

REPSSI promotes **EQUITABLE ACCESS** to academic, emotional and social wellbeing for teachers and learners.

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TEACHERS' DIPLOMA IN PSYCHOSOCIAL CARE, SUPPORT AND PROTECTION:

An intervention to improve the academic, social and emotional well-being of children

ISSUE

Education is a fundamental right and crucially important for children's development and psychosocial wellbeing. However, children experience many barriers to education including caring for sick relatives, food-insecurity, violence and sexual abuse against girls, child marriage and teenage pregnancy, corporal punishment, alcohol and substance abuse and bullying. These hinder children's learning and ability to reach their full potential in school.

Schools are the most widespread service for children. They are uniquely positioned to support girls and boys and liaise with other services and support mechanisms for children within their community. A recommendation of the SADC Care and Support for Teaching and Learning (CSTL) baseline study was that teachers be trained to provide psychosocial support to the students in their care. 'Education which gives children a good academic, social and emotional foundation for their lives is more valuable than education which focuses only on academics' (MIET Africa: Care and Support for Teaching and Learning: Regional Report on Baseline Study Conducted in five SADC Member States: 2009 pg 7).

RESPONSE

REPSSI believes that *mainstreaming psychosocial support into education is one of the main catalysts for enhancing access, retention and performance* of marginalised children in schools. Schools which have embraced psychosocial support respond to learners' problems and promote resilience & learning. These become places where children can thrive.

With support from UNICEF, REPSSI collaborated with MIET Africa, the Children's Institute at the University of Cape Town, government and academic institutions from 5 countries to develop the *Teachers' Diploma Course in Psychosocial Care, Support and Protection*.

The Teachers' Diploma is intended to transform the way in which a whole school interacts with its learners, their families and the broader community to improve the psychosocial environment of the school which enables all learners to achieve their full potential. The premise is that children who receive psychosocial and other support at school and in the community will have improved educational outcomes and motivation to demand and access basic services.



DELIVERY OF PROGRAMME:

The *Teachers' Diploma in Psychosocial Care, Support & Protection* is an in-service programme which involves both the schools and specific teachers in those schools. The 15-month diploma course is delivered through blended supported, situated, distance learning and contact sessions. Teachers from within the same cluster meet at least once a month as a Community of Practice to discuss the content of the modules and how they are implementing what they are learning within their schools and engaging the rest of the school community in implementation. Face-to-face contact sessions are conducted at the teacher training institution that is responsible for delivery. The students have five blocks of face-to-face contact sessions during the school holidays throughout the course.

Implementation of what is learnt continues within the school throughout the fifteen months of study. Schools are supported in implementation by district education officials and commit to a subsequent year for full implementation and reporting.

ENGAGING GOVERNMENT (Ministry of Education):

In order to ensure smooth management and implementation of the diploma course, a Technical Committee comprising members from all the directorates of the Ministry of Education is created to:

- ☞ provide technical oversight and guidance in the implementation of the project
- ☞ facilitate integration of the project activities into other ministry related activities
- ☞ strengthen the capacity to improve activities to mainstream psychosocial support into the education system.

The Technical Committee also acts as a platform for sharing information with stakeholders.

KEY MESSAGES:

Mainstreaming psychosocial support into national education policies provides a framework for effective school-based psychosocial support programmes

Mainstreaming psychosocial support into education programmes facilitates long-term sustainable provision of care and support to children within teaching and learning environments

Strengthening psychosocial support aspects within national teacher training curricula enhances the capacity of teachers to support their learners

Integrated psychosocial support programmes, that also address sexual & reproductive health and rights of adolescents in school and community, contribute to holistic child well-being and social development

Government, the private sector and international cooperating partners should prioritise education interventions that promote psychosocial support

CASE EXAMPLE: ZAMBIA

The Teachers' Diploma is delivered by Chalimbana University, with Mongu and Chipata Colleges of Education. All three institutions fall under the Ministry of Higher Education.

At provincial level, the Teachers' Diploma is monitored by the Senior Education Officer for Guidance in the Provincial Education Office.

At district level, district resource centre coordinators and district guidance coordinators serve as the focal persons for psychosocial support in their respective districts and support the diploma students by participating in community of practice sessions and conducting monitoring visits to schools where they observe knowledge and skills implementation during the course.