

HEALTH Countries marked World Mental Health Day on Thursday to raise awareness of mental health issues around the world

Difficulties facing those healing from mental illness

Experts say mental health patients who are discharged from facilities need support when they leave hospital-and, being involved in activities or occupation is therapeutic for them.

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Dar es Salaam. As countries marked World Mental Health Day on Thursday, Mr Khamis Juma, who has been battling a mental health disorder, had a story to tell about his life as he looks forward to joining his community after spending months in a mental health facility.

"I used to trade in crops in Mwanza before I became sick. When I finally get out of this facility, I plan to open up a retail kiosk to do business just as I used to. But I am not sure of getting capital," says Mr Juma.

"I don't want to stay idle when I get back home. Experts are telling us here that idleness is not good for us mental health patients," he says.

Juma spoke to *The Citizen* on Thursday when the Tap Elderly Women's Wisdom for Youth (TEWWY) visited mental health patients in Temeke District as part

of the activities for World Mental Health Day. The TEWWY executive director, Rustica Tembele, says the organization is working on helping mental health patients speak up about their challenges.

"For us, mental health is everything, if you don't have it, you can't survive. Our intention is to make every Tanzanian speak about mental health," she says.

World Mental Health Day is observed on October 10 every year to raise awareness of mental health issues around the world and mobilize efforts in supporting mental health patients. Juma, alongside other patients, has spent months



Tap Elderly Women's Wisdom for Youth (TEWWY) staff clean the environment at the Mental Health Rehabilitation Village, Temeke District in Dar es Salaam to commemorate World Mental Health Day on October 10.

PHOTO | ELIAS MSUYA

in a special rehabilitation village in Vikuruti ward, Temeke District. The village is under the Muhimbili National Hospital (MNH)'s mental health department and has 11 patients.

Before being diagnosed with a mental illness, he was trading in crops in Mwanza, a job he believed would enable him to make ends meet.

"Some years back I came to Dar es Salaam from Mwanza to do business but I became sick and found myself unconscious. I was told by my brothers that I was taken by police to the Muhimbili hospital where I was put on treatment," he recalls his ordeal.

"After improving, I was advised to join this village for rehabilitation

early this year. We have been learning on how to practise farming and keeping livestock. We have gardens in which we grow vegetables. Also, we keep poultry and cows," he says.

When Juma thinks of his future, what boggles his mind is whether he would be able to revive his business. Experts say mental health patients who are discharged from facilities need support when they leave the hospital-and, being involved in activities or occupation is therapeutic for them. Alice Mussa started getting sick seven years ago when she completed her advanced level studies at a government secondary school in Dar es Salaam. She also explains how idleness is unhealthy.

"Some of us have gone to school so we can be employed. We should be helped get job after being discharged so that we should not stay idle. Idleness is very dangerous for mentally ill persons," she insists.

"When you are employed, you feels valued because you will be contributing to your family and society at large," she says.

"After being discharged I would

like to continue with studies and complete my first degree and also a Master's degree. I would like to be an advocate for mentally ill patients," she tells *The Citizen*.

"I wish to raise awareness to the public about mental health."

A nurse at the rehabilitation village, Mwangi Esae, says the mentally ill patients are not restricted from leaving the facility as long as they have improved and can live healthy lives thereafter. "The minimum time of staying here is three to nine months, but we don't limit them. If the patient leaves without permission, we report to the police and inform the family," she says. A medical health doctor, Dawson Muntara, says the patients can cope with life after leaving the mental health facility if they have activities to do in order make them independent.

"We teach them self-management, such like washing themselves, brushing teeth and washing their clothes, in economic activities such like farming and livestock activities; and lastly engaging them in entertainment," he says.

Patients can cope with life after leaving mental hospitals if they do things to make them independent.

MUNTARA | DOCTOR

Magufuli blocks Tanapa's plan to kill hippos

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Dar es Salaam. President John Magufuli yesterday blocked a plan by the Tanzania National Parks Authority (Tanapa) to kill over 50 hippos who have invaded human settlements in parts of Katavi Region.

The President has instead directed the wildlife agency to look for alternatives in conserving the animals, whose population has tremendously increased in recent years.

He gave the directive in Katavi Region as part of his tour of the Southern Highland regions where he inaugurated new roads and other major projects.

President Magufuli has learnt that Tanapa was planning to kill the hippos who had migrated in human settlements in search of water. However, the authorities told the President that the animals were attacking villagers.

The Head of State issued the



remarks during a ceremony of which he laid the foundation stone for a power project to connect Katavi Region into the national power grid.

The President is in his tour of the Southern Highland regions.

On Thursday, the President also instructed Tanapa to ensure the hip-

pos were supplied with water. He has learnt that a channel that supplied water to the animals was diverted by the villagers for irrigation purposes.

Residents of Serengeti District in Mara Region admiring hippos during a domestic tourism trip at the Serengeti National Park in October 2017.

PHOTOS | FILE

"I am glad that Tanapa has started implementing my directive to supply the animals with water. I also urge the management to construct dams to conserve the animals because they are potential for tourism," said the Head of State in a televised speech.

Referring to the proposed power project, the President expressed optimism that the project would boost economic activities in the region upon its completion.

The project, which entails construction of 132 Kilovolt from Tabora to Mpanda (about 138 kilometres of electricity transmission line), will cost Sh137 billion.

More than 191 villages will affordable power charges when the project is complete in May, next year, said the Energy minister, Dr Medard Kalemani.

Katavi has for decades been using fuel generated electricity, which is too expensive. The government pays about Sh6.8 billion annually to purchase fuel for operating power generators in Katavi Region.