

An update from...

Sharing Stories

Developing understanding,
knowledge and ability
through sharing experiences
about mental health

November 2015



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Who are we?

Sharing Stories is a collaborative venture between the Lancaster University clinical psychology training community and people, services and communities in Uganda. Although our work is diverse, our shared values are enshrined in the aims of the group and are embedded in everything we do.

We recognise the value in lived experience and the power of sharing with others. We aim to harness the benefits of sharing stories about mental health to improve knowledge and understanding in both Uganda and the UK.

We believe that the benefits of sharing stories can have a positive impact for people who access services, their families, friends, their wider communities and the professionals and services who support them.



Want to find out more?

Check out our website: www.sharingstoriesventure.com or find us on
Twitter @sharingventure



Sharing Stories Venture Wins Award

Sharing Stories are commended for celebrating learning together and creating a shared culture

The Sharing Stores Venture were delighted to learn we were to receive an award from Health Education North West. As part of the Adult Learners' Week Awards in Health and Social Care 2015, we received an award for 'Learning Together in a Health and Social Care Project – Developing a Shared Culture'. The ethos

of this award fits closely with the values which underpin our collaboration between Lancaster University clinical psychology training community in the UK and people who access and work in mental health services in Uganda.

Jen Davies, Eddie Nkurunungi and Rosco

Kasujja shared some reflections on what winning the award meant to them. You can watch the video at our website:, www.sharingstoriesventure.com

Special thanks to Mike Ilamyo for helping with the filming in Uganda!

Beyond the Therapy Room conference

On 12th June, the Sharing Stories Venture hosted a stall at the 'Beyond the Therapy Room' conference in London. The conference was aimed at exploring the impact that Clinical Psychology can have beyond individual therapeutic work. Many

speakers looked towards community engagement, listening to everyone who wants to have a voice, being proactive, and speaking out as a profession as ways to help support a psychologically caring society. These ideas fit well with the Sharing Stories



ethos of engaging with all voices within a community and listening to each other as a way of improving emotional wellbeing across the board.

Sharing Stories of Recovery in Uganda

We were honoured to undertake a series of listening events in Uganda during February 2015 to explore the understanding of recovery in a Ugandan context. In this issue, members of the team discuss their reflections on being involved with the project



Dr. Rosco Kasujja, lecturer and clinical psychologist at Makerere University

Well, having a chance to finally meet most of the sharing stories team members for the first time in Uganda was awesome. Of course a lot of work had to be done in a short time. I was more than humbled by the way the team gelled in a short time. The level of commitment meant that we achieved more than what we had set out. I also learnt that together each one achieves more! I now feel like I've got a very big family that can get anything done in a very short time. How lovely is that? Go Sharing Stories!!!

Keith Holt, member of Lancaster University Public Involvement Network (LUPIN)

How brilliant, a chance to visit Uganda with a great team of exceptional people, that is an understatement. As a member of LUPIN I had met visitors from Uganda at Lancaster, so it was nice to be with Jo Atukunda and his family in Kampala at

Heartsounds, they made us so welcome. Smiler, Nyeko Jipaul (J.J. Paul) a wise man from Gulu and Sam a really nice guy from Makerere University. Meeting and making new friends through Sharing Stories, what a privilege to hear individuals from around Uganda and our visit to Jinja. I will never forget the kindness and warmth of spirit that the members of the community centre in Jinja showed us, I would like to think that one day I may return soon to visit again.

Helen Walls, trainee clinical psychologist at Lancaster University, UK

Visiting Uganda in February earlier this year gave me valuable experiences both professionally and personally. I was excited by the work we were involved in, and inspired by the people we were lucky enough to work with. I could write lots about my reflections on the process, but one of the most striking things I personally experienced was the cultural differences between Uganda and the UK in regards to interpersonal

relations.

Almost everyone I met, including service users, service providers, clinical staff, students, and members of the general public seemed to have an air of being available, present, and attentive. In Uganda, the social exchange somehow felt more important than it does in the UK; "Hi, how are



I feel the UK could really learn something from Ugandan culture - Helen

you?" was a genuine question.

I feel that in the UK, we rush around, both in and out of work, often following the 'social rules' of etiquette, but perhaps lacking some of this genuinity that

Continued

seemed so apparent in the Ugandan culture. As a society, I feel the UK could really learn something from Ugandan culture in regards to social interaction; taking the time to genuinely give fellow human beings our attention is really important.

Over time, I felt that the social approach that Ugandan people so effortlessly adopt began to filter into our Sharing Stories group of shared culture. During the project, when times were pressured, I witnessed members of the group (both UK and Ugandan) giving time to one another and to service users, often over and above other tasks. I acknowledged this prompted a shift for me personally, as previously I might have prioritised logistics and practicalities over the inter-relational aspects of group working in order to get the job done. However, I can see that these are clearly so important for an effective team to thrive and

perhaps are the foundation for a group to be truly effective.

Will Curvis, trainee clinical psychologist at Lancaster University, UK

After so much planning and fundraising, boarding the plane to Uganda was quite a surreal experience. It was fantastic to finally meet our friends and colleagues from Uganda in person. Being part of the workshops was such a valuable experience for me both personally and professionally, particularly as I reach the end of my training and begin to think about life as a qualified clinical psychologist.

Two things stand out to me when I think back to our venture to Uganda. I was humbled by the way in which the people we met shared their stories with us. Their brave and honest accounts of some of the most difficult times in their lives – and the strength and resilience they showed in moving

forwards – will always remain with me. The collaborative discussions which identified things to help recovery taught me so much about the different things people find important. Some of the ideas discussed would have never occurred to me in a million years, which for me truly highlighted the value of hearing all voices when considering service development.

