

Emotional Well-Being Support Package



Scars to Stars Project

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Executive summary

Emotional Well-being is paramount to the overall mental health of an individual. While there are significant multisector interventions to end FGM and child marriage in place, there are very few structures in place to cater to the emotional wellbeing of both FGM survivors and activists. There is an urgent need for psychosocial support for FGM survivors. This is to ensure that they can emerge triumphant and shine throughout the rest of their life by working towards achieving their full potential rather than reliving their traumas. As for anti-FGM survivors/champions, they are often met with harsh resistance from perpetrators, burnout from overworking, and sometimes find themselves in life-threatening situations in their quest to fight the practice. To ensure that their experience in the line of duty does not leave them with mental health issues, key psychosocial support must be made available and accessible to enable improve their emotional wellbeing.



About AfyAfrika –

AfyAfrika is a Women-led/Youth-Serving Community Based Organization based in Narok county, Kenya. The organization was founded in 2009 by five survivors of female genital mutilation.

Our vision is a world with healthy and empowered girls and women.

Our mission is to empower young women who are at risk or have survived female genital mutilation to rediscover and celebrate their wholeness, develop their self-confidence, and become agents of change within their own communities.

Our ambition is to accelerate the total eradication of FGM and all forms of violence against women and girls through social change communication, community dialogues and alternative rite of passage.





The Scars to Stars Project

The Scars to Stars project is a youth-led, grassroots-led, survivor-centered project aimed at promoting emotional wellbeing and breaking down the stigma associated with FGM, by building and testing a package of support for survivors and activists and creating portraiture exhibitions to catalyze social change in Narok, Kenya, with the potential for future application in many other settings.

Through a co-created emotional wellbeing package, the project aims at ensuring the availability and accessibility of a user-friendly package that can be used as a point of reference for both FGM survivors and activists in need of psychosocial support. The package will incorporate How-To instructions on how to deal with mental health issues, available resources, and facilities and contacts for the mental health service provider in Narok County.

The Scars to Stars project is funded by USAID under the Youth Excel program implemented by IREX. The Youth Excel is a global program that aims to empower young people and youth organizations to use implementation research to strengthen local, national, and global development solutions.



CHAPTER 1

Understanding Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting

Female Genital mutilation is a violation of females' fundamental human rights. In many regions where FGM/C is done, the practice is extensively embedded into their social norms that in most cases encourage gender inequality and violence against women.

UNICEF, (2019)

What is Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting?

Female Genital Mutilation or cutting is a cultural practice where a female genital is injured and interfered with for a non-medical reason, usually without the consent of the victim. According to WHO (2022), FGM/C is a procedure that entails the removal of the whole or part of the external female genital organ. This procedure entails cutting, removal, piercing, sewing closed the entire or part of a female's external genital and any other sort of injuries to female genitalia. FGM/C can lead to several health problems and complications such as severe bleeding, infections, and childbirth complications among others.

FGM/C as a form of trauma

FGM/C leads to trauma for women or girls and society. FGM is and can never be considered a good or harmless cultural practice since the women who undergo it can suffer hemorrhage to death and persevere the roughening infections for a long period of their life after the FGM/C. Even when the procedure is done without any immediate serious effects, the physical and psychological effects will be present in the entire women's life. Besides the effects on women's life, FGM will as well affect the woman's spouse and their community.

What are the types of FGM/C

According to WHO (2022), there are four major types of FGM/C. These are

- Clitoridectomy. This refers to an FGM procedure that involves complete or partial removal of clitorises and or the purpose.
- The second is excision, which is the removal of the entire or part of the labia minora and clitoris. In this case, labia, and Majora may or may not be excised and the amount of tissue removed varies.
- Infibulation is the third type of female mutilation where the vaginal opening is narrowed by creating a covering seal that is formed by cutting and repositioning labia minora that can involve stitching. In these cases, their clitoral prepuce may or may not be removed.
- The fourth type of FGM/C is the one that includes all other types of injuries to women's genitalia with non-medical intentions/benefits. For instance, scraping, pricking, cauterizing, and piercing a woman's genital.

Effects of FGM/C

FGM has both long-term and short-term unpleasant implications for the victim's life.

- Severe pain, injuries, and difficulties urinating.
- During the procedure, FGM/C can end up causing survival-bleeding leading to death.

