

REPSSI NEWS

Updates and information on psychosocial care and support

Issue 3, April — July 2011

➔ INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Welcome to the second issue of REPSSI News for 2011, expanded to fit all our news and announcements! Inside, you will find articles on a range of new psychosocial support research and initiatives, and stories from REPSSI partners across the region.

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SPOTLIGHT ON OUR PARTNERS: Kenya Orphans Rural Development Programme



REPSSI Officer for Kenya, Edwick Mapalala (2nd from left) with KORDP staff at their offices

According to the Kenya Orphans Rural Development Program (KORDP), psychosocial support (PSS) is what makes them stand out among other organizations undertaking similar work in HIV and AIDS, food security, early childhood education, health and sanitation.

“When KORDP started,” says Kathleen Okatcha, KORDP Executive Director, “a baseline survey in seven Districts

revealed that many children orphaned by HIV and AIDS were taking care of other children. PSS became a priceless asset in our quest for an intervention to address the impact of HIV and AIDS. In order to help empower the caregivers and children to cope with the effects of HIV and AIDS, PSS was especially instrumental in the reduction of trauma among the children and their caregivers. PSS has also helped communities that host KORDP to deal with emotional issues associated with the loss of close relatives and stigma, denial and discrimination.”

Citing examples, she says that psychosocial support has helped engage community members, reduce conflicts and foster unity at both family and community levels.

Kenya Orphans Rural Development Programme (KORDP) has been at the forefront of the response to the HIV epidemic in Kenya since 1996. Over the years, KORDP has helped increase literacy levels and enrolment at primary and secondary school levels, reduce the duration that families and communities experience hunger, and reduce deaths amongst children aged 1-8 years.

ABOUT REPSSI

REPSSI (the Regional Psychosocial Support Initiative) is a non-profit regional organization working to lessen the devastating social and emotional (psychosocial) impact of HIV and AIDS, poverty and conflict among children and youth in East and Southern Africa.

We maintain partnerships with governments, development partners, international organisations and NGOs in the region. With our technical advice and assistance, these partners implement programmes which strengthen communities’ and families’ ability to care for and protect their children and youth. For more information, visit www.repssi.org.



THE REPSSI MASTER TRAINERS PROGRAMME



Mr. Shaib Mohamed (standing centre), a Master Trainer from Africare in Zanzibar, speaking with students of a school where he had trained the teachers on psychosocial support and the REPSSI tool "Journey of Life." Master Trainers are drawn from REPSSI partners all across the region. Photo © REPSSI

"I have vowed to bring changes in the lives of individuals who have felt like giving up on life, by using the *Tree of Life*," says Veronica Nhemachena of Midlands Aids Service Organisation (MASO), Zimbabwe. "I have been able to help communities realise that they can do something about children in their communities, without money."

For the last year and a half, Veronica has been part of a training process focusing on the psychosocial support (PSS) needs of children. This training has changed the way Veronica works.

"I had always seen our organisation specialising in welfare support, like distributing food, clothing and paying school fees," Veronica explains. "I always felt these interventions lacked something on their own." Now, after the training, Veronica has mainstreamed psychosocial support into MASO's activities.

This training programme Veronica has participated in is known as the REPSSI "Master Trainer" process. It is an intensive, long term process for capacity building. Master Trainers are staff members of REPSSI partners, who are provided training in key REPSSI manuals and tools, and are supported to then deliver training within their organisations and for their affiliate partners.

What makes it such a unique and effective skills building process is that it focuses on mentoring the trainees. Trainees are first shown how to run an activity, then they lead that activity under their mentor's supervision, and finally they go on to deliver it on their own.

REPSSI has developed partnerships with key organisations working with children across the region, as part of a strategy intended to scale up the number of children accessing psychosocial care and support. The Master Trainer process is the primary form of capacity building for these REPSSI partners.

"We are delighted that 106 people have now successfully graduated from the Master Trainer process," says Kirstie Fieber, REPSSI's Regional Training Manager. "While we have no plans to continue the exact same process, this model can be easily adopted for individual organisations to help them build an internal group of PSS resource people."

REPSSI offers a wide range of solutions for the training needs of organisations working with children. E-mail Kirstie Fieber at kirstie@repski.org for more information.

