

MANI is a registered non-profit organisation focused on breaking the silence and alleviating suffering for Nigerians, young and old, living with mental illness. In the nearly two years of our existence we have come up with data that debunks myths on the Nigerian and indeed African immunity to mental illnesses like depression, bi-polar disorder, etc.

There is a thriving misconception that Nigerians do not suffer mental illness but I know personally what it's like to suffer from a mental illness.

For the past 4 years, I have been coping with depression, but I was lucky enough to have support and be able to seek help early. Though it continues to be a challenge, I'm doing much better. **Sadly, almost 40 million Nigerians don't have access to such a support system.** Even more alarming, is that many have no idea they even have a mental illness and those who do are often subjected to stigma and severe mistreatment; much of which stem from cultural misconceptions and spiritualization of an illness that's as real as malaria and cancer. We exist to change this, and so much more.

WHAT WE DO

- Challenge the taboo, stigma and misconceptions about mental health among the general population in Nigeria
- Making sure the majority of the Nigerian population (urban, rural, youth, elder, adults) have a fair understanding about mental health and mental health issues
- Work to Improve legislation, policies and allocation of budget to mental health in Nigeria
- Build awareness of decision makers to improve the mental health system and the legislation related to Mental health issues
- Provoke an innovative disruption of the offer of Mental Health services in Nigeria
- Facilitate the early intervention and treatment of those at risk
- Improve the human resources capacity of identifying and treating Mental Health and Psychosocial conditions in Nigeria.
- Provide Mental health first aid and suicide intervention services

IMPACT, PARTNERSHIPS AND AWARDS

In less than two years of existence, we have been able to:

1. We've provided group support for over 5000 people living/coping with a mental illness, including but not limited to de-escalation of distressing situations, suicide intervention with the aid of our talk lines with adequate and appropriate referral to mental health professionals.
2. We were selected as one of the 100 sparks of hope across the world by THE ELDERS (an organisation of past world leaders founded on Nelson Mandela's Legacy).
3. We most recently won the Best Civil Society Organisation Category of the 2017 Nelson Mandela-Graca Machel award for innovation.
4. Establish 4 state chapters across Nigeria and working to establish more. These chapters are made up of more than 500 young people who are part of a safe community that allows people to share their struggles without fear of stigma or discrimination and also with a better chance of getting appropriate help. Within these numbers we have a lot of mental health champions who are brave enough to share their struggles with others. Each chapter has a peer to peer model called the buddy group, which connects these individuals to themselves in such a way that one

never really feels alone. They also conduct monthly physical activities for advocacy in their various states.

5. We partnered with GlaxoSmithKline pharmaceuticals (GSK) to build a mobile app that will aim to promote better mental health and better access to mental health professionals.
6. Grow our following on social media from zero to more than 20,000, with impressions from our posts of more than twelve million.
7. Educate thousands of Nigerians on the reality of mental illnesses as well as the basics of most of the common ones seen in our environment, both online (using targeted social media campaigns) and offline (using various psycho-education programs organized across more than 10 states in Nigeria).
8. We became the first International Associate of Mental Health America (one of the largest mental health organisations in the world), with access to their screening programs and other resources of value and established partnerships with other international organisations like Mental Health Innovation Network, CIVICUS, Movement for Global Mental Health, Hack Mental Health, and National partnerships with Joy Inc., SheWritesWoman, and SERAPH foundation).
9. Were involved in the production of a short film to raise awareness about mental health, illnesses and forms of therapy in conjunction with NiyiAkinmolayan.com and the cast & crew of Room315.
10. We also partnered with Grand Scope concepts to produce 3 short films based on male child sexual abuse, depression and domestic violence of the male folk which would be airing soon.
11. Conducted hospital outreaches to The National Hospital, Psychiatric Ward, Abuja and The MOB Ward, Federal Neuropsychiatric Hospital and Military Hospital, Yaba, Lagos.
12. Conducted outreaches at the Abuja, Ondo and Ebonyi Youth Corps Orientation camps where talks were given and awareness exercises carried out.
13. Offered suicide response training to the Lagos State Emergency Response Unit (LASEMA) as well as a training on Workplace Depression to the staff of the Nigerian Stock Exchange.
14. Partnered with Facebook, SociallyAfrica and ProjectGetNaked to hold WhatsApp conferences on WhatsApp discussing various issues as regards mental illness. We had 10 groups of more than 50 persons (a total of 500) in each all involved in active learning session and with well-trained facilitators. This ended with a Facebook live chat highlighting the experiences in the groups as well as speaking more on the issue.
15. We also presented a talk on Mental Health Awareness, Depression and Good Mental Hygiene to ambassadors at the Empowering African Leaders Initiative (EALA) where we were also presented an award for Excellence and also got inducted into the forum.
16. Partnered with CognoAid to provide easier access to telemedical alternatives for psychotherapy and consultations.
17. Putting together the first Anthology of Mental illness, a compilation of short stories that shines light on the perception of mental illness in Nigeria which will be released before August, 2018.
18. Partnered with quick medical consults in their worm free zone event to reach out to children and their parents using arts and easy to understand resources to inform them about mental illnesses and teach them mental hygiene.

NEEDS

Despite these recorded successes, the organization still has a long way to go in actualizing its vision of developing and supporting advocacy for mental health, as well as, improving on access to mental health services across every Nigerian community.

We have below, some facilitations, that will aid and expand on the above visions:

1. We hope to setup a toll-free crisis hotline for suicide and mental health distress calls, as well as train and provide for counselors that will be on ground 24 hours and 7 days of the week.
2. In the next 3 years, we hope to have trained at least 10,000 student trainers in mental health first aid and advocacy who will be equipped to train 10 people per year each as trainers, with an expected number of student mental health first aid trainers of more than One million in 2021. The first set of student trainers trained, would be equipped to set up student advocacy networks across tertiary and secondary institutions, and conduct monthly campaigns.
3. We intend to host an annual summit and one which we want to make the largest gathering of people with mental health and mental health related interests in Africa (from scientists to traditionalists to religious heads; everyone would be given a chance to present solutions).
4. We hope to set up well-structured support groups for people coping with mental illnesses as well as for their family members.
5. Intensify advocacy efforts (through the use of ads on social media, radio and TV programs, etc.)
6. Set up walk in centers across various points in every Nigerian city and community and employ trained counselors to provide free counseling services and refer appropriately, all for free.
7. Build rehabilitation centers for drug abuse and addiction as well as for other common mental health conditions and employ specialists to consult in them.
8. Set up a fund to assist in the welfare of mental health service users that are unable to afford health services, as well as, getting those in much more deteriorated conditions off the streets and into the rehabilitation homes as above.
9. Set up a research grant program to facilitate mental health research in Nigeria.
10. Set up our offices across various cities in Nigeria, equipped with a dedicated staff to take our work, vision and campaigns to the next level.
11. Facilitate a stakeholder coalition to push mental health policies and put pressure on the government to effect already existing mental health policies to full effect.

I would be delighted to speak further with you in the coming weeks to find out more of how you can help our work in Nigeria.

I hope that you can support our fundraise for the first part of our Anthology.

Sincerely,

Dr Victor Ugo