- FGM can also result in contracting infections and facilitates the transmission of HIV, which the victim may remain with it for months, or the rest of her life.
- FGM/C causes complications during child delivery such as postpartum hemorrhage and neonatal death.
- FGM/C victims also suffer from reduced female sexual function index (FSFI). This is due to pain or lack of pleasure during sex.
- These cultural practice procedures can as well lead to infertility.
- The procedure leaves the victim with permanent genital marks or even scars like keloids or cysts.
- FGM/C also leads to psychological problems where the victim loses trust in her caregivers and lifetime feelings of anxiety and depression as a woman. Can

Root causes of FGM/C

The root causes of FGM/C vary depending on community cultural beliefs and norms. According to some communities, FGM/C is the rite of passage from childhood to womanhood. In other communities, FGM/C is perceived as a means to suppress women's sexuality. While some others uphold this form of cultural practice since it is believed to crown honor to a girl's future marriage or family (UNICEF, 2019). Some associate it with religious beliefs yet there is no scripture that has been stated to support it.

Prevalence of FGM/C in Kenya

Despite FGM/C been outlawed by the government in 2011, some communities to date still practice it. The statistics show that around four million women and girls aged 15-49 have been subjected to some form of FGM/C. The FGM/C prevalence rate varies with the region mostly large percentage (98%) of those still practicing it are from the Northeast part of the country while the west and central parts of the country don't practice it. As per the UNFPA (2014) data, girls and women between the age of 15 to 49 years who have undergone FGM/C present varying percentages in different regions in the country. In North-Eastern 98%, Rift Valley 27%, Nyanza 32%, Eastern 26%, central 17%, Coast 10%, Nairobi 8% and Western 1% of the women and girls (age 15-49) have undergone this cultural practice.

There was a projection made by the Kenyan government to end FGM/C by 2022. Even though commendable strides have been achieved, many girls are still being subjected to this cultural practice which leaves them harmed and traumatized (Kimeu, 2022).

Emerging trends of FGM/C

Medicalization of FGM/C practice. This is the current trend in FGM/C where trained health workers are the ones performing procedures. Besides, the practice is carried out at the health clinic in the community (Komba, et al, 2020). The availability of retired healthcare workers and the existence of private clinics in the estates facilitated the practice of FGM/C in the current age. It is then high time to make the community aware that the medicalization of FGM does not make it safer in any case.

FGM/C practice is secretive and now girls of much younger age undergo the practice. Girls from the age of 4 to 6 secretly undergo FGM making people think the practice is no longer in existence (UNICEF, 2019). This could be

done in unimaginable places such as clinics, cross-border and at night to avoid attracting attention and being caught by the law.

CHAPTER 2: MENTAL HEALTH

What is mental health?

Mental health entails emotional, psychological and social well-being that may cause some implicate on how we think, feel and behave. Female Genital Mutilation or cutting affects women's mental health even many years after the procedure. Women undergo severe pain and many other unpleasant effects because of the procedure done by the people they know and cannot say anything about it or against it (Fontes, 2019). The survivors of this practice in most cases exhibit physiological trauma. This could be depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress, and somatization, the feeling of isolation, shock and sadness among others.

Challenges faced by survivors of FGM/C – related to mental health

FGM/C survivors several physiological, emotional and social well-being challenges. These have a ravenous effect on their way of thinking, acting and feeling. Include-

- Sexual abuse vulnerability - a girl no matter the age is considered a grown woman after undergoing FGM/C. This exposes a child to force sex or early marriage even at the young age of even 5 or 6 years.
- Terror, anxiety and phobia is another psychological effect of FGM/C that can result in nightmares and fear.
- Isolation - women face stigma and social isolation especially when others or health workers react to the narration of their experience. They feel they are missing out on important positive sexual experiences that their friends who did not undergo FGM enjoy (Milken Institute School of Public Health George Washington University, 2019)
- Betrayal to girls without being made aware in advance and they do not obtain their consent. After undergoing the procedure, they feel betrayed by their parents, family, and community at large (Fontes, 2019).
- Powerless and vulnerability to FGM makes women to helpless. They are weak and unable to fight for their rights and thus accept everything the way they are present even biased against them.