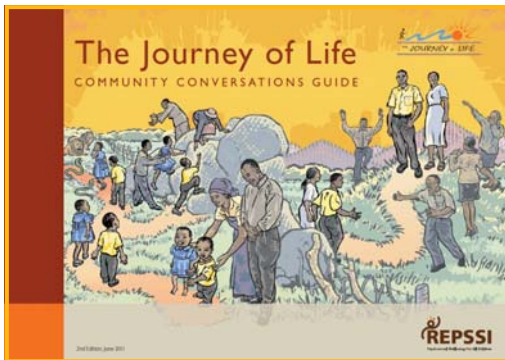
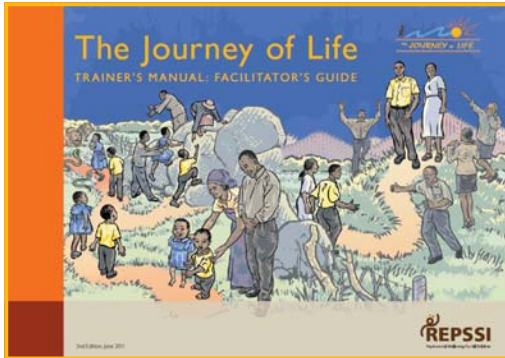
"We should allow the community to lead their conversations to enable them to decide so that they can be able to take part in all planning and programming and to have a sense of ownership."

Macdonald Buttie Radebe, Master Trainer with Lifeline, South Africa

My dream is to see most NGO's changing their role from focusing on material support for children to building back families and communities, to empower communities/families into making sure that children's wellbeing is everyone's responsibility... I am very happy to say the information I gained showed us all the gaps in our programme."

Bonizulu Matsebula, Master Trainer with the National Children's Coordination Unit, Swaziland

REVISED REPSSI PUBLICATION: *Journey of Life*



The *Journey of Life* is a community mobilization tool that allows the community to have conversation around issues that affect children within the particular location. Participants discuss the needs and rights of these children and they develop action plans which then facilitate the support that they will provide.

This tool has been revised to factor in recommendations from the assessment conducted in 2007 which highlighted the need to revisit the following:

1. Relevance of content
2. Appropriateness of methods
3. Suitability of images/pictures

For more details contact Brighton: brighton@repssi.org

REPSSI produces a range of user-friendly manuals and guidelines to address the issue of social and emotional (psychosocial) wellbeing.

For more information about our publications, which are available in print or electronically from our website, you can download a catalogue from www.repssi.org or request one by email from Riona at communications@repssi.org.

REACHING NEW SHORES: TRAINING IN TOGO AND CAMEROON

In April, REPSSI was excited to have delivered training for the first time in two new countries: Togo and Cameroon.

In Togo, Terre des Hommes (TdH) engaged REPSSI to deliver a 7-day training on *Making Hero Books*, to use in their child protection work in relation to child trafficking and child labour. The Hero Books training equips participants to lead groups of children or youth through a series of autobiographical storytelling and art exercises (the Hero Book), designed to support each child or youth to identify a significant psychosocial obstacle standing in the way of their goals, and to find ways to gain power over this obstacle.

In Cameroon, Centro per la Salute del Bambino engaged REPSSI to deliver a 10-day initial training on *Introduction to Psychosocial Support*, which builds the capacity of child care professionals around psychosocial care and support for children affected by HIV and AIDS, poverty and conflict. Centro per la Salute del Bambino works with children in residential care in Cameroon.

REPSSI is available to engage for a range of training courses related to the rights and welfare of children and youth. "We can look at your organization and your work with children, and put together a curriculum of our tools and approaches

that best suits your needs," says Kirstie Fieber, REPSSI Training Manager. Contact kirstie@repssi.org for more details.



FORUM ESTABLISHES REGIONAL COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE ON PSS



Opening speech by Dr. Maria Mabetsa, Deputy Director General, Department of Social Development, Government of South Africa

A first for the region

The first event of its kind, the Regional Psychosocial Support Forum held in May sold out a week in advance. Co-hosted by REPSSI, SADC, UNICEF and the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund, the forum brought together over 265 delegates from 19 countries. Delegates came from all over East and Southern Africa, and comprised senior government officials, civil society organizations, academic institutions, United Nations agencies, International Co-operating Partners and youth representatives.

