



CONCEPT NOTE -- ROUNDTABLE ON:

MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: MOVING TO IMPLEMENTATION

In 2014 the STIAS Roundtable meeting will focus on *Mental Health Challenges in Sub-Saharan Africa: Moving to implementation*¹.

Context

- STIAS has identified Health in Transition as one of its six major strategic focus areas over the next 5 years or so. STIAS takes a long term perspective and from time to time organizes roundtables which aim to act as a bridge between the science and major thinking at a global level on the one hand, and policymakers on the other. The experience of Sweden in planning and delivering mental health services will be very valuable in these deliberations.
- To understand the concept of Health in Transition, please see the paper by Stig Wall². This focuses largely on epidemiological transition but current global health trends embrace other critical transitions including those in health systems, technologies, etc.
- In March 2013 a group³ met at STIAS to brainstorm around the theme of Health in Transition and identified Global Mental Health as an important theme to be addressed. Subsequent discussions among the Core Group⁴ have narrowed the focus to South Africa and sub-Saharan Africa (SA & SSA).
- Two linked events have been planned at STIAS to move the agenda forward:
 - A **Workshop**, planned for November 18-20, 2013, and
 - A **Roundtable**, planned for February 24-26, 2014

The smaller November 2013 Workshop focused on preparation for the larger February 2014 Roundtable.

¹ Developed in a Workshop at STIAS from 18 to 20 November 2013; based on a Concept Note developed by Stig Wall, Marian Jacobs and Abdallah Daar.

² Appendix 1.

³ Bernard Lategan, Jimmy Volmink, H. Mahomed, Marian Jacobs, Abdallah Daar, Stig Wall, Maud Olofsson, Lars Weinehall, Kjell Asplund and STIAS staff.

⁴ Stig Wall, Marian Jacobs, Abdallah Daar, Maud Olofsson, Stias staff (Hendrik Geyer, Bernard Lategan and Johann Groenewald).

The February 2014 Roundtable

The Roundtable is meant to bring together at STIAS key individuals, some of whom will have participated in the November 2013 Workshop, with key decision-makers from government and industry.

- The outcomes of the November 2013 Workshop will feed into this roundtable
- The aim of this meeting will be to identify concrete ways of moving forward with implementing the South Africa National Mental Health Roadmap, taking into account potential opportunities and challenges, learning from the Swedish experience, identifying and helping sub-Saharan African countries that would like to be involved in their own road-mapping and implementation of WHO's MHGap recommendations
- The Roundtable will highlight briefly the work of STIAS in general but also the useful work that STIAS intends to do in its long term strategic research themes⁵, which include the Health in Transition theme (starting with Global Health/Global Mental Health)
- The Roundtable will create a forum for discussion amongst researchers, practitioners, policy makers, civil society and potential beneficiaries of research in this area and its application or implementation.

Background from the November 2013 Workshop

Experts from South Africa, Sweden, SA & SSA, a few key world experts and STIAS people met to:

- 1) Learn about the South Africa National Mental Health Roadmap⁶ and how this, and the process of its creation, might inform similar initiatives in other sub-Saharan African Countries
- 2) Learn from Swedish Experts how they have developed and implemented their mental health programs with an emphasis on prevention and care in community settings. This will be of great value for South Africa as it begins planning to implement its own Roadmap, and for those sub-Saharan African countries who would like to develop or implement their own roadmaps
- 3) Begin a conversation with South African policymakers to identify key next implementation steps and look at the potential opportunities and challenges.

To start with, the Core Group has identified the following as potential areas of interest (to be reviewed in light of priorities identified in the National Roadmap):

- a. Mental health and Violence (especially gender-based violence)
- b. Substance abuse, especially alcohol
- c. Integration of mental health services into primary health⁷, especially maternal and neonatal care, HIV care, and chronic non-communicable diseases care

⁵ <http://stias.ac.za/research/themes/>

⁶ South Africa National Mental Health Roadmap; will be available soon

- d. Trends in basic science research and other approaches, especially the move by the NIMH away from reliance on the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) to Research Domain Criteria (RDoC) and the implications of this for the future of mental health in South Africa and sub-Saharan Africa
 - e. The move from treatment to prevention -- is screening for early mental health problems at an early age in community settings a realistic possibility for SA & SSA?
- It was resolved to use a definition of mental health that essentially encompasses MNS disorders i.e. mental, neurological and substance abuse disorders⁸, and global mental health as defined in the paper in *Nature* by Collins et al on Grand Challenges in Global Mental Health⁹ (taking a global perspective, emphasizing a life-course approach, etc). That paper identifies major challenges and research priorities, which we could usefully review at the Workshop.
 - To make the Workshop Roundtable even more useful, a specific focus on *integration* was proposed, i.e. integration of mental health CARE into the primary health care setting and into chronic diseases care settings that emphasize PREVENTION (for example possible mental health screening programs using community health workers coupled to a system for referrals- an area that requires rigorous implementation research and application of delivery science).

Discussions at the Workshop were informed by a literature scan encompassing:

- The World Health Organization's MHGap programme¹⁰,
- Recent large scale research funding opportunities and successful grantee projects (e.g. from Grand Challenges Canada¹¹ and from National Institute of Mental Health of NIH¹²).
- The South African Mental Health Roadmap.
- The outcomes of a major mental health meeting organized by the Gulbenkian Foundation¹³.
- The work and experience of Africa-wide groups such as the Africa Mental Health Foundation¹⁴.

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⁷ We will draw upon the 5 papers in PLoS Medicine published in the last few months

⁸ World Health Organisation; and Appendix 3

⁹ Collins et al. Grand Challenges in Global Mental Health. *Nature*

¹⁰ MHGap programme

¹¹ www.grandchallenges.ca

¹² <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/index.shtml>

¹³ http://www.gmhmovement.org/binary_data/713_gulbmhplatf.pdf

¹⁴ <http://www.africamentalhealthfoundation.org>