Impact of Covid-19 on the mental health of survivors of FGM/C

In general, Covid-19 had several negative impacts on the FGM/C programs, survivors, and anyone at risk. Mental health specifically Covid-19 affected survivors in several ways that include-

- Making them vulnerable to sexual abuse and early marriage. Economic hardship during the Covid-19 lockdown period increased the rate of forced and early marriages. This could result in anxiety and depression among the FGM/C survivor.
- The covid-19 pandemic exacerbated terror, anxiety and phobia among survivors who were benefiting from program recovery services. Project workers who were helping survivors through counseling among other services were prevented from moving to service stations due to the covid-19 pandemic lockdown and could

not attend to FGM survivors. These, therefore, interfered with recovery and survivors' healing process. FGM survivors with mental health issues such as physiological trauma were interrupted by the Pandemic crisis.

Anxiety – definition, types, causes symptoms, and treatments

Anxiety is a mental health disorder. The reaction to stress alerts someone of potential danger. Types of anxiety disorder are-

- Generalized anxiety disorders - having excess, unrealistic worry and tension with minor on no reason.
- Panic disorder - sudden, intense fear that result results in an attack.
- Social anxiety - overwhelming worry and self-consciousness concerning everyday social situations.
- Specific phobia - having intense fear beyond appreciation of particular things or situations. Examples are fear of heights that cause you to avoid ordinary heights.
- Agoraphobia - having an intense fear of places where it seems impossible to escape when an emergency occurs. For example, feeling anxious on an airplane.
- Separation anxiety - feeling scared when a loved one leaves your sight.
- Selective mutism - children fear talking in public but talk well with family members.
- Medication-induced anxiety disorder - this is anxiety caused by the use of certain drugs, or withdrawal from drug abuse.

Causes of an anxiety disorder include-

- Genetic - anxiety genes inheritance
- Environmental anxiety - anxiety that develops due to a stressful condition someone has seen or been living.
- Withdrawal/abuse anxiety - anxiety feeling that comes because of drug misuse or withdrawal from drugs.
- Medical condition - conditions from lung, heart, and thyroid with symptoms similar to that of anxiety or worsen anxiety symptoms.

Symptoms of anxiety are heart palpitations, tensed muscle, and shortness of breath, loss of energy, dry mouth, sleeping problem, panic, and fear among others.

Treatment

- Medication - there is a wide range of drugs, which are used to treat anxiety. There are antidepressants, Bupropion, Benzodiazepines, Beta-blocker and antipsychotics, and Buspirone. It is always advised to consult a psychiatrist who will tell you the advantages and disadvantages of the available drugs and advice on the best option for a person.
- Psychotherapy - this is a form of counseling that helps a person to know how emotions his/her behavior. It involves discussing your thoughts and feelings with mental health specialist who will then give you options on how to understand and manage them together with anxiety (Brennan, 2021)

Stress- definition, types, causes symptoms and treatments

Stress is our body's reaction to real or perceived harmful situations. People vary and therefore a situation can cause stress to someone while it may not cause stress to others.

Types of stress

- Acute stress - is a short-term type of stress experienced in day-to-day life. It can be positive or more distressing
- Chronic stress - this stress appears to be unending. This could be a result of a dramatic experience.
- Episodic acute stress - is acute stress that occurs rampantly to an extent that it becomes a way of life.
- Eustress stress - Also known to be. The positive type of stress that makes someone energized. It involves a surge of adrenaline in some situations such as when trying to meet a dateline.

Cause of stress: -

- Disasters and calamities
- Financial instability
- Being a of crime
- Chronic illness
- Working in a dangerous profession

Symptoms of stress

- Behavioral symptoms - this involves exhibiting nervous behavior, change of appetite, and use of alcohol and drugs.
- Cognitive symptoms - poor judgment, pessimistic, constant worry and being unable to concentrate among others.
- Emotional symptoms - avoiding others, low self-esteem, finding it hard to relax, moody and easily agitated
- Physical symptoms - dry mouth and problem swallowing, headaches, low energy, frequent infections. and loss of sexual desires,

Treatment of stress

- Psychotherapy - mindfulness-based stress reduction. and cognitive behavioral therapy are some of the therapy that may be employed to help reduce stress level
- Medication - Medication may be prescribed for stress-associated symptoms such as antidepressants, ant-acid, sleeping aid and others.
- Complementary and alternative medication - This refers to aromatherapy, medications, massage, and yoga (Scott, 2022).

