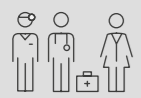




BY THE NUMBERS



5
Psychiatric nurses trained
as coaches



297
Psychiatric nurses trained
and supervised by coaches



156,711
patients with mental illness
supported

IMPROVING MENTAL HEALTH CARE IN THE GREAT LAKES REGION

Lack of infrastructure, shortage of qualified mental health providers, and stigma affects mental health care in the Great Lakes Region of Africa.

To improve care and treatment, our partner Fracarita Belgium has created a regional network involving hospitals from Rwanda, Burundi, RDC and Tanzania focused on improving the quality of mental health care by enriching the competencies of psychiatric nurses.

Carefully selected nurses from each hospital or centre are trained as coaches at the Caraes Neuropsychiatric Hospital in Ndera by Rwandan and national and international mental health experts. Acting as full-time coaches, they also provide on-the-job training to other nurses.

The coaching system enhances nursing knowledge, skills and attitudes, while supervision and intervision on-the-job (peer-supervision) ensures quality of care among staff. These actions ultimately aim to improve the quality of life of people living with a mental health condition by offering the best possible mental health care.

SPOTLIGHT

Coaching: a vital tool for improving care

According to a recent study by the American Journal of Public Health, up to 1.8 million Congolese women have been raped at least once in their lifetime.

The psychological and physical consequences can have long-term effects. Women who have been raped may present themselves in very distressed and confused conditions and are more likely to suffer from depression and post-traumatic stress, excessive alcohol consumption, and behavioural problems such as self-harm and other aggressive behaviour, as well as suicide.

A raped woman is often rejected in her local community and risks living on the margins of society because of shame, dishonour, guilt and social pressure. Mothers who live with the constant memory of the assault struggle to establish a stable relationship with the child born from rape and it is difficult for these children, often called "children of the snake," to find belonging in their community.

To provide psychological assistance to women who have been abused, a 24/7 Psychiatric Emergency unit has been set up in SOSAME Psychiatric center in Bukavu.

Francisco Habamungu, a psychiatric nurse and coach trained through the project, runs a global therapeutic framework for SOSAME's multidisciplinary team. He conducts intervision and supervision, which he learned during his training with Fracarita Belgium. He also organizes debriefing and self-care sessions for staff with a psychologist so they can share their feelings, emotions and challenges.

Francisco trains his colleagues on how to properly welcome women and their families in crisis to the emergency room; checks that guidelines are developed and available to the entire emergency team; and ensures that confidentiality is maintained. In collaboration with his colleagues, he is creating a protocol for the provision of ongoing quality care and psychoeducation for victims of rape and their family members.

