

## Research on mental health and disability in Ghana

### About this summary

This summary is for organisations who wish to apply for funding for research on topics relating to people with disabilities, including people with mental health disabilities. It gives an overview of research gaps and needs in Ghana.

This summary is based on a report which can be read by contacting Ghana Somubi Dwumadie (Ghana Participation Programme), who wrote the report.

Ghana Somubi Dwumadie can provide funding for initiatives employing a well-designed research study with a clearly defined research question and defined protocol for data collection, analysis and dissemination. Organisations are encouraged to read this summary alongside the Call for Proposals before submitting a grant application, as not every research priority will be funded through grants.

Ghana Somubi Dwumadie is a four-year disability programme with a specific focus on mental health. This programme is funded with UK Aid from the UK government and run by an Options' led consortium, which also consists of BasicNeeds-Ghana, King's College London, Sightsavers International and Tropical Health. It focuses on:

- Promoting stronger policies and systems that respect the rights of people with disabilities, including people with mental health disabilities
- Scaling up high quality and accessible mental health services
- Reducing stigma and discrimination against people with disabilities, including mental health disabilities
- Generating evidence to inform policy and practice on the effectiveness of disability and mental health programmes and interventions

### Background

To identify the research priorities for mental health and disability in Ghana, Ghana Somubi Dwumadie conducted an online survey of clinicians, researchers and academics, policy makers, funders, multilateral organisations, and non-governmental organisations and civil society organisations in mental health and disability.

The survey asked practitioners to identify their top three research priorities in mental health and disability in the immediate and short-term (within the next five years) and long term (more than five years).

Ghana Somubi Dwumadie also reviewed the existing published research available during the last 10 years (2010-2020). The search for existing research was done by searching databases using a range of defined search terms and analysing the year of research, type of research, research and cross-cutting themes, research design, study population, study setting, research location, funding source and those conducting the research.

## Research priorities for mental health in Ghana

From the survey responses, there is no major difference in the short-term and long-term research priorities, for disability and mental health practitioners in Ghana. The nine main areas where stakeholders wanted more research are:

Epidemiology of mental health and disability including inadequate or lack of mental health data in Ghana, and epidemiological data on burden, prevalence and incidence to inform priorities.
Evaluation research to assess the impact of interventions designed to address mental health and disability (including economic outcomes)
<p>Research to strengthen mental health policy legislation and its implementation including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Human-rights based approaches to mental health and disability</li> <li>• Ensuring the protection of rights of people with disabilities including people with mental health disabilities</li> <li>• Implementing mental health policies and legislation effectively</li> </ul>
<p>Mental health services research including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding of mental health services (private vs. public)</li> <li>• Human resources, including staffing, remuneration and motivation, training and developing skills, and ensuring adequate resources for staff</li> <li>• Unequal geographical distribution of mental health services</li> <li>• Improving access to quality, affordable mental health services, including the supply of adequate psychotropic medicine</li> <li>• Integration of mental health services in primary healthcare</li> <li>• Community-based mental health care &amp; rehabilitation.</li> </ul>
Research on interventions to improve mental health education / advocacy, including the promotion of mental health literacy and the prevention of mental illness
Intervention research programmes to de-stigmatise disability and mental health conditions
Research on social interventions, protection and community support programmes, including livelihood support programmes, social inclusion and community rehabilitation facilities.
Culture, mental health and disability, including the role of faith-based organisations and traditional healers
Public health emergencies and mental health, including COVID-19 and continuity of care for persons with disabilities, including persons with mental health conditions

## Research in Ghana

### What exists:

The review of existing research covering mental health and disability in Ghana included all studies found through this search conducted on mental health and/or disability in Ghana over the past ten years. This meant that a lot of research was reviewed, but that some specific topics may not have been included. For example, if research covered a very specific condition such as schizophrenia, this may not have come up in the search.

Most of the research identified was about mental health (62%) rather than disability (38%).

Most of the research was informed by observational quantitative or qualitative studies, with very few intervention studies.

Most of the studies were conducted in the south of Ghana.

### Significant research gaps:

There is a clear need to evaluate the impact of community-based rehabilitation (CBR) initiatives in Ghana. In addition, research is needed to understand what support these organisations would need to rigorously evaluate the impact of their work.

There are key gaps in data on the burden of disability, mental health conditions, and the needs of people living with mental and physical disabilities in Ghana.

A well-designed epidemiological study is recommended to provide this essential data for planning intervention programmes.

Future research should consider scientifically rigorous evaluations of interventions and longitudinal studies, not just cross-sectional observational studies. Examples include conducting pragmatic trials and cohort studies, which could establish causal relationships and intervention effects on mental health and/or disability outcomes.

There is also a need for more intervention studies to evaluate what mental health and/or disability interventions work, for whom, and under what circumstances. These should include economic evaluations of cost, benefits, effectiveness and the acceptability of certain interventions for policy and planning.

There is a need for more studies across all of Ghana, as well as studies aimed at determining the burden<sup>1</sup>, distribution and connections between mental health and/or disability among certain population groups. Specific studies should be done looking at mental health in adolescents, children and men, as little research has been done for these groups.

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<sup>1</sup> The 'burden' terminology in this context is used to assess the relative importance of mental health and disability conditions compared to other health conditions, and whereby the disease burden is the impact of a condition as measured by financial cost, mortality, morbidity, or other indicators using standardised measurement approaches.

## What Ghana Somubi Dwumadie will fund

The research reviews and survey have informed the priorities that Ghana Somubi Dwumadie will fund. These are detailed in the calls for proposals covering four thematic areas:

1. Epidemiological studies
2. Intervention studies
3. Health systems, policy, legislation studies
4. Public health emergencies and mental health studies
5. Cross-cutting themes

You can find out more about these themes in the Ghana Somubi Dwumadie call for proposals which is open from 18<sup>th</sup> December 2020 to 18<sup>th</sup> January 2021.



**For the full report including sources of further information please contact:**

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**For further information, visit our website:**

<https://options.co.uk/work/ghana-participation-programme>

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