Depression - definition, types, causes symptoms and treatments

Depression is a mood disorder that affects someone's ability to function. It is a continuation of feeling sadness, anger and emptiness for a minimum f two weeks or even years.

Types of depression

- Major depression - is a depression where someone has a constant state of sadness.
- Persistent depressive disorder also referred to as dysthymia. A type of depression with symptoms that last for two years.

- Psychotic depression - this is where psychosis (having false beliefs and detachment from reality) and depression are experienced at the same time.
- Bipolar disorder - experiencing depression for weeks with a mania that makes the person lose control.

Causes of depression

- Unpleasant and stressful life occurrences like relationship break up, family conflict
- Recurrence of not completing depression treatment dose
- Medical crises such as a new diagnosis of chronic illness

Symptoms of depression are

- Too much sleep
- Change of appetite
- Loss of energy
- Restlessness
- Inability to think and concentrate
- Depressed mood
- Loss of sex desires
- Loss of interest in what was previously enjoyed
- Feeling guilty and worthless

Treatment

- Drugs treatment - physician prescription of antidepressants
- Psychotherapy - its one-on-one counseling and cognitive behavior therapy.
- Support - this involves discussing the practical solutions or possible causes among others (Goldman, 2021).

Psychological Trauma definition, types, causes symptoms and treatments

Psychological Trauma is damage to psych after going extremely frightening which may lead to some difficulties in normal adapting well thereafter. Reaction to trauma varies with the person and so is the recovery. With a proper support system, some will recover well while others may develop challenges right after the trauma thus making recovery difficult (Cascade Behavioral Health, 2022)

Psychological Trauma is categorized into three:-

- Acute trauma - It single extreme distressing event which threatens someone's emotional and physical security. e.g. Assault, accident, rape
- Chronic trauma - is a type of trauma that occurs when multiple distressing, traumatic event happens to someone for a prolonged period. For example, domestic abuse, a series of illnesses, and bullying.

- Complex trauma - This type of trauma entails exposure to several, different dramatic experiences in the interpersonal context. It has a severe effect on the victim's mind. Examples of complex trauma are family disputes, and neglect among others.

The cause of Psychological Trauma can be a result of a single occurrence of a trauma event or continuous relentless stress. The causes of psychological trauma include-

- Involvement in an accident
- Natural disasters like thunder striking, fire among others
- Acts of violence like war, robbery among others
- Interpersonal violence such as the suicide of a friend/ relative and rape.

Symptoms of psychological trauma are

- Cognitive symptoms nightmares, disorientation, mood swings, loss of memory and visual images of the event.
- Behavioral symptoms refer to a lacking of interest in things, which were enjoyable, social withdrawal, and avoiding memory, as well as triggers of an occurrence.
- Physical symptoms comprise altered sleeping and eating patterns, extreme alertness in fear of potential danger, sexual dysfunction, and being easily startled among others.
- Psychological symptoms of psychological trauma are things like shame, disbelief, depression, irritability, emotional numbness, anxiety, guilt and anger.

Mood Disorder - definition, types, causes symptoms and treatments

Mood disorders are mental health condition that affects someone's emotional state. It involves a serious change in moods of extreme happiness, sadness, or both.

The following are **types of mood disorders**

- Depression- is characterized by grief and sadness case by triggers or not caused by anything.
- Bipolar mood disorder - swings of moods from depression to mania
- Premenstrual dysphoric disorder - this is a mood disorder that comes several days before menstruation and disappears after some time.
- Intermittent explosive disorder – It is a mood disorder where someone experiences behavioral outbursts beyond situation proportion.

Causes of mood disorder

- Medication and abuse - use of substances or certain medications lead to mood disorder. For instance, someone who abuses drugs will always experience a serious change in mood
- Traumatic life events - when someone was involved in traumatic events like violence, sexual abuse, or the loss of a loved one.
- Inheritance - someone from a family whose member was diagnosed with a mood disorder generally has a higher probability of developing moody.

Symptoms of mood disorder

- Loss of interest in what was previously enjoyed
- Too much or not enough sleep
- Losing or gaining weight
- Too much energy or loss of energy
- Loss of appetite
- Feeling sad regularly
- Racing thoughts
- Life risk behaviors
- Feeling worthless and hopeless etc.

