



Plot No.34, Mikocheni Industrial Area, Kinondoni

P.O.BOX 11014, Dar es Salaam

Email: info@sydf.or.tz

**PROJECT REPORT**



<b>PROJECT NAME</b>	MENTAL HEALTH IS JUST AS IMPORTANT AS PHYSICAL HEALTH
<b>START DATE</b>	07 <sup>th</sup> MARCH 2024
<b>COMPLETION DATE</b>	16 <sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2024
<b>LOCATION</b>	LIFE AND HOPE SOBER HOUSE - BAGAMOYO
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	DR. SARAH MATHEW

**PROJECT OVERVIEW**

SYDF is a youth-led non-governmental organisation bringing impact to youth’s lives aiming to improve their lives in social, political, and economic aspect. We operate focused on four pillars being Health, education & skills, culture, and governance as it is our belief that they play a crucial role in enabling a young individual to unleash their potentials.

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Health being one of our areas of expertise with its sub-divisions we ought to advocate for mental health as one of the critical aspects being left out in consideration of the well-being of a person, we believe that "mental health is just as important as physical health".

SYDF has targeted alcohol abusers and drug addicts considering their vulnerability to mental illness and their core predisposing factors which led to them adapting to high risky behaviours. In view that drug use and addiction can occur at any time in one's life, but a lot of studies indicate this kind of abuse is typically common during adolescence the same period where first signs of mental illness usually manifest. Everyone has a story to tell on the factors which led them to the use of the illicit drugs/alcohol use but in highlights the common reasons being low socioeconomic status, unemployment, debts, peer pressure, copying behaviour developed in response to day to stressful situations, relationship disputes, violence, exclusion, loneliness, the urge to fit/not fit in the community in accordance with the society's norms without leaving poor mental health.

According to WHO Mental health is a lot more than the absence of illness: it is an intrinsic part of our individual and collective health and well-being, one in eight people among 1,000 individuals have mental disorder globally making it approximately 970 million people, Temmingh HS et al in 2020 stated in Africa, the prevalence of substance use among patients with mental illness ranges from 21.3% to 69.2%. Tanzania's neuropsychiatric disorders are estimated to contribute to 5.3 per cent of the global burden of disease. Kilaye et al in 2023 conducted a study at Muhimbili national hospital and found out prevalence of substance use among patients with mental illness was 32.7%, 21.7% with alcohol, 19.8% tobacco and 12.7% cannabis. Mental health and substance abuse are coherent to each other as one of it may affect the other or they may conjointly occur.

### **Objectives of the activity**

- To Advocate on the relationship between mental health and body health.
- To Provide knowledge on how to face their triggers and reduce the rate of relapse.
- Advocate on the modality and importance of Lowering stigma rate among themselves and ways to combat it at the community level.
- Emphasizing on the significance of Boosting their confidence, increasing high levels of productivity, creativity, and building better social relationships

### **ACTIVITY HIGHLIGHTS**

#### **Methodology used.**

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Through a disclosure approach advocacy on mental health was initiated measuring the level of knowledge of the participants at this community, provide a deeper understanding of the mental health and the importance of always prioritizing it, getting to know what the triggers are, creating emotional awareness, how to manage well their emotions.

A word of introduction was given by their coordinator Hamza familiarizing us to them and giving them a highlight of the expected activity to be held, thereafter welcoming Yasintah who gave a brief description of what the organization is all about and initiated engagement on the advocacy of mental health.

Dr Sarah pointed out on the importance of fostering connectedness among themselves at the facility and even at the community level and boosting social relationships promoting positive healthy coping behaviours, gaining confidence to face their life challenges creating a good balance on how to handle whatever is thrown at them and their awaiting dreams thus preventing themselves from having a feeling of isolation.

Psychologist Jacob Kilimba gave an overview on the whole concept of mental health, what it is all comprised of what happens till a person is labelled as being mentally ill, the relationship between mental health and body health, things leading to being exposed to risky behaviours, how to control such situations, and vivid examples where shared in reference to life experiences.

