



Ramatou Irene Nombro

Bamako, Mali

Resident Psychiatric Doctor

Ramatou is a second-year resident at the Hospital of Mali and is majoring in psychiatry. She is one of only six psychiatrists in all of Bamako (Mali's capital city) and only one of 15 public psychiatrists in all of Mali. Her work is hectic, with patients coming from not just across Mali, but from neighbouring countries too.

Despite mental health being Ramatou's favourite part of the health sciences, she plans to leave psychiatry altogether to start working in public health and prevention. She said: "The working conditions in Mali are horrible. We work 8 hours each day and one on-call shift where we have to work 36 hours straight. There are not enough mental health doctors, nurses or even security guards."

Ramatou has suffered from burnout twice in her career. She took two months off sick and stayed at home alone all day, which made her feel even worse.

In addition to the long hours, Ramatou works for very little remuneration, earning between \$1-2 per day. Even once she becomes fully qualified, she can only expect to earn \$700 USD per month.

Within the hospital, there are few facilities. Patients often come to the hospital from the townships and stay there with their families. All of the patients stay in one room with no facilities for young children or babies, making it an incredibly difficult environment in which to work. Patients often come to the hospital with complex trauma, and many have come to the hospital after

spending time with a 'traditional healer' where they were chained up and beaten for months and sometimes even years on end.

The lack of medical staff, facilities and security can make it a dangerous place to work. Last year, Ramatou witnessed the killing of a three-year-old girl in the facility by another patient. She said: "I don't think anyone can ever forget seeing this... it will stay in my mind forever. I am not sure I will ever get over it..."

Ramatou cites climate change and conflict as the main contributing factors to hospitalisation. She said, "People do not have the land and, therefore, the resources they once had. This poverty creates mental health problems and contributes to increased domestic violence."

Ramatou would like to see better working conditions for health workers in Mali and for the mental health of the health workers to be prioritised. She would like them to receive better pay and work less hours. And for there to be a decentralised system where mental health is integrated into community health centres to take the pressure off the central facility in Bamako.

As for Ramatou's future, she is leaving psychiatry. She said, "If I stay in this profession, I know I will become a future patient."