



Integration of mental health care in Burundi: framework for action and current situation



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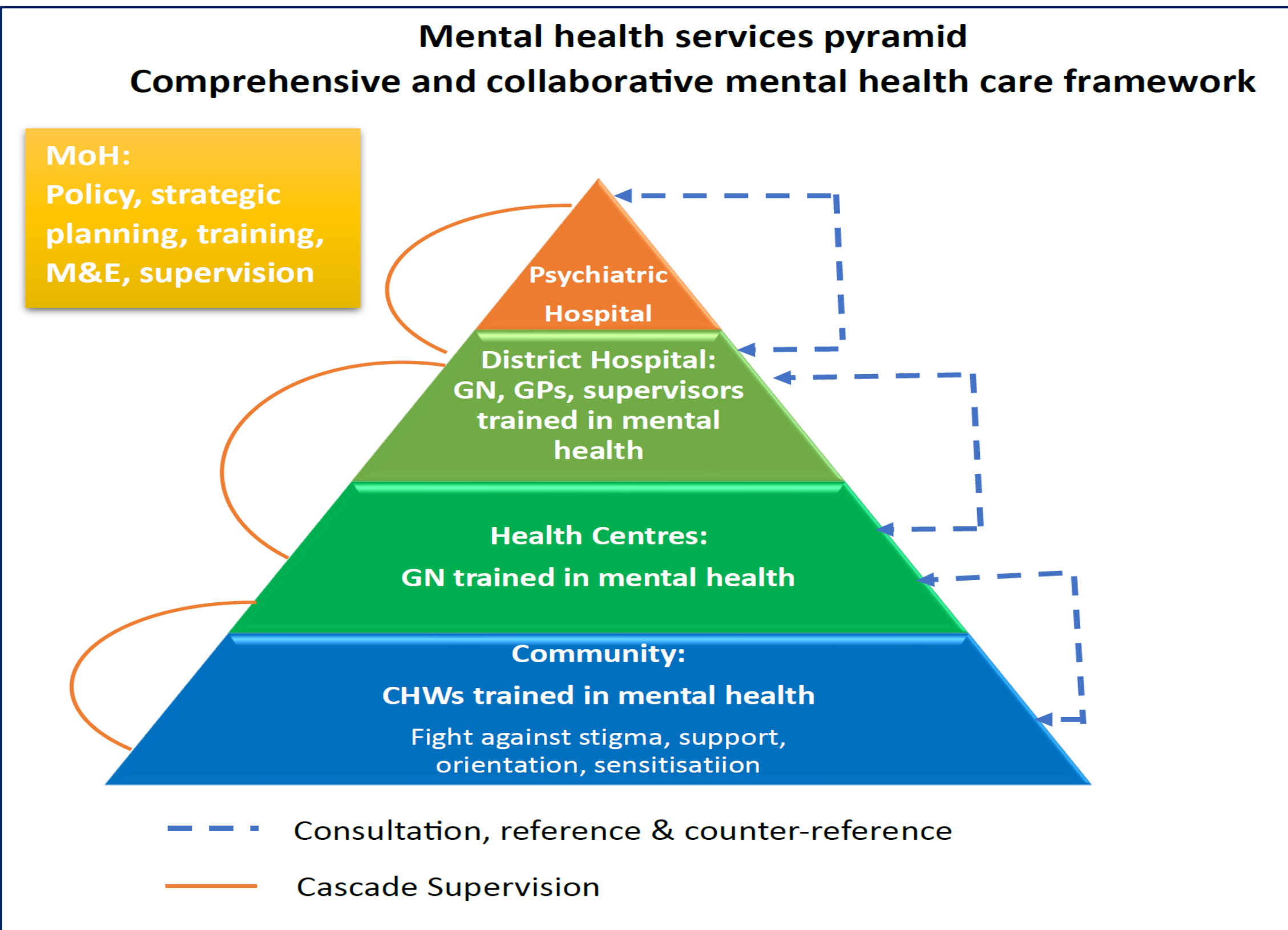
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Introduction

- In Burundi, mental health has long been neglected and treatment of mental disorders is a major challenge for the health care system.
- The aim is to present the framework for action, the progress made and main lessons learned in integrating mental health care into the health system.

Methods

- The framework for action used is based on task-shifting (task-sharing) of services to non-specialists, drawing on the World Health Organisation's Mental Health Gap Action Programme. It also includes setting up a reference and counter-reference system.
- Operational steps included
 - The development of national guidelines for the integration of mental health care into primary health care;
 - Improving coordination between mental health stakeholders in order to share information, experiences and strengthen the leadership of the Ministry of Health;
 - Training of general nurses and general practitioners working in district hospitals (DH) and health centres (HC), as well as CHWs, in the management of mental disorders and fighting stigma;
 - Supervision and patient referral system to improve quality of care;
 - Availability of psychotropic medicines;
 - Recruitment of mental health nurses in hospitals
 - Inclusion of mental health indicators in HMIS To obtain general information, disaggregated by age and gender, on the treatment and follow-up of mental disorders, and on the diagnoses made by teams working in the field.



Results

- The strategic document guiding the process of integrating mental health has been adopted and is in place and being used by all stakeholders
- Mental health is now part of the minimum healthcare package of HC and the healthcare package of DH. In addition, mental health care standards have been established and integrated into national health standards.
- Training of GPs and general nurses working in DH and HC has taken place in 14 of the country's 18 provinces;
- Community health workers have been trained to support patients and families and fight against stigma;
- The national essential medicines list has been revised to include psychotropic drugs. The supply chain for psychotropic medicines has improved;

Category	Number
National trainers in MH	25
CHWs	3767
GN of HC	1498
GN of DH	314
GPs of DH	234
Supervisors	122
Technicians in health promotion	262

Trained staff in mental health

- Mental health nurses have not yet been recruited.
- Challenges remain. These mainly include low funding, lack of qualified staff and cultural barriers.

Rconclusion

- The process of integration mental health care is still in progress. However opportunities exist as the mental health is identified as a priority area for intervention by the Ministry of Health in Burundi.