTube and running actively with the link as follows:
<https://youtu.be/KH8v-illMUI>
- Obonu TV, which is government owned was the next TV station where the media engagement came off on March 17. Those who featured were Mr. Taylor, Mrs. Juliana Ikavi, a person with mental health condition and Dr. Yaw Amankwa Arthur, Deputy Director, Ghana Mental Health Authority. The topic was on the operations of the community support networks to which Juliana belongs to the Amanfro Community Support Network. Also discussed were issues of mental health and stigma. One of the local languages, Ga was the medium of expression. Clip of the show has been attached to this report
- Another of the radio station which is also government owned, namely Obonu FM was where on March 28, Mr. Taylor featured. Two other panelists scheduled to appear could not make it to the studio due to some last moment challenges that befell them. The issues, discussed in the local Ga language dwelt on our organization's capacity and ability to

implement the project and strides made thus far in the activities. Also, some issues of mental health came up for discussion. Photos and short video of the show have been attached

- Following the passage of the amendment of Section 57(2) of the Criminal Offenses Act, 1960 (Act 29) of Ghana, by Parliament on March 29, 2023 attempted suicide is no longer a crime. Mr. Taylor spoke to Radio Ghana on this issue in relation to mental health issues and lauded Parliament for amending this law which will go a long way to help people with suicidal ideations to seek help instead of killing themselves.

This is the link to the publication on the amendment:

<https://www.graphic.com.gh/news/general-news/ghana-decriminalizes-attempted-suicide.html>

Clip of the interview is also attached to this report

- On April 4, the last of the media engagements came off at Uniiq FM, a government owned radio station, where those who featured were Ms. Jemima Awuku-Buah, a person with a mental health condition, Beatrice Danso, Head of Mental Health Unit, Amanfrom Polyclinic and Dan Taylor. Topics discussed were on the activities of the community support networks, stigma, access to medications and their costs and mental healthcare. It should be significantly mentioned that Ms. Awuku-Buah, who is a school teacher previously, had the floor to share her experiences pertaining to her mental health condition and the way she has been treated thus far to live in her community. The recording clip to this engagement is attached to this report

Participant Feedback and Photos:

Include a list of quotes from participants and, if applicable, from trainers/experts for each activity. Also include appropriate pictures of project activities here, with a note with the name, location and date of the activity.

Quotes from some participants: -

1. *“I am not shy of my conditions anymore because the health walk has built my self-confidence and will not hide but speak out about my condition without feeling any stigma”Abena Jasmine, a person with mental health condition*
2. *“The community support network training on livelihood life skills in which I participated has taught me that despite my condition I can do something to enhance my life”Desmond, a person with mental health condition at Amanfrom*
3. *“I thank MindFreedom Ghana and National Democratic Institute of the United States and the nurses for bringing us together as network to learn, share information and ideas” ... Juliana Ikavi - person with mental health condition*
4. *“I am happy for the first time to speak on radio through MindFreedom support to share my mental health condition experiences and journey with the public. If not the support I had from the Amanfrom Community Support Network, I do not know how things will have turned out up to be” ... Jemima Awuku-Buah - person with mental health condition*

5. *“If not for the mental health walk and sensitization I’m witnessing today, I thought persons with mental illness are the madmen and women that those I see on the streets”Food vendor at Amanfrom*

6. *“I’m lost for words to describe how happy and satisfied I am to have had MindFreedom Ghana and NDI extend this hand of support to our patients and caregivers in Ga South through the Amanfrom Community Support Network’s activities. On behalf of my colleagues, we plead with them to continue for the next 1 year and even more”Ms. Beatrice Danso, Head of Mental Health Unit, Amanfrom Polyclinic*

7. *“My son’s mood and outlook have changed for the better from previous times since we joined this group from last December. He’s now very cheerful and takes his medications regularly, thanks to the support we’ve received from the nurses and MindFreedom”A caregiver*

IV. PROJECT CHALLENGES

State the challenges you faced during the implementation of the activities conducted during the reporting period. Describe how you mitigated or resolved these issues. Propose how you can mitigate these challenges in the future.

The Tamale Community Support Network inability to draw up any activity schedule to implement was the major issue we had to contend with.

We still engaged with the Coordinator from time to time but not much was achieved.

