

## **International Policy Brief**

Issue 3, March 2009

### **Coming to America . . .**

In this time of optimism surrounding the inauguration of President Obama, we are very pleased to announce that BasicNeeds is coming to America. Registration for BasicNeeds USA was approved this week by the IRS. Our most sincere thanks go to Richard and Charlotte Dougherty, who have been skillfully leading this initiative from Massachusetts. We are delighted to welcome them into the BasicNeeds family.

Simultaneously to our registration, BasicNeeds has been raising awareness of global mental health in North America by presenting at two large international conferences: the US Psychiatric and Mental Health Conference bringing together over 2,000 psychiatrists and mental health professionals, and the Canadian Conference on International Health, which showcased our Kenyan Programme Manager Joyce Kingori.

### **Historic Mental Health Act for Tanzania**

In November 2008, Tanzania passed a historic Mental Health Act through Parliament, which commits to “involving the community in monitoring and protecting the rights of persons with mental disorder.” To that end, it calls for the creation of three new national structures: The Mental Health Board; the Patient Welfare Board; and the National Council for Mental Health, all of them with user representation. We congratulate our colleagues in Tanzania, particularly our programme manager Malembo Makene and Chief Psychiatrist Dr. Joseph Mbatia, as well as Rachel Jenkins and the team at the WHO Collaborating Centre for Research and Training in Mental Health for their tireless efforts to push through this landmark piece of legislation.

### **Research Reports from the Field**

Research Officers from six of our field programmes have internally presented their findings on the practice of community mental health in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Ghana, Laos and Sri Lanka so as to improve the quality of service delivery. These findings are the result of our annual thematic research study, which in 2008 focused on assessing one module of the BasicNeeds’ Model for Mental Health and Development.

In an effort to externalise our growing knowledge, BasicNeeds has recently authored three articles for scientific publications. 1. Shoba Raja, our Director for Policy and Practice, contributed a best practices case study from Kerala India to the newly issued WHO report *Integrating Mental Health into Primary Care*. 2. In addition, Shoba, Chris and colleagues published an article in the *International Journal of Rehabilitation Research* on evaluating the success of mental health within community based rehabilitation projects. 3. Finally, an article by Shoba, David McDaid and Martin Knapp from the London School of Economics appeared in *World Psychiatry* making the economic case for mental health in low-income countries.

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For more information, or to remove yourself from this list, please contact Victoria de Menil

[victoria.demenil@basicneeds.org](mailto:victoria.demenil@basicneeds.org)

## **Experiences of Recovery**

Recovering from mental illness is the focus of our newly released 2008 annual review. In it are individual stories from each of our country programmes, including the experiences of Zulfawu a hair-dresser in Ghana, Jeremiah, a self-advocate in Kenya, Mariappa, a father and business-owner in Karnataka India and Bonavanh, a fruit vendor in Laos. For the full stories go to: [http://www.basicneeds.org/html/about\\_review.htm](http://www.basicneeds.org/html/about_review.htm)

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