Treatment

- Medication - some types of mood disorders like bipolar depression are treated by long-life medications while in another type, anti-anxiety and depressants.
- Psychotherapy - This is a standard therapy for treating an individual with a mood disorder. In some instances, a combination of medication and psychotherapy is used to treat mood disorders.

Fatigue - definition, types, causes symptoms and treatments

Fatigue is a feeling of tiredness, exhaustion, weariness and lack of energy. It is not being sleepy or drowsy. Fatigue entails a lack of both motivation and energy.

Types of fatigue

- Physical fatigue - having physical fatigue means being unable to do those things that you have usually been doing. For example, being unable to walk uphill due to muscle weakness.
- Mental fatigue - poor concentration and difficulty staying awake and focused.

Cause of fatigue

- Lifestyle factors - fatigue caused by activities and other lifestyle choices like lack of exercise, being overweight, lack of sleep
- Physical health conditions - this type of fatigue is caused by medical conditions like arthritis, diabetes, cancer, anemia, and sleeping disorder among others.
- Mental health issues - anxiety and depression are mental health condition that results in fatigue

Symptoms of fatigue

- Loss of appetite
- Depression
- Explainable weight loss
- Unable to concentrate
- Pain
- Swelling(edema) and lymph nodes

- Breathing problems or chest pain
- Heart palpitation

Treatment of fatigue

- Cognitive-behavioral therapy - talk therapy focused on thoughts and beliefs that aid in identifying and reforming from having negative thoughts, emotions and behavior.
- Physical therapy - involves things like exercise and massage that improve strength and help in conditioning.
- Medication - This involves the use of pain relievers and taking drugs for a specific illness
- Relaxing - this comprises meditation and mindfulness (Brazier, 2020).

Burnout - definition, types, causes symptoms and treatments

Burnout refers to feeling emotional, physically and mentally drained caused by extreme and prolonged stress.

Types of burnout

- Burnout by socialization - burnout for trying to give please/let others have pleasure.
- Burnout by boredom - burnout due to the need for change or challenge.
- Burnout by volume - feeling exhausted and having no time for oneself because your time is completely booked.

Causes

- Work-related causes of burnout are lack of reward, unchallenging work, and work with high pressure.
- Lifestyle causes of burnout - working a lot, not having sufficient sleep, having a lot of responsibilities and little help from other people.
- Personality traits cause burnout - perfectionist tendency, high achievers type of person, being reactant to delegate and others.

Symptoms

- Physical symptoms include feeling tired, low immunity, headache, change of sleep and appetite.
- Emotional symptoms encompass feeling helpless, loss of motivation, detachment and a sense of failure.
- Behavioral symptoms the use of drug abuse, smoking and food to cope, withdrawal from responsibilities, social withdrawal

Treatment

- Prescribed medication
- Counseling

CHAPTER 3: EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

What is emotional wellbeing?

Emotional well-being refers to how well a person is able of accepting and managing their emotions and adapt to adversity and stressful life challenges. As for Sisson (2022), emotional wellbeing entails being aware of and understanding self-emotions and their management when faced with challenges throughout life.

Why is emotional wellbeing important?

Emotional well-being is significant since it enables one to deal with changes and uncertainties in life. It makes someone stay positive and manage stress, adapt to changes and positively to difficult life events. Emotional well-being is very important since it affects our daily activities in life. The emotional strength we develop enables us to make sound decisions and embrace life's optimism (The Bach, 2018). Having good emotional well-being is therefore the essence of living a complete and balanced life. Thus good emotional health, therefore, leads to fulfilled relationship with the loved one.

Emotional wellness in life is important since it will determine how well one will navigate life's difficulties. It makes someone in touch with her/his feelings and as well holds them in their rightful position (Corte, 2019). This will enable someone to withstand the change and challenges encountered in life. This entails handling life challenges with confidence and resilience and bouncing back when faced with life difficulties.

Being able to manage our emotions can as well contribute positively to our physical health. Emotional and physical health is intertwined in a way that one will always affect the other (The Bach, 2018). Good physical health lead to positive emotional health and emotional health will contribute the same to physical health.

Factors that can influence emotional wellbeing

- Factors that can influence emotional well-being are;-
- Change in physical health
- Death if a loved one
- Live challenges in the workplace, relationships, school and home
- Retirement leads to change in social circle and sense of purpose
- Traveling far away from people you are used to

Tips to improve emotional well-being among survivors of FGM/C

To improve the emotional well-being of FGM survivors, it is essential to provide them with constantly available and reliable emotional support. This involves ensuring there are reliable formal counseling services, which will aid in improving survivors' emotional health (The Grl Generation, 2018). This will thus enable them to handle the negative emotions that come because of FGM.