Yasintah and Dr Sarah conducted an open discussion allowing few of the members to share their understanding pertaining mental health and experience in relation to what led them to substance abuse and alcohol abuse and questionnaires (quantitative mental health measurement tool) was shared. Several stories where shared one being.

"being raised to a family which is well off and parents holding professional titles has been stressful ever since I was a teenager as they believed for me to push myself harder aiming at being a successful lawyer as my father demanding myself to always being perfect at whatever I do regardless of my capabilities, with time I found myself pushed at a corner where things didn't go as intended and according to my families expectations thus decided to find an alternative to put myself at ease and that is where I began using heroin for years catastrophizing me being productive and useful at anything" ~ anonymous

"a drop out from one of the universities in Dar es salaam stated that prior to his alcohol addiction he experienced some emotional disturbances following for his inability to sustain friendship among his colleagues always prying to what others think of him, hearing voices telling him he is a failure, his family particularly his father not taking his situation as anticipated rather he thought he was being bewitched which led him taking his son to overstay to the witch doctor for almost



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3 months with no improvement, all his dreams of being a famous and good photographer just got shattered before reaching his final year at the university” ~ anonymous

Bagamoyo sober centre situated at makarani street, dunda is one among the top centres in Tanzania known to promote public health by providing harm reduction services, counselling, substance abuse recovery programs and economic empowerment to people who inject drugs and alcohol abusers. It contains approximately 30 male members at different age group, education level, socioeconomic status, culture, and ethnicity background. Their recruitment process is based on the willingness of the victim and the respective care givers/family members/good Samaritans, once an admission is made sobriety process begins right away by keeping the victim for 72 hours giving them medications to alleviate the withdrawal symptoms (detoxification commonly done to heroin users) 14 days later they are allowed to engage in feeling sessions, 2 months focusing on mental health sessions and the remaining 3 months building their spiritual being, it takes almost 6 months for one to be evaluated and ruled out fit for discharge. Counselling sessions are usually offered at least twice weekly. A fixed timetable is set for everyone to follow to keep them occupied and have things scheduled for them to perform keeping them in track like running their usual errands at the community.

Recovery is all about changes and responsibilities ~ Hamza.



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## Major accomplishments

1. Ability to create positive attitude towards mental health and avoidance of substance abuse.
2. Established a helpline for them to get help once they are back to their communities.
3. Boosted confidence by creating a harmonized environment which led them to open-up freely with no resilience during Group therapy.
4. Individual therapy was offered.

## CHALLENGES/LESSON LEARNT/OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT:

1. Lack of knowledge to what constitutes mental health and the why they should prioritize it.
2. Lack of awareness towards factors contributing to the addiction and ways to face their challenges/exploring their hobbies.
3. Lack of personal commitment and discipline leading to relapse
4. Lack of infrastructure to accommodate them according to their age groups/gender.

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5. Lack of Sustainability plan after treatment equipping them with skills to support themselves and rebuild their lives.

**ACTION POINT/WAY FORWARD/RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. Capacitate them with skills based on what they are passionate about, through creating a safe environment like a vocational skills station where they will be able to learn, acquire and put into practice.
2. Support from the government/donors reaching out to youth's who are incapable of enrolling themselves to the sober centres due to poverty. (financial accessibility of mental health care)
3. Community based mental health services such as development of community mental health service centres and self-help groups.

**CONCLUSION:**

Youths being the sole future of the nation's development at all levels, there is still a need for adding more effort at making sure their well-being especially mentally is well protected and prevention of all predisposing factors should begin since childhood re-shaping them to becoming their best selves. We have a lot of sobriety centres being formed but most of them aren't well developed to accommodate different age groups separately as this is crucial at intervention, addressing the stressors appropriately and make the services more youth friendly. Accessibility and affordability of mental health services still remains our greatest challenge especially to developing countries like Tanzania, a innovation call must be made for a cheaper and easily accessible option of delivering such services from the grassroot level at the same time changing our ways of thinking aiming at diminishing stigma and discrimination in the end eliminating people who shy away from seeking services. So too is integrating mental and physical health care, which improves accessibility, reduces fragmentation and duplication of resources, and better meets people's health needs.



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