



PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT FORUM 2017

Equity, Equality for all Girls, Boys and Youth

4 – 6 September, 2017

Arusha, Tanzania

Concept Note

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Background and Rationale

REPSSI and our partners host a biannual Psychosocial Support forum to promote awareness and understanding of the importance of psychosocial support (PSS) and to share knowledge on approaches to providing it. The last PSS Forum in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe was attended by 399 people (186 men and 213 women) from 28 countries. The forum considered issues and responses for children in infancy, childhood and adolescence, as well as for their primary or family caregivers, secondary caregivers or the social service workforce. It also looked at monitoring and evaluation and social enterprise for sustainability of responses. Presenters came from governments, nineteen academic institutions across the region, sharing their research results, as well as a wide range of civil society organizations from small CBOs to large international NGOs sharing their experience. Participants included government representatives from all SADC member states as well as the EAC and SADC secretariats.

The forum was co hosted by SADC, Sweden / NORAD, SDC, NFSD, Catholic Relief Services, 4Children, the Global Social Services Workforce Alliance, MIET Africa, RIATT ESA and UNICEF. It received extensive print, social, audio and visual media coverage in South Africa, Botswana, Angola, Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The theme of the fourth PSS forum, which will take place in Arusha, Tanzania from 4-6 September, 2017, is “Equity, Equality for all Girls, Boys and Youth”

Psychosocial support (PSS) is a catalyst for the realisation of equity and equality in the daily lives of girls, boys and youth as it helps them to develop resilience and thrive. Motivated communities and families play a central role in creating safe and nurturing environments in which girls, boys and youth have equal chances to fulfil their potential, and contribute to society, are valued for who they are, are treated with respect; and live without discrimination, violence or abuse thereby achieving psychosocial and mental wellbeing. Psychosocial and mental wellbeing enable children and youth to make decisions to protect themselves and those around them and be active members of their community.

Aim of the Forum:

The aim of this forum is to share knowledge and skills and to explore roles and strategic engagement (nationally, regionally and internationally) for PSS practitioners, to realise equity and equality of all girls, boys and youth. The forum will focus on four Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

- SDG 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
- SDG 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
- SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

- SDG 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

Objectives of the Forum:

The PSS forum is an established platform to share knowledge on research, practice and policy that impact on the provision of PSS to children and youth so that they realise their potential. The forum objectives include:

- To influence policy formulation and implementation in the work of social, health and education practitioners as they interact with girls, boys and youth.
- To share innovative trends in PSS practice and new research findings.
- To bring young people, practitioners, researchers, policy makers and international cooperating partners together to network, share promising practices, discuss challenges and develop new solutions.
- To share experiences in the application of equity and equality in PSS interventions targeted at girls, boys and youth
- To enhance PSS capacity and knowledge for practitioners who interact with girls, boys and youth

Equity, Equality for all girls, boys and youth

Article 2 of the UNCRC requires that the state shall ensure and respect the rights of all children without discrimination of any kind, and that the state shall take measures to ensure that the rights of every child are protected against discrimination (UNHCHR, 1990). Article 3 also states that "in all actions in regards to children...the best interests of the child will be the primary consideration" (UNHCHR, 1990) All actions, regardless of whether the action is public or private, must put the child's best interests first.

Equality entails that all girls, boys and youth are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by stereotypes and prejudices. Equality means that the rights, responsibilities and opportunities of girls, boys and youth will not depend on their gender, socio-economic status or any other classification or stratification. It also means that the provision of services to girls, boys and youth should therefore be according to their respective needs, rights, benefits, obligations and prevailing opportunities.

To complement equality, equity acknowledges the different needs of girls, boys and youth, and how they all require specific support to be able to reach a goal. Equity is treating everyone equally and fairly. To be fair is to make sure that opportunities are appropriate for, and relevant to, the unique needs and circumstances of girls, boys and youth. Equity

ensures that everyone has the right to access goods and services in ways that meet their needs. Gender sensitive provision of services is a principle of psychosocial programming.

To achieve sustainable development, the needs and rights of all girls, boys and youth must be fulfilled, especially those living in difficult situations, marginalized, vulnerable and discriminated against. Priority must be placed on ending any form of inequality by promoting equality and equity through the mainstreaming of psychosocial support into policies, services and programmes advancing the rights of all girls, boys and youth.

Programming that promotes equity and equality should ensure that girls, boys and youth exercise their social, economic, cultural, civil and political rights, which include the rights to education, health, child protection, social protection, inheritance and property. The social service workforce that supports girls, boys and youth, including community caregivers and teachers, can provide better quality services when they appreciate the value of equity and equality.

Policies and programmes should target improved access to quality education where both boys and girls start early childhood development very early and at least complete secondary education. Education should also be accessible to children with special needs. Children who remain and succeed in school are more likely to have better opportunities in life which will in turn empower them to provide better care and support to their own children¹

Universal access to quality comprehensive sexuality education for all young people, both in and out of school; as well as youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health information and services should be a priority. With access to adequate knowledge, as well as the skills to aid healthy decision-making and to build supportive relationships within the family and community, adolescents can derive the confidence and self-esteem to protect themselves and others from adverse sexual and reproductive health outcomes including HIV.

