

Pay more attention to mental health

[Editorial](#)

Monday, 12 May 2014 09:01

Written by Observer Media Ltd

Last Thursday, Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) personnel rounded up at least 38 mentally ill people from the streets and took them to Butabika national referral mental hospital for rehabilitation.

The city authority says it took this action upon the realization that the number of mentally-ill people on Kampala streets is growing, yet these people have no proper care and are generally neglected by the wider society.

Unlike many KCCA operations that are often characterized by violence, this one passed off relatively peacefully and the personnel tried to be as humane as possible while handling the affected people.

KCCA should be commended for this effort. More so, we need to take lessons from their action. There is no doubt that mental illness is one of the most neglected medical conditions in our society.

Many people believe that mentally-ill people are 'cursed' or 'bewitched.' That is why they abandon them, ignore them and leave them to waste away. Mental facilities in the country, aside from Butabika hospital, remain in a deplorable state.

A report released on April 30 and titled: **Mental health in post-conflict Northern Uganda in the context of modernization and traditional beliefs**, noted that the expenditure on mental health in Uganda is less than one per cent of the total health expenditure.

The report further notes that the biggest chunk of this little money (55 per cent) is allocated to Butabika hospital. This means that mental facilities in places such as northern Uganda, where the study was conducted and where cases of mental illness are on the rise as a result of the trauma experienced during the long war, are left with nothing.

Mental health clearly needs our attention. If the affected people are looked after well by society and their facilities adequately funded by the government, their lives can be turned around. Psychiatrists always remind us that all of us experience some form of mental instability in our lives. What differs is the degree of the instability.

Comments

#1 Bezalel Bizibu 2014-05-13 05:08

Mentally sick people surely need medical attention but even more important is the urgent need to regulate the rate of substance abuse by mostly the teenagers and the youth.

We in this fair country have allowed the unchecked production of waragi of all types conveniently packed in sachets for all and sundry to carry and consume freely anywhere, anytime.

Markets for 'enjaga' are bustling with activity in the centre of every major town including Kampala under the watch of the police and the general public.

The clowns passing for 'celebs', and commanding a sizeable following among the youth, smoke the substances in broad day light and no one raises a finger.

All these substances are conveniently sold in small quantities affordable to every Tom, Dick and Harry! No one seems to care. Given these scenarios, why won't the number of the mentally-ill escalate?

#2 kato 2014-05-14 22:33

Govt. Needs to invest in mental Health.

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