The Forum provided delegates with an opportunity to share research findings, lessons learnt, experiences and key issues regarding the provision of services required for children and youth to grow and develop in a supportive environment.

Outcomes and recommendations

Amongst the key outcomes of the Forum was an agreement to establish a regional community of practice on psychosocial support, which would allow for information exchange, advocacy, policy and technical guidance on psychosocial support issues in the region. Members would include regional partners, government, academic institutions, media and others. REPSSI is currently developing terms of reference for this initiative. A related recommendation was to re-convene the Regional Psychosocial Support Forum every two years.

Delegates were also given the opportunity to make specific recommendations on the finalization of the SADC Minimum Package of Services and PSS Conceptual Framework. These comments were considered at the recent SADC Ministers Meeting on the 3rd June, in Namibia, which endorsed the final versions of the two documents.

The need to develop a clear roll-out strategy for implementing these two SADC documents in member states, including specific programming guidance was recommended by Forum delegates. Further

recommendations to establish an online discussion forum on psychosocial support indicators and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) for psychosocial support programming were also made. In line with this, the Forum is to provide input to a draft SADC M&E Framework for the region.

Among other issues that emerged from the Forum, it was made clear that psychosocial support interventions should seek to build on existing cultural practices, and indigenous approaches. In addition, there were specific recommendations that tools be developed that address psychosocial needs of young people in relation to sexual reproductive health and rights.

The required strengthening of the social workforce capacity in the region was also emphasized, and it was recommended that national strategies need to address issues of remuneration and retention of the social services workforce.

Child and Youth Participation

The Forum also highlighted the importance of child participation in psychosocial support programming. Alex Muchero, a 20 year-old peer counselor from AfricAid Zimbabwe reflected on his participation:

"Being in the Narrative Therapy workshop made me dig deeper into the things that I can actually do and be the kind of person I have always dreamt to be - happy, confident and with knowledge of my self-worth... I was very glad to attend this session, as now I can try something new in my counselling to help my peers to realize their strengths". (You can read Alex's full blog and various others on the [REPSSI blog](#))

More information on the recommendations, refreshing presentations, photos and videos from the Forum can be found on www.repssi.org

SADC ministers meeting

A major step forward for the region was taken on the 3rd June, when SADC members adopted two key documents for the welfare of vulnerable children and youth in the region.

The first is the **Minimum Package of Services for Orphans, Vulnerable Children and Youth (OVC & Y)**, which presents a holistic package of services to meet the needs of OVC & Y across the region.

The second is the **Psychosocial Support Framework**, which aims to ensure that the basic principles and quality of psychosocial care and support for orphans and other vulnerable children and youth are consistently applied and available in the SADC Member States.

REPSSI is proud to have partnered with SADC and UNICEF on the finalization of these documents.

KEEPING THEM IN SCHOOL DOES THEM A WORLD OF GOOD!



A class at a pre-school sponsored by REPSSI partner Lesotho Red Cross. The school uses REPSSI tools in its activities. Photo (c) REPSSI

There continues to be strong evidence that keeping children in school is beneficial to them. Two studies published recently highlight the wide range of benefits accrued when students are able to stay in school.

One study from Kenya¹ reports on the effects of comprehensive support on adolescent sexual health behaviours. 105 adolescent orphans aged 12-14 years were randomly allocated to either receiving the programme or nothing. The programme comprised school fees, uniforms, and a "community visitor" who monitored school attendance and helped resolve problems that would lead to absence or dropout.

Compared with the control group, intervention students were less likely to drop out of school, commence sexual intercourse, or report attitudes supporting early sex. School support also increased pro-social bonding and gender equity attitudes. After one year of exposure to the intervention, the authors found evidence suggesting that comprehensive school support can prevent school dropout, delay sexual debut, and reduce sexual health risk factors. As the study sample was relatively small, further research, with much larger samples, is needed to better understand the relationship between education and sexual health.

A second study in Malawi, compared the effects of conditional and unconditional cash transfers to adolescent girls on their school attendance², school learning, marriage, pregnancy and mental health³. In the conditional cash

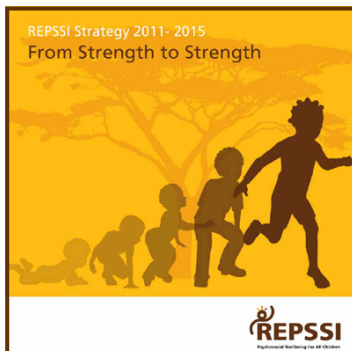
transfer arm (CCT), girls were expected to attend school 80% of the time in order to receive the funds. Data was collected from 2089 adolescent girls over three survey rounds and two school years.

