



FRIENDS of YouBelong

NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 1, MARCH 2018

2017 was just the start for us: 2018 will see major results in Uganda.



Sending off the YouBelong team after receiving their family member back home.



YouBelong social worker talks to primary carer of family member soon to be returned home.

My dear Friends,

In 2017, YouBelong made a commitment. It promised to use its international experience in mental health reform, its knowledge of a wide range of health systems, and its local knowledge to confront a humanitarian tragedy. It promised to come to the aid of those all but forgotten people with severe mental illness in Africa who have little hope of a life with dignity. Our work begins in Uganda!

With your encouragement and financial support we established offices near the Uganda national mental hospital, employed and trained social workers, nurses, and an occupational therapist. And in the last six months of 2017 we worked with over 50 hospital patients and families as we developed our new model of community mental health care.

In December we received the great news that this success was to be recognised and rewarded through a prestigious research grant from a joint fund comprising the Medical Research Council UK, Wellcome, the NHS, the National Institute for Health Research, and UKAid. This was a huge honour for such a young charity and made us fully aware of the value and potential of our work.

Together with Swansea University, Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine and Makerere University in Kampala, YouBelong will now begin testing the effectiveness of its initiatives in preventing hospital re-admissions for people with severe mental illness in East Africa.

And we are delighted that as 2018 begun, we have secured the services of Mr Oliver Hylton as head of development and fundraising to highlight the importance of sustainable financials for the organisation and its ground-breaking work.

Our Friends are our partners in this great enterprise for Africa.

With gratitude,

David Cappel AO
Co-Founder and Chief Executive

There are extremely few programmes in Uganda for people with severe mental illness while they live with their families. The mental health system remains locked in a mental hospital/institution/asylum model. After discharge from hospital, relapse and readmission back to institutional care is running at well over 50%.

How will YouBelong know that it is succeeding?

We are very clear about our targets:

50% reduction in readmissions
to hospital care in 2 years - 2018-2019

70% reduction in readmissions
to hospital care in 5 years - 2018-2022



YouBelong worker (in blue top) supporting and reassuring two daughters as their mother returns home from mental hospital care.

YOUBELONG CASE STUDY

Children of parents with severe mental illness experience stigma and discrimination

"Kessy" who was diagnosed with Bipolar Affective Disorder had been in the mental hospital in Kampala for three months together with her three month old child, who was later taken to a foster home to be cared for. Her other three children ages 6, 8, and 10, were in the care of her cousin, together with other children in an extended family. During an assessment meeting with the YouBelong team, "Kessy", mentioned with a sense of despair, "I do not like watching my children being mistreated, yet I cannot defend them". As we worked with "Kessy" and her family during the pre and post hospital discharge visits, the YouBelong team was astonished at the behavior we observed after spending some time with cousin's family over a number of visits. Kessy's children were always seated on the floor while other children were seated on chairs. Kessy's children were regularly beaten and blamed for every wrong doing, even when caused by the other children in the home. We also learned that they do not go to school with the other children in the family.

We have noticed that in some families, children are victims of stigma and discrimination due to their parents' severe mental illness. Serious consequences include constant feelings of shame and embarrassment, isolating themselves from other children, and assuming inappropriate levels of responsibility to take care of themselves. It affects their way of living, lowers their self-esteem, and breeds self-stigma.



You Belong staff facilitating a discussion with 'Kessy's' family. From the left; are her three children (seated on the floor), while the other children in the extended family, the main carer and her child, and You Belong staff, are all seated.

In light of this, we work with families to diminish stigma and empower them to support children of parents with mental illness. These children have attachment issues and need to experience belonging in and to their family. Their physical, psychological and emotional growth and development is crucial to their mental wellbeing and must be addressed. This is a big part of the YouBelong role.

2018 IS A MAJOR IMPACT YEAR for YouBelong

Here are some of our key strategies and costs for the year. We will:

- Further develop our specially designed pre and post discharge assessment and intervention tools, to assist in reducing readmission to institutional care. \$60,000 per year
- Increase our staff to 6 social workers, 4 nurses, 2 occupational therapists and 2 team leaders. \$150,000 per year
- Train key public health personnel and village level health teams in mental health, linking discharged patients in the community to them. \$13,800 per year
- Prepare and initiate COMBAT STIGMA sessions with local village communities. \$9,400 per year
- Establish a telephone support system for families caring for a member discharged from the mental hospital. \$3,600 per year
- Ensure an uninterrupted supply of essential mental health medications and press government to streamline the medication supply system. \$9,000 per year
- Use micro grants (for seed, textiles, chickens, goats, pigs) to kick start income generation for families and the person discharged from the mental hospital. \$9,200 per year

YOUBELONG CASE STUDY

Culture and severe mental illness in Uganda



You Belong staff (seated on a mat) having a discussion with the pastor at the church. On the table is a bottle of holy oil the pastor uses to chase away demons

While conducting a post hospital discharge visit, the You Belong team learnt that 'Natalie', who was diagnosed with chronic psychosis, had stopped taking her medication, believing that Jesus had healed her. She told us a lot about her belief in her pastor who prayed for her

To our surprise, we also learned that the Pastor was the person who told her to go to Butabika mental hospital when she was 'prayed for in vain' following a relapse and the return of her symptoms of talking to herself, irritability, violence and destroying property. We identified this religious leader as a key person in positively influencing the health-seeking behavior of his followers. We decided to pay him a visit.

"When a demon attacks an individual, she is brought for prayers, I pray for her and the demon is chased away but it leaves a wound, I refer them to Butabika hospital for the wound to be treated since it cannot be healed without medication. Sometimes even the brain tilts itself in the process and then they talk too much, I refer them to Butabika hospital for the brain to be put in the right position so that they can stop talking too much" he explained

Culture plays a dominant role in the local understanding of the causes and treatments of severe mental illness. Most people are taken to traditional healers or faith healers at first. It is rare to find a faith healer or traditional healer who also refers people to what is seen as 'western' medical care. This was a great opportunity for You Belong and we were quick to establish a connection with this pastor, and hopefully, a cooperative relationship for the future.

YouBelong opposes the human degradation caused by total institutions/asylums, and has developed its own unique pre-and-post discharge care packages, to get people back to their families and communities and to keep them there.

We want to develop the YouBelong innovative 'care in the community' model, so that it is well evaluated, highly credible, and sustainable, and can be applied in other countries in Africa.

ETHICS and TRANSPARENCY.

The YouBelong internal culture is one of commitment to high ethical standards for its Board and all staff. Ethics training is mandatory for all staff. As well, financial accountability and transparency is built into the operations of YouBelong

Can you help us?

JOIN THE FRIENDS OF YouBelong in our mission in Uganda

YouBelong is a registered charity in the UK
(registration no. 1169229)
Gift Aid registered in the UK
and is a registered NGO in Uganda
(registration no. 12212).

Email info@youbelongcommunity.org
to receive our quarterly newsletter.

Please view our website at

YouBelongCommunity.org

to access the DONATE button

if you wish to join us as a FRIEND OF
YouBelong, in our work.

Or you may wish to send a cheque made payable to YouBelong
and post it to either:

YouBelong

C/- GPO Box 1963
Adelaide, South Australia 5001
Australia

YouBelong

The Coach House
Greys Green Business Centre
Henley-on-Thames



Kenneth (Team Leader) 'A big reason why I enjoy my work, is that YouBelong is serious about making big changes in mental health services in Uganda'

