

Edu.pression Peer Support Project

Project Background & Need

Eswatini faces the highest death rate in Africa due to deaths related to COVID-19, HIV/AIDS, TB, pneumonia and malaria. According to www.worldlifeexpectancy.com, Eswatini is in the top countries with the highest suicide rates, 25.3 people per 100 000 are likely to commit suicide. Young people in Eswatini have a higher risk for depression/anxiety due to the socioeconomic impacts such as inability to work, death of family members, poverty, stigma and loss became stressors. Many young people are engaging in risky lifestyles such as drinking alcohol, abusing drugs and dropping out of school due to the lack of mental health support and awareness (Siphepho). The statistics are alarming, however there have been no mental health training or programs conducted in Eswatini which are aimed at reducing the stigma surrounding mental health, educating young people and decreasing suicidal ideation in the community. Data from the Health Management Information System (HMIS) shows that between 2017 and 2019, about 8 229 people accessed mental health facilities but the number of those struggling could be significantly higher. The statistics are alarming, however there have been no mental health training or programs conducted in Eswatini which are aimed at reducing the stigma surrounding mental health, educating young people and decreasing suicidal ideation in the community. Research has shown that peer support tends to offer great levels of self-efficacy, empowerment and engagement in people struggling with mental health. We propose to establish the first ever mental health peer support training in Eswatini where selected high school and university students from every class will be selected to get a three day training that will equip them with tools that they will use to help other young people going through mental health challenges.

Project Goals & Objectives

Overall Goal:

To strengthen suicide prevention and mental health knowledge among the youth in Eswatini.

Objectives

- Educating young people about mental health
- Raising awareness on mental disorders and suicide prevention.
- Raising awareness on the inclusion of women in fighting national pandemics
- Improve peer support system amongst the students in the field.

Project Details:

The project seeks to train and recruit a total of 30 peer counsellors and educators (PCEs) in a total of 3 schools and 4 universities (due to restricted funds) in Manzini and Mbabane. Upon being trained, PCEs will then form sensitization groups in their schools where they will educate peers on mental health, Suicide ideation and coping mechanisms. They will further act as counsellors whom peers can confide in. PCEs will be responsible for reporting to the organization. Referrals will be generated from PCE reports and therefore ensuring the necessary psychological, social and physical needs of students are met. To achieve this, we will be working closely with psychologists, the psychiatric center, head teachers and teachers, speakers. We will also be working collaboratively with the non profit organisation called Georgetown University Center for Global Health practice and Impact(GU-CHPHI) to educate and raise awareness to mental health issues.

Project Sustainability:

Team: Langa Dlamini (Team leader OU), Mack Shabangu (Team leader), Siphweyinkhosi Sigudla (Team leader)

To ensure sustainability, our program is focused on education and skills transference. Mental Health education is the main priority of ESPS and for that reason, ESPS will continue to build interventions based on gaps, lessons and experiences from this project for many more years to come using the resources and connections established. This will ensure continuity in responding to issues that affect young people. Moreover, the trained Peer educators will remain operational, providing direct support to the young people both at school and in their communities for a sustained period of time.

Measuring Success:

Quantitative and qualitative data will be collected to form part of the project's monitoring, evaluation and learning system from the schools to assess how much they know about mental health. Indicators to measure implementation will be developed in the project's monitoring and evaluation framework.

Indicators:

1. The number of peer educators trained
2. The level of knowledge gained by trained peer educators
3. The number of sensitization sessions held

| Time | Activity |
|-------------|---|
| June 2021 | Inception Facilitator's training and team building. During this time the Edupression team will be meeting with high school teachers in Manzini and Mbabane to talk about the students to be selected to become Peer Supporters. Moreover, the Edu.pression team will be ensuring that the facilities, the food, the manual and every speaker is ready to deliver the training for the next four weekends. |
| July 2021 | Training Program for training: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Training to Understand: Suicide, Anxiety, Depression, Grief and Loss, Eating Disorders. Understanding Self (Emotions, Moods, Energy. Testimonials, Invite a panel of psychologists, How to find Allies, Coping Mechanisms and Planning for Future |
| August 2021 | Evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Self-assessment questionnaires, Surveys, Evaluation of applied learning, Focus groups |

Qualifications:

Langelihle Dlamini is a Psychology Student trained in numerous mental health programs such as: Mental Health First Aid, Applied Suicide Intervention Skills, Safetalk (suicide alertness), Grief and loss and Indigenous Issues. Sakhile is a social Worker who has numerous experience working with NGOs around Swaziland. Siphweyinkhosi Sigudla is also working with young people as a social worker at an NGO.