To improve the emotional well-being of women who underwent FGM, it is significant to provide them with a safe space to reflect on their experiences and its implication to their female children (The Grl Generation, 2018). This will relieve them and allow them to think about the implications of FGM that will help in ending it in future generations. This will reinforce social connections, reduction of stress and be mindful.

Signs a person is having trouble with their emotional wellbeing

To be able to realize that someone is encountering challenges with their emotional wellbeing,

- Isolation of oneself
- Loss of interest in normally enjoyable activities
- Altered sleep or eating pattern
- Ignore self-care
- Self-harm (Sissons, 2022)
- Persistent feelings of hopelessness
- Mood swings

Tips to improve emotional health and well-being

- Building strong, positive interpersonal relationships is one way of improving emotional well-being.
- Practice mindfulness and be committed to living in the present. Do not be stressed by the past or be worried about the future since it cannot change anything, instead, live and remain in present (Corte, 2019).
- Do not suppress your feelings and emotions. At least look for a way of releasing energies like sharing/talking to a friend, or going for a jog.

CHAPTER 4: SELF CARE

What is Self-Care?

Self-care is all about taking care of oneself to be healthy and well. It is doing all the things you want to attain while coping with stressors. Hussain and Girl generation (2018) refers to self-care as the ability to uphold a positive attitude despite the challenges one is going through. WHO defines Self-care as the ability to promote and maintain health, prevent diseases and cope with illness and disability with or without the help of health caregivers. Self-care involves doing something without sacrificing important parts of one's life. It is staying well, safe and fulfilled.

Why Is It Critical for Your Well-Being?

Understanding your well-being involves knowing what satisfies you and then looking for a way to be there. Self-care is essentially necessary for one's well-being since it is part of the solution to our daily challenges. It enables us to handle daily stressors and cope well with situations.

Types of Self-care

There are three types of self-care:-

- Physical self-care - these are activities that your physical health. For instance, having enough good sleep, taking healthy food, doing, attention to medication, and doing some physical exercise among others.
- Emotional self-care - is identifying and nurturing oneself feelings, conscious inner being and intellect. This could involve things such as self-talk, refusing that thing that gives stress and setting dates with your friend or others (Lawler, 2021)
- Spiritual self-care - this is an initiative to deepen our connection with the higher self. This entails things like attending church services, meditation, taking a nature walk and several others

The Effects: How Self-Care Benefits Your Health and Well-Being

- It is clinically proven that self-care help in healing or controlling anxiety and depression, stress, frustration and anger.
- Self-care is also significant in improving physical health. The study has shown that self-care lowers the risk of getting heart disease, cancer and stroke.
- With spiritual well-being, self-care enables a person to keep in touch with his/her high power and understand the essence of life (Glowiak, 2020).

How to Start a Self-Care Routine

When developing a self-care routine one should consider eight dimensions (emotional, occupational, social, environmental, intellectual, spiritual, financial and physical) which make everyone complete. It is important to know the types of self-care, their importance, know we are there is a need for action (self-care) and reflection on your goal before coming up with a self-care plan.

The self-care plan involves-

- Identifying one's stressors. Knowing your stressors and analysis is an approach to solve whether it worked or not will help one to acknowledge it and go for the alternative. One can approach this by asking her/himself some questions such as what is the current stress or conflict in your life. How long have you been having it/them? How have you managed them in the past? Did it help?
- The next step is thinking of what to change to manage the identified triggers or stressors. This could be done by talking with a counselor or friend or writing it down.

Also, note what will be required for self-care when making the plan. It will help in ensuring you get the best experience during self-care. This entail having a quiet place, clean space, time, and energy among others (Saxena, 2022).

Support groups

Support groups are when people with common problems or issues come together to share what is bothering them. In the process, they give support, encouragement and comfort to each other.