We intend in future to visit the group and link them to the network in Zorko Kodorogo in the Upper East Region, which very close to them, as best examples to emulate and be able to get something positive going even with the low numbers.

V. PROJECT RESULTS

State any results of the activities conducted during the reporting period. First and foremost, this is an evaluation of whether you believe the milestone was achieved satisfactorily, but it should also go further to explain any results that more broadly contribute to the project objectives.

- The community support networks have become formidable groups of persons with mental health conditions and their caregivers who now use these platforms to advocate for pragmatic reforms in their treatment regimen and further garner support from community leaders to address challenges they encounter in their communities and the facilities as well
- The skills training some members of the networks have had will make them economically viable to earn some money to take care of their needs such as catering for their households, medications etc.
- The health screening and counselling services have enabled the network members to be abreast with the state of their general health conditions and hence what they need to do to stay healthy always
- Through the media engagements, some persons with mental health conditions have come out openly and boldly to let the public know of their cases which will go a long way to minimize stigma and wrong perceptions in mental health generally

- The media engagements done especially in the communities, had enabled the residents therein to gain access and knowledge about mental health and human rights thereby enabling them to do what it takes whenever any cases of mental illness crop up and/or the signals begin to manifest

VI. SUMMARY OF ACHIEVEMENTS (FOR FINAL NARRATIVE REPORT ONLY)

Summarize the key achievements of the entire program. In particular, consider medium- and long-term outcomes that may not have been reported in previous narrative reports.

- The project has made the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) of the Ghana Health Service to turn its attention to persons with mental health conditions in the communities and have committed themselves to factor them into rolling out of the national immunization exercises as a vulnerable group
- The project has come out with an advocacy plan on mental health and human rights on Covid-19 and other infection cases that can be used by civil society organizations to the overall benefit of persons with mental health conditions and their caregivers in the communities
- The media engagements have highlighted issues of mental health on a wider spectrum and given great insights where the general populace is gradually coming to terms with issues of mental health conditions as well as the rights of persons with mental disabilities and what they must do when the need arises
- The new website developed and currently running has given a new face to our organization's current status where everyone can at all times have easy access to know more about us in terms of information, education, photos materials etc. It has further enabled MindFreedom Ghana have its own corporate identity now in place with the creation of staff emails etc.
- The new accounting software now in use has increased the efficiency of organization's financial record keeping and reporting. Furthermore, the new enhanced features added, have make it more efficient and effective to achieve optimum results in our financial transactions thus far
- With the 5-year Strategic Plan finalized and when implementation commences, this will enable our organization to be more proactive and lead to increased operational focus and efficiency in our organization's areas of work within the period it is intended to cover and even beyond
- With the community support networks recognized and operating in their communities, it has become easy for health workers, traditional rulers, opinion leaders and other entities to easily reach out to them at any point in time for any kind of support to be given to their members
- Many of the persons and organizations we have engaged and/or come across in the implementation of the project, have greatly lauded NDI for supporting such interventions in health and particularly in mental health for the first time in Ghana and hope that this will linger on for a much longer period

- The strategic planning retreat, the first of its kind our organization has organized, has gone a very long way to build the capacity of our Board and staff as well as improve the functions, visibility and mandate of MFGh

Conclusion:

The Board and staff of MFGh are gratified by the support NDI has given to our organization to implement this yearlong project which thus far has made great impact on issues of mental health and persons with mental disabilities.

The establishment of the community support networks in six (6) regions of the country has been phenomenal in that its purpose and functions as well as the composition of the group makes its ownership all encompassing. Having persons with mental disabilities and caregivers, mental health workers, social welfare staff, traditional and religious leaders, opinion leaders and Assembly Members constitute the group, makes it one that everyone will take interest in their activities and ensure that they continue to exist and work.

We therefore request NDI to extend its support to us once again to establish the Networks in the remaining ten (10) out of the sixteen (16) regions in Ghana. Furthermore this support will enable us to strengthen the activities of the six (6) already established.

With the 5-year Strategic Plan now developed, what lies ahead is to seek the requisite funding to enable our organization to implement the various activities outlined therein. It is on the basis of this that MFGh will want to use this medium to ask for the support of NDI to make this possible. Our expectation is that this request will be given a favourable response.

We wish to thank NDI for all the support!