

DIAKONIA INTERDENOMINATIONAL SERVICES FOR COUNSELLING EVANGELISM AND TEACHING (DISCET)

22 Wellington Street, Freetown, Sierra Leone

PROGRESS REPORT ON PTSD WORKSHOP

The PTSD/ Well Being Session for Counsellors and would be Counsellors was organised by DISCET in collaboration with Mental Health Coalition, Sierra Leone with funding from SAVE USA.

The workshop started from Wednesday 5th and ended on Friday 7th June, 2019 at the Council of Churches, Sierra Leone (CCSL) conference Hall in Brookfields, Freetown. The workshop was a pilot case tailored to host one hundred people but due to the need and the relevance of the counselling in Sierra Leone, we ended up having one hundred and thirty-five participants in attendance for the three days from all walks of life, Christian denominations and religions.

DISCET was able to get this turnout because of the many talk shows that were done on both the radio and television stations across Freetown. These talk shows created awareness in the public to the point we were overwhelmed by people who wants to attend the workshop. We had to stop people from registering because the number catered for have far been overrun. This indicates the urgency of the need for counselling in the nation.

The workshop started with an opening session where many stakeholders in the counselling field from both the private and public sector were asked to deliver a five minutes statement on the urgency and relevance of counselling in the country. Amongst those invited were; Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs, the Director of Guidance and counselling at the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education, the Ministry of



Mr. Ransford Wright, CEO BBN Counselling Centre and Rev. Can. Dr. J.E.M. Taylor-Pearce, Director Emeritus, DISCET.

health and Sanitation, BBN Counselling, the Sierra Leone Police and the Founder and Director Emeritus of DISCET. Some of the above mentioned organisations delivered statements on the relevance and urgency of counselling in our nation, Sierra Leone given the trend of adversities that have taken place in the last twenty years history of our nation.

The training session of the workshop was attended by one hundred and thirty-five participants comprising of 80% professionally trained counsellors and 20% would be counsellors (*those who have the desire to be trained as counsellors in the near future*).



Different lecturers delivery their presentations

The workshop addressed seven critical and important issues that may affect the effective functioning of the Counsellor if not checked in time. These issues starts from fatigue and burnt-out due to excessive and prolonged stress, trauma due to disasters and disorders from different common individual issues like anxiety, anger, low self esteem and depression. All of the above can deteriorate a counsellor into a disorder. The subjects mentioned below were taught by highly qualified lecturers from different disciplines; *“Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and Resilience Building Skills, Responding to Post Traumatic Events (Social factor versus Emotional factor), Stress Management (Causes, effect and mitigation), Basic Mental and Psychosocial Conditions, Steps in Evidence Based Counselling and Psychosocial Response to Fatigue and Burnt-out.*

Participants of the workshop find the teachings to be very helpful and an eye opener to many. They confessed how the training will help them as counsellors as they go out there to help people make life changing decisions for themselves. Here are what some people testify:

Read what Mrs. Elizabeth Kamara has to say: "I thank God for this workshop. It has opened my eyes as a counsellor to be much more effective than before because these subjects have helped me to know the reason different people behave differently in our counselling rooms. Through this workshop, i was able to distinguish between emotional issues and mental issues".

Mr. Matthew Hanciles wrote, "this workshop has made me to know the reason for underperformance in jobs of many people in our country. When the employee is burnt-out due to prolonged stress, it leads to underperformance. I thank God for the organisations of this workshop. I want to suggest to them that this workshop should not only stop within the confines of your counselling rooms but rather, every government department must have a counsellor. If this happens, our country will change.

Mrs. Aminata Seppeh wrote; "I thank God for this workshop. As a Counsellor, I have been empowered and equipped for effective service".

Ms. Abigail Ajax wrote; "I thank God for this workshop. I have been informed about several things I never heard any knowledge about. This workshop has motivated me to go for counselling training. I know after my training, I will able to help as many people as I can".

Several testimonies of the workshop are in our archives but we can only write few for lack of enough space. The evaluation report shows 65% of the participants at the workshop requested this workshop to be held three times every year throughout Sierra Leone, whilst 30% said they will it to twice every year. The remaining 5% said once every year.

During the workshop, plenary sessions were held, the ideas that stood out clearly were:

DISCET is to set up a network of Counsellors across the country starting with the Western Area that will be charged with the responsibility of co-ordinating activities of counsellors in their communities and later report to DISCET.

DISCET must organise a monthly or bimonthly meeting of the leaders of these networks for further information on counselling in the country.

Counselling was identified to be one major tool that can be utilised for the development of Sierra Leone. They pointed out that, through the teachings, many underperformance in public offices is as a result of stress.

I want to thank God for the opportunity He gave us to serve his people through this workshop.

Faithfully compiled by:
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