Secondly, I was struck by how many people who attended the workshops wanted to talk about things they could do as a community to help each other. Psychologists and psychiatrists often take an individualised approach to mental health, neglecting the contextual and social factors surrounding a person. This experience has taught me the value of working holistically and empowering families and communities with the skills and resources to work together to support each other to be happy and live well.

“My lesson from this is that you don’t have to think big to do big things” - Eddie

Eddie Nkurunungi, Peer Support Worker & Project Finance Officer - Brain Gain II Project, Uganda

Not long ago, I got the opportunity to meet up with the amazing Jenny Davies, a Lancastrian woman with moving passion for the country Uganda and its’ people. The first time we met, was at Entebbe Airport in January 2013, when Jenny had travelled from Manchester aboard KLM Airlines, but on arrival, she was

missing her luggage. Her destination was Heartsounds Uganda in Kampala, then flying onto Gulu. Her mission was to forge links with services in Uganda, particularly Mental Health Service User groups and Psychologists in the country. She wanted to explore areas around what contributes to mental wellbeing. Interviews with service users, myself included were recorded and footage stored. This was the Uganda Venture which

later came to be the Sharing Stories Collaboration between Heartsounds Uganda, Lancaster University Psychology department, Lancaster University Public involvement network (LUPIN) and Makerere University Psychology department.

On Jenny’s second visit, she came in with two of her trainees from Lancaster University namely Amy Singleton and Amy D’sa. Her mission this time was to hold



“Recovery is when
the water in my
heart stops boiling”

A group of six UK members (representing people who work in mental health services and people who access them) travelled to Uganda to facilitate the recovery listening events alongside their Ugandan colleagues.



Recovery is...
"soaring above the
problem like an
eagle"

Our key task was to listen to what people who used and worked in mental health services in Uganda thought about the following questions:

What helps recovery?

What helps achieve and maintain recovery?

What hinders recovery?

a series of workshops still on the Uganda Venture, including the first ever workshop between Heartsounds Uganda and Makerere University Psychology department to form a kind of collaboration for purposes of sharing knowledge and learning.

On her 3rd and most recent visit, the team had grown to six visitors from Lancaster namely; Jenny, Keith, Will, Helen, Rob and Bethan. This had become the Sharing Stories group that had been tasked to hold listening events in Kampala and Jinja that would help to inform future trainings at the Recovery College in the bigger Brain Gain programme at Butabika.

My lesson from this is you don't have to think big to do big things. Just think and share your ideas around. That way you think aloud and your thinking is echoed in many ways. The future is bright for Sharing Stories. Thank you Jenny for thinking aloud and inspiring the group along the way.

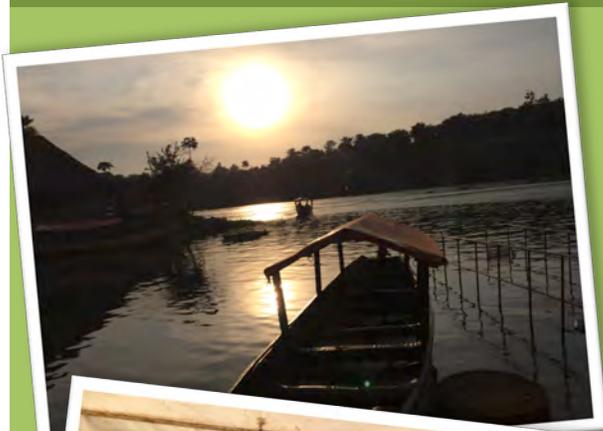
Jen Davies, clinical psychologist and clinical tutor at Lancaster University, UK.

When I first visited, and lived in, Uganda back in 1998 people told me I would carry the place in my heart forever. How right they were! When I then visited Uganda in 2013 people asked me when I'd be coming back. It took me a while to understand what was meant by this but eventually it sunk in. People were saying "Please don't come and look and then go and leave us with nothing. Please commit to do something long term. Please give as well as take."

I have been so pleased to see the Sharing Stories group grow with this ethos in mind. We have battled with internet connections during our regular meetings and we have worked hard to raise finances to fund our work. We have looked at each other with wonder and a lack of comprehension and we have had to find new languages to talk amongst ourselves and to communicate our work to others. But we have stayed true to our vision. We are about collaboration; we know that by hearing all voices (including those most often silenced) we will be able to forge a better future together.

We had the privilege of listening to people who access and work in services in Uganda. And people shared with great honesty and bravery and pain and beauty. And we listened. And, I hope, we understood. We shared this information with the people who asked us to gather it and now we are at the exciting point of considering...where next for Sharing Stories?

One of the most moving things for me personally was seeing people again that I'd got to know on my previous two visits. There are deep and meaningful relationships there. I want to see opportunity for more of these relationships to grow, with ongoing two-way exchange of visits and ideas. As we grow we move into a new phase of sharing out roles and responsibilities, and we can celebrate as our achievements in developing a shared culture are recognised.



Thank you!

The Sharing Stories Venture would not be possible without the support of everyone who has helped us with fundraising and raising awareness. Thank you to everyone who has helped us with our projects to date.

We hope you have enjoyed this newsletter. If you would like to know more about our work and upcoming projects, check out our website at www.sharingstoriesventure.com, find us on Facebook (Uganda Venture) or follow us on Twitter

The Sharing Stories Team