HIV and AIDS is the greatest immediate threat to survival and development of girls, boys and youth in the region. The HIV epidemic puts girls, boys and youth at risk physically, economically, socially and emotionally. Families often find themselves stigmatized or ostracised when a family member is diagnosed with HIV. Some children and youth in the region also miss out on basic education. The failure by girls, boys and youth to reach their full potential is detrimental to them, their families, the community and society in general.

Despite the presence of child protection interventions, violence against children still persists in the region and beyond. Children experience abuse, violence, exploitation and neglect.

¹ Walker, SP. ; Wachs, TD.; Grantham-McGregor, S. et al for the International Child Development Steering Group. 2011. Inequality in early childhood: risk and protective factors for early childhood development. Lancet, published online Sept 23. DOI:10.1016/S0140-6736(11)60555-2.

Tackling violence against children requires addressing both long-standing beliefs and practices and also requires understanding and responding to changes, such as the impact of HIV, economic shifts leading to urbanisation and the arrival of new communication technologies. Children can only be protected from abuse, violence, exploitation and neglect if basic needs are being met, such as food, education and health services. Children must be treated as equal citizens and human beings hence their voices should be at the centre of interventions.

Policy makers and programmers should promote an environment where all girls, boys and youth have opportunity to flourish and fulfil their potential; where their rights and dignity are valued; and where they can freely express themselves, free from discrimination and stigma, violence and abuse. Policy makers and programmers should understand how social capital is built on social relationships in the family, institutions, and communities (e.g., schools, clubs, and faith-based institutions) and among peers that positively influence the psychosocial and mental wellbeing of girls, boys and youth. Higher levels of social capital in families and communities may facilitate better development and health outcomes for girls, boys and youth.

The PSS Forum

The programme will have a rich array of different meetings and presentations: from the Children's Pre-forum; plenary sessions; abstract driven and non abstract driven breakaway sessions and panel discussions; skills building sessions and poster presentations. There will be opportunities for displays and a variety of meetings and discussions such as discussions between primary and secondary caregivers.

The Children's Pre-forum

The children's pre-forum will bring together children and youth from East and Southern Africa, to share knowledge, information, skills and experiences on issues which hinder or enhance their psychosocial and mental wellbeing. The children and youth will be selected from children's groups, Junior Parliaments, youth led organisations and young people leading change at community level. They will represent voices of children and youth from diverse races, religions, traditions, capabilities and geographic locations.

In preparation for the forum the children and youth will conduct activities in their countries that will enable them to document and collect voices of children and youth who will not be able to attend the forum.

During the children's pre-forum the boys, girls and youth will deliberate issues which hinder or enhance their psychosocial and mental wellbeing e.g. discrimination and stigma, violence

and abuse. Some of the young people will attend the main forum and present their deliberations. They will make presentations, facilitate skills building workshops and participate in the forum. After the conference they will give feedback to their constituents.

Forum documents

In the run up to the forum, the following documents will be shared with participants:

- Conference programme
- Forum abstracts
- The 2015 PSS forum report

The outcome documents will include:

- The Conference report
- Conference presentations and papers
- Photographs and video clips
- Internet blogs, tweets and updates
- Press releases

Forum participants

The PSS Forum adopts the approach of broad participation of partners in the region and internationally, representatives from the regional economic blocks, national governments, civil society, academia, international cooperating partners, community caregivers and Youths all sharing their scientific and practical experiences. It is anticipated that the Forum will host at least 400 participants.

Co-hosting

REPSSI has adopted a co-hosting approach in convening this PSS Forum. Co-hosting can be in the form of sponsoring special tracks, delegates and presenters, strategic and technical support and direct funding of conferencing expenses. Co-hosts will chair selected sessions, facilitate panel discussions, host thematic tracks and nominate key presenters.

Marketing, Communication and Branding

A joint marketing, communication and branding strategy will be agreed on among co-hosting partners. All forum communication will indicate that the event is jointly hosted while logos of all partners will appear on the forum communication, programme, promotional materials and forum report. REPSSI and the Co-hosting Partners will market the forum through their respective social networks, websites and strategic platforms.

Abstract Submission:

Abstracts will be submitted through an online system and a technical review panel, consisting of members from the partner organizations and other leading subject experts from the partners' networks, will be established to review all abstracts select those for presentation. Abstract submission will open on the 7th of November, 2016.

Registration:

Registration will be open from January 2, 2017. Registration covers the costs of participation in all sessions, teas and lunches. Early Bird registration is USD 230, Children and Youth is USD120; regular registration is USD250, Children and Youth USD 150. Late registration USD 300.

Key Dates:

KEY DATES	OPEN	CLOSE
Call for Abstract	January 16, 2017	March 5, 2017
Early Registration	January 16, 2017	March 30, 2017
Regular Registration	April 1, 2017	July 31 2017
Late Registration	August 1, 2017	September 4, 2017
Scholarship Application	March 1, 2017	May 26, 2017
Notice of Abstract Acceptance	May 1, 2017	
Announcement of Scholarship Recipient	June 26, 2017	
Dissemination of final report	January 31, 2018	

Logistics

- Date and venue: 4 to 6 September 2017, Arusha, Tanzania
- Children's Pre-conference: 2-3 September 2017, Arusha, Tanzania