Results indicated that school attendance among those who received conditional cash transfers were 43% larger when compared to those who received unconditional cash transfers (UCT). Girls in the CCT arm also had higher test scores than those in the UCT arm. However, teenage pregnancy and marriage rates were substantially higher in the CCT than the UCT arm. With regards to mental health, likelihood of suffering from psychological distress was 38% lower in the UCT arm and 17% lower in the CCT arm when compared to the control group. However, these mental health benefits dissipated quickly after the programme ended. These findings reinforce the importance to cash to help children stay in school, but suggest that a CCT program for early adolescents that transitions into a UCT for older teenagers could minimize this trade-off by improving schooling outcomes while avoiding the adverse impacts of conditionality on teenage pregnancy and marriage.

References:

- ¹ Keeping adolescent orphans in school to prevent human immunodeficiency virus infection: evidence from a randomized controlled trial in Kenya. Cho H, Hallfors D, Mbai I, et al. *J Adolesc Health* 2011;48:523-26.
- ² Cash or condition? Evidence from a cash transfer experiment Baird S, McIntosh C; Ozler, B March 2010: World Bank Report Number, WPS5259
- ³ Income shocks and adolescent mental health Baird S; de Hoop J; Ozler B April 2011: World Bank Report Number WPS5644

REPSSI FORMULATES NEW STRATEGY FOR 2011-2015



Following a process of insightful consultation with our partners and stakeholders, REPSSI is delighted to announce the details of our new Strategy for 2011-2015.

The new Strategy builds on the successes of REPSSI and our partner network to date, and announces some bold shifts in our strategic direction to best meet the considerable demand that now exists for mainstreaming psychosocial support into programmes for vulnerable children and youth.

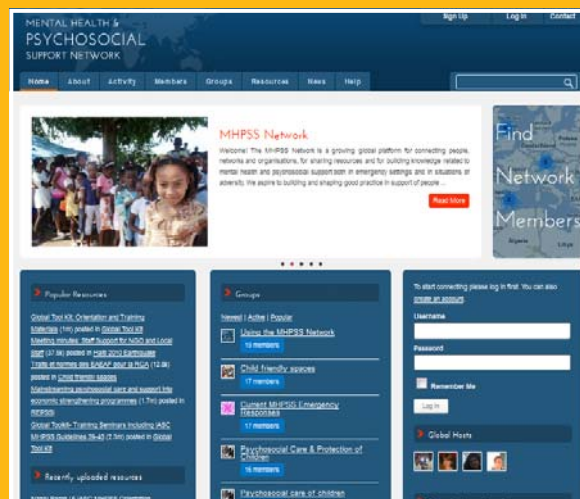
Click [here](#) or visit the REPSSI website to download our brochure outlining the key points of the new Strategy.

New Online Platform for Psychosocial Support

The Mental Health and Psychosocial Support network has launched a new online platform for connecting sharing resources and building knowledge related to mental health and psychosocial support.

On the site you can connect with other professionals in this field, search for and download resources, and join discussion groups on diverse topics such as: protection and human rights, psychosocial care and protection of children, gender-based violence, and many others. Membership is free and open to the wide range of people and organisations engaged with mental health and psychosocial support. Simply visit: <http://mhps.net/> to register.

For more information on the network, visit: <http://mhps.net/about/>



A PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT FRAMEWORK FOR SOUTH AFRICA

South Africa is in the process of developing an important framework document to guide implementation of psychosocial support activities nationally.

Entitled “Building a Caring Society Together: A Conceptual Framework for Psychosocial Support for Orphans & Other Children Made Vulnerable by HIV and AIDS”, the Framework was developed by REPSSI, with support from UNICEF, on behalf of the National Action Committee for Children

Affected by AIDS (NACCA) and the Department for Social Development.

“An effective response to the challenges we face in South Africa must include rebuilding and strengthening relationships – the psychological and social care so vital to human development,” the draft Framework reads. “The old African adage that ‘it takes a village to raise a child’ has never been more important than in the time of HIV & AIDS.”

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