

Speech: "There can be no health without mental health" : speech by Jemima Gordon-Duff

Deputy Minister, CEO MHA, Chief Director, Ambassador (s), all protocols observed – I'm delighted to be here today at the launch the WHO Quality Rights Initiative. The roll out of the Initiative represents a new era for Mental Health in Ghana and the UK is proud to be a sponsor and partner of putting quality of care and human rights at the heart of Ghana's approach to mental health.

I'd like to start by congratulating people with mental health conditions and their representative groups here today that have been leading this change for many years. People with mental health conditions must be at front and centre of planning services, holding decision-makers to account and challenging stigma and discrimination. The phrase that best encapsulates this is "nothing about, us without us".

The past year has been monumental for mental health globally – with the launch of new evidence in the Lancet Commission, and commitments from the UN Secretary General and business leaders at the World Economic Forum. The Global Ministerial Mental Health Summit hosted by the UK and attended by Ghana's Deputy Minister of Health, the Honourable Tina Mensah, challenged us to radically rethink mental health – to look after our mental health as we would our physical health.

The message was loud and clear. There can be no health without mental health. Mental health is a fundamental part of being human. Everyone will experience mental distress at some point in their life. Globally, mental health conditions are one of the leading causes of disability and ill health. Experiences of being separated from communities or hidden away, entrenched discrimination, negative attitudes and discrimination – in some cases being abused – remain all too common the world over.

For years, global mental health has remained in the shadows and is one of the most neglected issues of our time. But this is starting to change. And I am heartened to see so many champions in this room leading a wave of change here in Ghana.

DFID has been a proud supporter of mental health in Ghana for more than ten years. We have worked in partnership with the Mental Health Authority, Ghana Health Services, CHAG and Basic Needs – to date, investing £10 million of UK aid to support mental health services across Ghana. Over this time, we have seen considerable change.

- There is now nationwide coverage of Mental Health services. All districts in Ghana now provide mental health services through GHS or CHAG facilities compared to 32 districts just six years ago.

- We've seen a rapid increase in a dedicated, skilled workforce – more than 5,000 health workers have been trained including district physicians, medical assistants and community health service providers .
- And perhaps most importantly, we have supported community groups, leaders and traditional healers to turn the tide against discrimination of people with mental health conditions. This has included supporting 500 self-help groups, reaching an estimated 10,000 people, to increase their access to social support and livelihoods.

Ladies and Gentlemen.

The partnership between the UK and Ghana is strong, and now maturing to support Ghana move beyond aid. His Excellency the President's vision for a self-reliant Ghana is truly inspiring and is applauded by the UK and all development partners. But "Ghana Beyond Aid" must leave no one behind. It has to be about the poorest and most marginalized Ghanaians. And that means every Ghanaian affected by mental health condition. A country can only reach its full potential if all its citizens can.

So we call on the government to go further still to champion mental health. With the imminent launch of the Mental Health policy, now is the time for implementation. I want to highlight three priorities:

- First and foremost, securing sustainable funding for and addressing the shortages of psychotropic drugs.
- Secondly, scaling up quality mental health services at the community level, equitably across the country including in regions currently disserved.
- Thirdly, more needs to be done to overturn stigma and discrimination and support the full, active inclusion of people with mental health conditions.

If these three priorities are implemented together, with their focus on prevention and community care, it will ultimately save Ghana money and support its move beyond aid.

I'd like to end by congratulating WHO, Mental Health Authority and civil society partners here today on this important launch of Quality Rights. This will help Ghana to transform mental health, to promote care and support that is good quality, meets people's needs and respects their dignity and rights. I look forward to a continuing partnership.