



IMPLEMENTATION SCIENCE
COLLABORATIVE

MHPSS WEBINAR SERIES REPORT

Reaching Policymakers in Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) Evidence Translation and Service Integration

May 3, 2022

Speakers



SUSAN MEFFERT, MD, MPH
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USAID'S HEALTH EVALUATION AND APPLIED RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT (HEARD) PROJECT

About the webinar series

ACCELERATING EVIDENCE-TO-USE IN MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT (MHPSS) POLICY AND PROGRAMMING



Image credit: Heartland Alliance International

The Implementation Science Collaborative’s Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) Webinar Series advances evidence-to-use priorities to inform policy and practice in low- and middle-income countries. This webinar series is supported by the Health Evaluation and Applied Research Development (HEARD) Project, managed by University Research Co., LLC., and co-hosted by the CUNY Graduate School of Public Health and Health Policy Center for Innovation in Mental Health (CIMH) and East, Central, and Southern Africa Health Community (ECSA-HC).

This report presents the highlights of the second webinar in this series, *Reaching Policymakers in MHPSS Evidence Translation and Service Integration*, which featured a diverse stakeholder discussion around the uptake of evidence-based MHPSS interventions and policy directions in Africa.

Our Partners:



MODERATORS



Victoria Ngo, PhD, MS

Victoria Ngo is an Associate Professor at the City University of New York Graduate School of Public Health & Health Policy and is the Director of the Center for Innovation in Mental Health. Also a clinical psychologist, she has expertise in developing, evaluating, and implementing evidence-based treatments for depression, anxiety, and trauma in diverse communities in the United States and abroad.



Rosemary Mwaisaka, MSc

Rosemary Mwaisaka is the Manager for NCDs, Food Security and Nutrition at the East, Central, and Southern Africa Health Community (ECSA-HC), providing leadership in establishing regional policies and strategies on NCDs, food security and nutrition. She has more than 14 years of expertise in designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating public health, nutrition and development interventions in the East, Central and Southern Africa region.

SPEAKERS



Susan Meffert, MD, MPH

Susan Meffert is a Professor in the University of California San Francisco (UCSF) Department of Psychiatry. In collaboration with Dr. Muthoni Mathai at the University of Nairobi, Susan is a principal investigator for the SMART-DAPPER study. SMART DAPPER evaluates large-scale integration of evidence-based, non-specialist-delivered mental health care within a public sector county healthcare center in Kenya to treat two of the most common conditions in the region: depression and trauma-related disorders.



Dumsani Njobo Mamba

Dumsani Njobo Mamba is a Mental Health Technical Officer for the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention and the founding Director of Eswatini Mental Wellness. A mental health activist and mental wellness trainer, he is also a psychiatric nurse practitioner, formerly with Lubombo Referral Hospital in Siteki, Eswatini as Senior Psychiatric Nurse.

PANELISTS



Florence Kamanyonza Baingana, MD, MBChB

Florence Kamanyonza Baingana is the Regional Advisor for Mental Health and Substance Abuse at the WHO Regional Office for Africa (WHO AFRO). She has worked extensively in mental health policy and programming, beginning in Uganda in 1996 and the World Bank in 2000, where she supported work in conflict and post-conflict countries. Beginning 2009, she worked in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and NE Nigeria until she joined WHO AFRO in 2019.



Grace Obalim, MS

Grace Obalim is the Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Advisor for Transcultural Psychosocial Organization (TPO) in Uganda. She is a clinical psychologist and mental health advocate specializing in managing the MHPSS issues of refugees in Uganda and the post-conflict communities of Northern Uganda.



Julie Grier-Villatte, MLitt, MSc

Julie Grier-Villatte is the Director of the Office of Education, Youth, and Child Development at USAID Uganda. She has 20 years of experience working with impoverished, at-risk children, families, and communities around the globe to improve their individual and collective functioning.

WEBINAR VIDEO



Click on the image above to access the full webinar recording.

