Kenya Factsheet 2015

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The Situation in Kenya

Investment in Kenya focuses on communicable diseases especially HIV and malaria despite the impact of mental health on the population. Only a third of the 75 psychiatrists in the country for a population of 38 million work in the public sector, whilst the rest work only with private patients at a great expense. Kenya has around 500 psychiatric nurses of which only 250 work in mental health. This means that for each district there are only 1 or 2 psychiatric nurses. Therefore, integration of mental health into primary care is essential in Kenya.

Our Approach

BasicNeeds transforms lives in Kenya by working with nomadic communities, smallholder coffee farmers, and vulnerable children and young people in both rural and urban areas through our BasicNeeds Kenya programme. BasicNeeds is actively involved in developing mental health policy and legislation to influence the development of mental health services at the national level and draws on its young advocates and user groups to inform and guide this engagement with policy makers.

With the support of Grand Challenges Canada, BasicNeeds is also currently involved in mentoring Caritas Nyeri, a local NGO, to reach a further 2,000 people with mental illness or epilepsy in Central and Rift Valley regions of Kenya through a social franchise agreement.

BasicNeeds Kenya has also partnered with the South Sudan Psychosocial Support Programme (SSPP) to identify the most pressing needs amongst people with mental health problems in South Sudan and to develop strategies to address the considerable problems arising from the protracted conflict.

Country Details

Our work in Kenya began since: 2005

Project Locations: Nairobi; Central Province; Rift Valley Province; Eastern Province

Number of lives transformed: 78,207
(affected persons, carers and family members – Impact Overview June 2015)

Photos from the Field

Consultation meeting with Kenyan Nomads
Adiel Mutembei (life story)
Janesia Muhuri, participant, selling baby shoes that she knits
Current Projects

Reducing the poverty of Kenyan pastoralist nomads, stabilised from mental illness through sustainable livelihoods

This project aims to improve the lives of Kenyan pastoralist nomads (women, men and children) who have mental illness and epilepsy and their family members in Kajiado county. It achieves this through facilitating access to community mental health services, and create access to income generating activities such as poultry, dairy goat and rabbit farming, bead jewellery making and tie-dyeing shawls. These livelihood activities improve food security, nutritional status and overall household poverty as well as contributing to the de-stigmatisation of mental illness in the community.

Improving the income of people living below the poverty line in rural coffee farming communities in Eastern Kenya

The main beneficiaries of this project are small holder coffee farmers, women and youth living in poor coffee communities who are at risk of mental health issues. The project was set up to address well-being through family capacity building and women’s empowerment and farmers’ education. The project is successfully improving the social, economic, and health status of small holder coffee farmers and their families in poor rural communities in Meru County, Kenya.

Mental health work with young people in Kenya

The broad objective of BasicNeeds Kenya’s work with young people is to enable young people and children with mental illnesses or epilepsy to work, go to school, and live successfully in their communities. BasicNeeds Kenya’s youth work, started in 2010, aims to create opportunities for young people with or at increased risk of developing mental health disorders, to strengthen their social and emotional resilience as well as giving them skills to deal with their own problems and help others. Our youth network run vibrant social media and self-advocacy programmes.

Life Story

Twenty-nine year old Adiel Mutembei resides in the Meru South District region in Kenya and is currently recovering from schizophrenia. He was taken ill when he was in high school and the burden of care fell on his mother’s shoulders. He hardly slept and became very violent, breaking things and beating up people including his own parents. His mother had to give up her job in order to take care of him and was constantly worried about his safety.

Adiel’s case was well known in the village. When BasicNeeds began its programme in Meru, Adiel’s neighbours asked a community health volunteer to visit his home. With the help of his neighbours and family and the support of BasicNeeds, Adiel was taken to a nearby hospital where he was able to get treatment and attend the regular mental health clinics organised by BasicNeeds. He was one of the first participants to join the BasicNeeds Kenya Programme when it started in the Meru South District.

Once his condition was stabilised, Adiel was encouraged to take up a livelihood activity. He currently works as a mechanic and with his savings has bought a cow and a goat. He is very happy about how things have changed and is proud to be able to support his mother, and even his sister, who he now supports financially with University fees and living costs. Adiel’s mother is delighted with his recovery and has resumed her work, so she can earn some income again. Adiel also recently got married and has started a family of his own – an unthinkable dream before he got the help he so desperately needed.

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