Importance of support group

- Through shared experience - A support group gives someone a safe place to get constructive information from experienced individuals.
- Maintain a sense of hope - From shared experience, a person gets encouraged and makes her/them feel less alone in the situation.
- Learn better strategies - It also teaches someone how to cope with the problem s/he is facing.
- Learn self-care tips - Through sharing participants offer creative ways how to handle their situations. Learning how to deal with the conditions and/or stressors helps improve their well being

Tips to form and run a support group, who should join

- Identify and invite two or several people with whom you share the interest in starting the group.
- Developing a plan for the group. Before having the first group gathering, one has to decide on some crucial things for a group such as a venue, rules and frequency.
- Deciding a suitable place preferably accessible central place. The places should also have things like parking spaces and essential facilities such as washrooms.
- Seeking publicity using different media. Making fliers to let many people possible know about the meeting. The message should be brief and is the venue, date, time and purpose of the group.
- Make a program for the support group. Have time for hanging around, checking attendance, having someone experienced to help out, and putting extra effort into educational components.
- Group rules help in knowing who should attend the group gathering. It will state the age, caregivers, or people facing certain types of challenges or open to anyone. (The national spinal cord injury resource center, 2010).

What should govern a support group?

A support group should have a ground rule that involves the use of appropriate language, respect for each other, being non-judgmental and upholding confidentiality.

How can a support group be effective and sustainable?

The support group is effective if it meets the intended purpose and product desire result. On the other hand, it is sustainable if it can continue operating over some time meeting the intended objectives. A support group can thus be effective and sustainable when:-

- It gives everyone a chance to talk
- Keep track of group progress
- Emphasize the essence of confidentiality
- Encouraged outside contact among members
- Share support group responsibilities
- Keeps recruiting
- Not idealizing the support group
- Staying focused on the purpose of the support group even when group dynamics.
- Keep recruiting

CHAPTER 5: Safeguarding and Do No Harm Approach

Introduction

These are measures in place to protect the program's target group or vulnerable group from harm and exploitation during implementation. They are in contact with the program. This for instance implies safe information, safe project workers, and a safe program.

What is the Do No Harm Approach?

Do No Harm Approach is an approach principle in research ethics that ensure the program does not intentionally or otherwise harm the workers, campaigner and activities, survivor, other women and girls, families and community. Examples of this are causing stigma to survivors, and undermining local authority concerns.

Who is at risk?

It is the possibility of harm or something bad to occur which will cause injuries or damage or anything unpleasant. It also may refer to future uncertainties, which lead to loss, destruction, or harm to a person's physical, emotional, and mental life.

What are the risks?

- Risk of being subjected to FGM/C
- Bullying
- Stigma and trauma
- Sexual harassment
- Early marriage
- Exploitation

What causes safeguarding risks?

Safeguarding risks entails protecting or controlling the harm or negative implications a program may cause on vulnerable populations or communities. In most cases, unequal power dynamics safeguard risks. Factors that cause unequal power dynamics to cause safeguarding risks are-

- Patriarchy - preserves gender traditions that prevent women and girls from claiming and exercising their rights. This makes vulnerable groups such as girls, women and children at of harm such as early marriages, domestic violence, child abuse and harmful, FGM, practices.

- Poverty - Creating of facilitating power imbalance between the poor and the rich, which will hinder the less privileged the vulnerable group from getting an education, independence, and jobs thus leading to safeguard risks like exploitation.
- Colonialism – Western imperialism perpetuates dependency syndrome and fosters its influence. Donors' countries have more privileges over those countries receiving the aids; which means those receiving the aid might be at risk of harm from those countries donating and can be subjected to emotional abuse, and bullying.

Safeguarding approaches

Safeguarding approaches consist of-

- Having a code of conduct in place - the code of conduct is clear and has elaborate expectations from everyone. The parties sign to show their commitment to the standards and understanding of the consequences of breaking them.
- Having access to independent whistleblower - every employee has access to independent whistleblowing support routine reports of any concern.
- Vulnerable (girls, women, children, junior staff/volunteers) group safeguarding policy - setting out guidelines and procedures that will ensure the protection of the vulnerable project's stakeholders group from anyway.
- Having a safeguard oversight team- the team will ensure that there is a culture of accountability and endless improvement on the subject of safeguarding and reporting.