PRESENTATION TRANSCRIPTS



Translating Evidence to Policy: Lessons from SMART-DAPPER

Susan Meffert, MD, MPH

Professor, Department of Psychiatry, University of California San Francisco (UCSF)



Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention: Africa Policy Perspective

Dumsani Njobo Mamba

Mental Health Technical Officer, Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention



Panel Remarks

Florence Kamanyonza Baingana, MD, MBChB

Regional Advisor, Mental Health and Substance Abuse, WHO Regional Office for Africa



Grace Obalim, MS

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Advisor, Transcultural Psychosocial Organization (TPO) Uganda



Julie Grier-Villatte, MLitt, MSc

Director, Office of Education, Youth, and Child Development, USAID Uganda

Translating Evidence to Policy: Lessons from SMART-DAPPER

Susan Meffert, MD, MPH

About the intervention

SMART-DAPPER: A Sequential, Multiple Assignment Randomized Trial (SMART) for non-specialist treatment of common mental disorders in Kenya: Leveraging the Depression And Primary care Partnership for Effectiveness-implementation Research (DAPPER)

The overarching goal of SMART DAPPER is to collaborate with Kenyan and Ugandan Ministries of Health and key stakeholders to test a strategy for implementing scalable, evidence-based treatment for depression and trauma-related disorders with protocol-driven psychotherapy and modern antidepressants using locally available, non-specialist providers.



Visit the *SMART-DAPPER* website



Policy Strategies of SMART-DAPPER

- Inclusion of high level policymakers in investigative team
- Strong emphasis on creation of a health policy menu of feasible, evidence-based mental health treatment options with cost and cost-benefit profiles so policymakers can select a package of care with the finances that they have available
- Involvement of broad range of regional, national and local stakeholders (including users), in annual meetings focused on adapting the study within scientific parameters to achieve better sustainability, scale-up, and relevance

Evidence-to-Policy Takeaways



Huge unmet need and demand for depression and PTSD outpatient treatment among adult public sector primary care patients in Kisumu



Feasibility, acceptability, and scalability of non-specialist, evidence-based, clinic-integrated outpatient care for depression and PTSD, including both face-to-face and mHealth treatment delivery



High economic return on depression/PTSD outpatient mental health services including low cost of treatment, increased workforce participation, increased % of participants earning an income, and increased monthly income all during a severe COVID-driven economic downturn in Kisumu

Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention: Africa Policy Perspective

Dumsani Njobo Mamba

The Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, with the support of the African Union, just launched the Non-Communicable Diseases, Injuries Prevention and Control and Mental Health Promotion Strategy. This document, developed and validated through a bottom-up, consultative process across all 55 Member States, (with 44 member states present at the validation), academic and research institutions, Pan African Civil Society Organizations and people with lived experience, emphasizes the continent's direction for MHPSS. The organization also recently culminated a regional workshop on the integration of MHPSS in emergency response with the goals of establishing regional networks to share learnings and expertise from different emergencies in the continent and developing a theory of change for integrating mental health into national emergency preparedness and response plans. During this workshop, the following barriers and solutions were identified.

