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Community Driven Mental Health Program Implementation in Low-Resource Settings



Introduction: Conflict has severely impacted access to healthcare, community well-being, and the local tourism industry in Jos, Nigeria. The primary objective of this project was to examine these effects and identify community-led strategies to build resilience and enhance well-being in conflict-affected areas such as Jos. This project also aimed to develop a practical toolkit for implementing community-driven mental health interventions tailored to low-resource settings.

Methods: This project utilized a mixed-methods approach, incorporated in-person interviews, observations, secondary data analysis, and literature reviews. Data was collected to gain a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced and the resources available. In person qualitative interviews were conducted with 4 community leaders, and 3 staff of the Plateau State Ministry of Tourism. A women's fellowship group was observed during a discussion about family/community resilience and wellness building. The development of the toolkit was informed by these insights, alongside a review of existing literature on community-based mental health interventions in similar contexts.

Results: The results of this project highlighted the significant barriers to access healthcare in conflict zones, including the disruption of services. A low number of trained mental health practitioners, stigma associated with mental health, and the economic impact of the conflict on families and communities were also noted. Despite these challenges, the research identified several community-led strategies that have been effective in promoting resilience and well-being including integration of cultural and religious practices into mental health care and the use of local resources for sustainable interventions. The toolkit developed as part of this project includes sections on these strategies, offering a structured approach for communities to implement mental health programs that are both culturally sensitive and sustainable.

Conclusions: The findings of this project underscore the urgent need for context-specific mental health interventions in conflict-affected regions. The toolkit provides a valuable resource for communities to take ownership of their mental health needs and build resilience in the face of ongoing conflict. Future work should focus on the dissemination and adaptation of this toolkit to other conflict-affected areas.