

REPSSI STRATEGY 2016-2020

Taking the next leap forward



ABOUT REPSSI

The Regional Psychosocial Support Initiative (REPSSI) was founded in 2002, and has since become the leading African psychosocial support advocate and provider of expertise. Operating in 13 countries across East and Southern Africa, REPSSI has helped families and communities support millions of girls, boys and youth.

This new strategy was informed by national, regional and global consultations. It draws on both the best of current research and the lessons of the last 13 years of REPSSI's operations. Our strategy also aligns with the new global Sustainable Development Goals, especially those relating to health and well-being, education, gender equality, and peace and justice.



We work in Angola, Botswana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

Psychosocial Support is love, care and protection. It is support for the emotional and social aspects of a child's life, so that they can live with hope and dignity.

Psychosocial support includes ensuring the meaningful participation of children in issues affecting them, listening and responding to

children's problems, helping children to appreciate their history and identity, encouraging children to set goals and reach their potential, and ensuring that children have positive relationships in their lives.

Psychosocial support builds resilience in girls, boys, youth, their families and communities, enhancing social, health, HIV and educational outcomes.

OUR SUCCESSES

REPSSI has **championed psychosocial support** within the Southern African Development Community (SADC), supported SADC to develop relevant frameworks and influenced ten member states to develop national guidelines.

We have led the **Regional Interagency Task Team on Children and AIDS – East and Southern Africa**, foregrounding the cause of children affected by HIV in the region.

We are proud to have significantly contributed to psychosocial support **research, evidence and knowledge** in Africa, building a foundation for future initiatives, and helped develop **indicators of psychosocial support wellbeing**.

We have created **3 regional and 3 national advocacy platforms**, convening 1500 thought-leaders, policy-makers and practitioners to develop policies and share best practice and evidence. We have successfully advocated for the recognition of community-based caregivers to **strengthen the childcare workforce** across the region.

2 million vulnerable children per year receiving quality psychosocial support

19363 people skilled in psychosocial support tools and approaches

451 teachers trained on our Teacher's Diploma

3,903 caregivers, police, social workers, probation officers and teachers graduated from and currently enrolled in our accredited Certificate Course

We have developed a range of **evidence-based and culturally appropriate resources**, including short courses and accredited qualifications, many of which have been made accessible through distance learning.

We have provided advice, training and support to relevant **government ministries and civil society partners**, and have created a network of highly-skilled, trained advocates and resource persons across the region.

13 YEARS PROVIDING AFRICAN THOUGHT LEADERSHIP
IN PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT



THE CONTEXT

Children and youth across East and Southern Africa continue to face devastating challenges to their social and emotional (psychosocial) wellbeing, which also translates into poor social, health and educational outcomes.

The region is still the **epicentre of the HIV epidemic**. 12 of the countries REPSI works in have the highest adult HIV prevalence rates in the world, and AIDS is now the leading cause of death in adolescents in sub-Saharan Africa. While treatment and prevention measures have brought huge gains, stigma and discrimination continue to plague efforts to end the epidemic.

Children and adolescents living with HIV face many challenges. 51% of HIV+ infants in East and Southern Africa never receive test results, and 31-68% of those tested are lost to follow up. Many experience poor treatment adherence, isolation, discrimination, grief, and the burden of caring for sick relatives. The absence of parents from an adolescent's clinic visits has been strongly associated with HIV virologic failure. Families and communities, therefore, remain central to sustainable HIV responses.

Young people (10-24 years) currently account for one-third of the total population in East and

Southern Africa. As they reach puberty, they face new challenges related to their **sexual and reproductive health and rights**. Comprehensive sexuality education for children, adolescents and youth is critical for HIV prevention and overall

The Sustainable Development Goals emphasise a rights-based approach and the relationship between environment and sustainable development. REPSI believes psychosocial support to be a critical enabler for the achievement of all the Goals, and has focused this strategy on the following:

- **SDG3:** Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.
- **SDG4:** Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
- **SDG5:** Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
- **SDG16:** Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and

THE CONTEXT

reproductive health. **Poor mental health is strongly related to negative health outcomes** for young people, including poor sexual reproductive health. Births by adolescent girls (15-19 years) account for 16% of all births in sub-Saharan Africa, and maternal mortality ratios are higher among these adolescents than in older women. Age-appropriate psychosocial support – to enhance self-awareness and acquisition of life skills for both boys and girls to overcome challenges related to sexuality and living with HIV – is still lacking. Psychosocial and mental wellbeing enables adolescents to take control of their sexual and reproductive health and rights.

The situation for children and youth in East and Southern Africa is compounded by high levels of violence and abuse. Studies in the region confirm the endemic nature of **violence against children**. Of the 20 countries with the highest rates of **child marriage** globally, 15 are in Africa.

Children and youth are also often caught up in **civil unrest and other emergencies**, and increasing **migration** due to poverty, conflict or climatic disasters means children suffer dislocation, separation and exploitation.

Children **living with disabilities** experience physical and social barriers, while **children in institutions** and **children living and working on the streets** fall outside family care. Many children experience **interrupted or inadequate education**, and youth **unemployment** is extremely high in Southern Africa.

It is critical that we scale up national and regional responses to these challenges. REPSSI's new strategy strives to do just this.