Key barriers



Lack of political commitment



Deprioritization of mental health during emergencies



Lack of funding



Lack of trained staff to provide MHPSS activities



Non-existing and weak pre-existing mental health systems

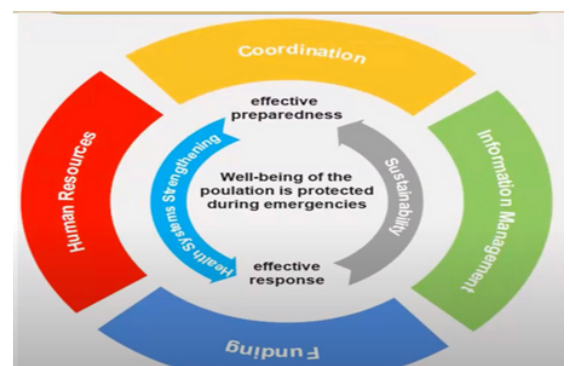
Solutions and Interventions

- Integration of the MHPSS pillar beyond emergencies
- Use of multi-sectoral approach in integration of MHPSS
- Community engagement in intervention to mitigate negative impacts and reduce stigma and discrimination
- Documentation of MHPSS activities during implementation
- Increase in government, international, and local partners' financial allocation to MHPSS activities
- Development and full embeddedness of MHPSS emergency preparedness and response plan into the National Disaster Prevention and Response Plan
- Empowerment of different mental health coalitions, CSOs, NGOs, and people with lived experience groups to promote change
- Research to assess the mental health impact of emergencies and promote evidence-based practices
- Availability and accessibility of MHPSS tools and guidelines to inform response

The African Continent's MHPSS Strategy

- Emphasizing integration of mental health and psychosocial services into emergency response and preparedness
- Enhancing the capacity of ministries of health in MHPSS to develop, integrate, and implement national policies and frameworks for mental health prevention and control

Theory of Change



PANEL HIGHLIGHTS

One of the main challenges in the field is using findings from implementation trials to shape policy and scale or sustain programming going forward. To address this, an expert panel of policymakers, implementers, and donors shared insights and recommendations around positioning implementation evidence to inform policy and practice for MHPSS efforts.

Florence Kamanyonza Baingana from the WHO Regional Office for Africa highlighted practical barriers to evidence translation, citing lack of funding and the complex coordination processes during conflicts or emergencies. She touched on the challenges associated with adapting evidence from foreign countries and emphasized the need to generate context-specific evidence applicable to local settings.

Grace Obalim, from TPO Uganda, an organization providing direct psychosocial support services to communities impacted by conflict, discussed the disparities between policy priorities and the actual needs on the ground, as well as the occasional lack of communication between different policy stakeholders. She identified several recommendations to bridge this gap, such as (1) emphasizing a more comprehensive mental health response strategy as opposed to building it into emergency response, (2) focusing on research-based implementation, (3) strengthening close coordination between researchers, implementers, and policymakers through working groups, and (4) being intentional about enhancing the capacity of non-technical health workers and using community-based structures in improving mental health awareness.

Julie Grier-Villatte offered her perspective as Director of the Office of Education, Youth, and Child Development of USAID Uganda. She presented an optimistic view for the future of MHPSS programming, highlighting countries' and communities' progressive awareness regarding mental health and its increasing significance in international development strategies. She stressed the importance of building in mental health and psychosocial support in economic, education, and health care planning and called on community members, researchers, and implementers to continue their advocacy for more effective and sustainable mental health programs.

WEBINAR AGENDA

OPENING & INTRODUCTION

Victoria Ngo, PhD, MS

Director, Center for Innovation in Mental Health
Associate Professor, Department of Community Health and Social Sciences
CUNY Graduate School of Public Health and Health Policy

OVERVIEW OF THE ISSUE & OPPORTUNITY

Rosemary Mwaisaka, MSc

Manager, Food Security and Nutrition, East, Central, and Southern Africa Health Community

TRANSLATING EVIDENCE TO POLICY: LESSONS FROM SMART-DAPPER

Susan Meffert, MD, MPH

Professor, Department of Psychiatry
University of California San Francisco

AFRICA CENTRES FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION: AFRICA POLICY PERSPECTIVE

Dumsani Njobo Mamba

Mental Health Technical Officer, Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention

REMARKS

Florence Kamanyonza Baingana, MD, MBChB

Regional Advisor, Mental Health and Substance Abuse, WHO Regional Office for Africa

Grace Obalim, MS

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Advisor, Transcultural Psychosocial Organization Uganda

Julie Grier-Villatte, MLitt, MSc

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CLOSING REMARKS

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For additional information, contact isc@iscollab.org.

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