Responsibility for safeguarding

- Board member - Responsible for ensuring safeguarding is effective done and is presented and contemplated in every board meeting
- Ensuring the internal child is safeguarding focal point key contact.
- Signing Disclosure and Barring Service - Obtaining Disclosure and Barring Service by management and all other employees is compulsory.
- Training - Safeguarding training of employees, which covers responsibilities, response, reporting and any, concerning issues on safeguarding children and adults.
- Turning down suspicious support requests and consulting with security bodies for any serious concerns.
- Background checks to be done on partners who visit the community or project beneficiaries.
- Screening communication from the sponsor to the beneficiary to ensure that there is no harm or inappropriate content.
- Make sure that the data and information forwarded to the sponsors are appropriate and well-handled (Plan International, 2022).

CHAPTER 6: GO-TO-RESOURCES

What resources exist for mental health, emotional well-being and self-care globally (online), in Kenya (facilities, online resources? What resources exist in Narok County?

Globally there are many online resources on mental health, emotional well-being and self-care. WHO has written a lot on mental health, self-care and emotional well-being? For instance, it has resources on ways to take care of mental health and well-being. This includes doing activities you enjoy, talking to someone, avoiding harmful substances, taking care of physical health; take a few minutes to focus on your surrounding environment among others.

UNICEF (2022) provides good online materials of mental health and well-being being for children and young people. It tells of how young people's mental health can affect their social relationships, making positive choices, ability to take care of themselves, and learning among others. UNICEF has much more resources about adolescent and mental health and wellbeing. For instance, how to identify the need for mental health among teens, how to take care of adolescents with mental health problems, and how to bring up and prepare children to handle mental health issues, Depression, and stress among others.

According to Dekin (2019) behavioral health practitioner in the United States, self-care, which is the practice of caring for physical, emotional and psychological well-being is proved to significantly help the mental health of a person. For instance, self-care depends on self-awareness that helps people with mental health to realize the variation of their emotions and their triggers thus devising a way to deal with them.

As per United States National Council for Mental Well-being (2022), self-care has a clinical establishment to minimize and end anxiety, increase happiness and reduce stress. The core goals of Self-care includes fostering sustained relationships, taking care of physical and stress management, aiming at balancing different dimension of your life and knowing your spiritual and emotional needs. United States National Council for Mental Well-being further encourages choice and participation in activities that will help promote self-care.

In Africa, mental health and emotional well-being have been identified as non-communicable sickness, which is increasingly resulting in the death and disability of women (Africa Woman Development fund, 2021). Africa Woman Development fund has produced several resources on African women's health series of films on mental health

featuring rural women, podcast episodes on accessing mental health and emotional care, article on service seeking, avenues and solutions, among others, for African woman's health and emotional well-being.

There are many material and research papers available on mental health, emotional well-being and self-care in Kenya. Kenya ministry of health (2022) has published information concerning mental health issues, such as addressing mental health and the reason why the stigma against mental health should end. For instance, of the reasons why mental illnesses must end is because of stigma experienced as a rest of cultural myths and misconceptions, which then sustained a lack of knowledge and wrong perception. According to the ministry, mental health disrupts physical well-being, thus resulting in numerous dysfunction and extreme effect on the person.

There are also research studies that done concerning mental health, emotional well-being and self-care. Study on emotional and psychological well-being in Kakuma refugee camp where the common emotional issues noticed are anger, fear, sadness and hopelessness. It is reported that refugees' current emotional well-being triggers and the unpleasant situations they previously underwent affect their emotional well-being (Horn, 2010).

AfyAfrika (2021) in Narok County on their safeguarding policy material has significant information on emotional well-being, mental health, and self-care. It has elaborated on emotional well-being and its practices. It also explains self-care in action for staff, which involves having boundaries in place to give time for self-care and monitoring burnout and fatigue to enable early interventions.

On emotional well-being, AfyAfrika gave examples of the effects of poor emotional well-being (trauma) and components of emotional well-being practice that include self-care in action and culture of care.

Resources in Narok County

There are 3 health institutions offering mental clinic services in Narok County

1. Narok District hospital
2. Olulung'a Sub-county hospital
3. Kilgoris Sub-county hospital

These institutions have officers in-charge of mental health services including Counsellors, Psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, and social workers

Contact persons;

1. Dickson Kaguya - 0727580978 - GBV - Mental health services.

Counsellors/Therapists

- 2. Ivy Murigi - 0726445485
- 3. Emily Sena - 0713748444
- 4. Suzzanne Leisin - 0721853354
- 5. Jane Tuitho - 0725307000

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