Psychosocial support can stimulate:

- improved HIV prevention, testing, treatment and adherence
- reduced stigma, discrimination and isolation
- safe disclosure
- strengthened child protection systems and social services
- safe, healthy and nurturing schools
- youth to seek work opportunities
- family and community re-establishment following emergencies and displacement



LOOKING TO 2020

Key shifts in the new strategy

- Establish the **Africa Psychosocial Support Institute**, to set the standard for psychosocial support innovation in Africa, and assess and endorse new approaches by others.
- Strengthen the **Global Thought Leaders Group** of experts to identify emerging trends and foster expertise among African youth.
- Deepen engagement with **local government and community-based organisations**, and strengthen both the social services workforce and family-level careforce.
- Gather evidence of best **practice interventions for high-impact results**, with a focus on improving quality of care for better outcomes.
- Expand competence in emerging fields of **humanitarian emergencies and mental health**, along with other priority areas.
- **Tailor interventions** to individual country contexts, within a regional approach.
- **Step up advocacy** at global, regional, national and community levels, including with the EAC and the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.
- Diversify funding streams at national and regional level through **social enterprise activities** in addition to traditional funding partners.

REPSSI's Vision

All girls, boys and youth enjoy psychosocial and mental wellbeing.

REPSSI's Mission

REPSSI leads in mainstreaming psychosocial support into programmes and services for girls, boys and youth in East and Southern Africa.

REPSSI Master Goal

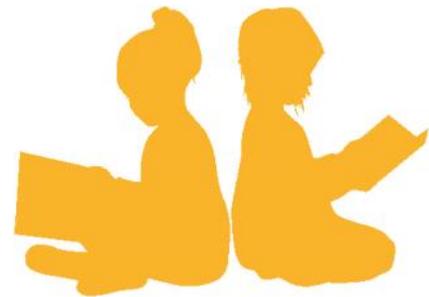
By 2020 REPSSI will provide technical assistance and lead advocacy for sustained PSS mainstreaming into programmes and services for girls, boys, youth, families and communities in East and Southern Africa so that they live with hope, dignity and happiness.



STRATEGIC OUTCOMES

1 *Psychosocial support knowledge generated through research and informs advocacy and programme delivery.*

- Conducting qualitative and quantitative research on issues affecting the psychosocial and mental wellbeing of girls and boys, and supporting African practitioners to develop research expertise in these areas
- Incubating promising practices to promote psychosocial support in identified emerging priority areas, such as sexual and reproductive health; migration; social and child protection; livelihoods and social workforce
- Fostering learning between partners and across countries to encourage innovation
- Documenting and comparing practice-based evidence from partner initiatives
- Developing and reviewing resources in accordance with rigorous internal standards
- Sequencing and packaging resources for the social services, health and education sectors
- Translating prioritised resources into Portuguese and Swahili to enable greater access



STRATEGIC OUTCOMES

2

Psychosocial support is integrated into social services, health and education programmes and services and reaches approximately two million children and young people annually.

- Identifying gaps in OVCY policy and practice and implementing a plan to address such gaps
- Engaging with SADC/ EAC/ ACERWC to include psychosocial support in children, youth and HIV plans, and M&E Frameworks
- Generating, documenting and sharing an economic case for psychosocial and mental wellbeing through local, national and regional platforms, including media
- Strengthening partnerships for social behaviour change communication for improved psychosocial and mental wellbeing
- REPSSI Thought Leaders Group contributes to the Lancet Commission report on the state of psychosocial wellbeing and mental health in Africa, and to psychosocial support publications, making the case for psychosocial support as a critical enabler for sustainable development



STRATEGIC OUTCOMES

3

Capacity of government and non-government partners to implement specific programmes increased, based on context of each country.

- Establishing partnerships with national and local government and civil society organisations to mainstream psychosocial support into their services
- Developing and implementing psychosocial support mainstreaming plans, including policy development, mentoring, monitoring, short courses and accredited qualifications for auxiliary workers and the social, educational and health service workforce.
- Incorporating practice-based evidence into REPSSI and partner programmes and services
- Implementing evidence-based Technical Assistance Models for emerging priority areas, to strengthen education, social services and health systems



STRATEGIC OUTCOMES

4 *REPSSI operates effectively to best achieve its mission and its resources are diversified.*

- Diversifying funding streams at regional and country level, including through cost recovery and provision of consultancy services
- Strengthening and decentralising systems, while ensuring adequate human resources for effective delivery of the strategy
- Strengthening financial management and administration
- Implementing a marketing and communications strategy
- Convening regional and national legal governing and advisory bodies to provide technical direction in accordance with statutory requirements



STRATEGIC OUTCOMES

5 *Africa Psychosocial Support Institute (APSI) established.*

- Accrediting and maintaining accreditation of REPSI and its skills development programmes with relevant national and international authorities
- Conducting feasibility study to assess needs and resources for establishing APSI
- Developing, approving, resourcing and implementing a strategic plan for APSI
- Developing processes and standards for accrediting/ endorsing organisations, resources and individuals





Contact the REPSSI Secretariat

Phone: +27 (0) 11 998 5820

Email: info@repssi.org

Website: www.repssi.org