



MENTAL HEALTH IN SOUTH AFRICA AND SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Concept Note

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Context

- This initiative is being developed by STIAS in association with the Marcus and Marianne Wallenberg Foundation of Sweden.
- 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 aims 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 Wall ¹. 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 group² met at STIAS to brainstorm around the theme of Health in Transition and identified Global Mental Health as the first priority to be addressed. Subsequent discussions among the Core Group³ 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 24-25, 2014.

The smaller November 2013 Workshop will be to prepare for the larger February 2014 Roundtable. Policymakers will be involved early and participate in the planning of the whole process, and will be key participants in the Roundtable.

¹ Appendix 1: “Health in Transition”, available on the STIAS website (www.stias.ac.za) under Events > Mental Health Workshop, November 2013.

² Bernard Lategan, Jimmy Volmink, H. Mahomed, Marian Jacobs, Abdallah Daar, Stig Wall, Maud Olofsson, Lars Weinehall, et al and STIAS staff

³ Stig Wall, Marian Jacobs, Abdallah Daar, Maud Olofsson, STIAS staff (Hendrik Geyer, Bernard Lategan and Johann Groenewald et al)

The November 2013 Workshop

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

- 1) Learn about the South Africa National Mental Health Roadmap⁴ 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 (These will 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 health⁵, especially maternal and neonatal care, HIV care, and chronic non-communicable diseases care
 - 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. How we can 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?
- We will use a definition of mental health that essentially encompasses MNS disorders i.e. mental, neurological and substance abuse disorders⁶, and global mental health as defined in the paper in *Nature* by Collins et al on Grand Challenges in Global Mental Health⁷ (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 even more useful, we propose a specific focus on *integration*, i.e. integration of mental health CARE into the primary health

⁴ South Africa National Mental Health Roadmap; will be available soon

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

⁶ World Health Organisation; and Appendix 3

⁷ Collins et al. Grand Challenges in Global Mental Health. *Nature*

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).

The discussions at the Workshop will be informed by a literature scan that will encompass:

- The World Health Organization's MHGap programme⁸,
- Recent large scale research funding opportunities and successful grantee projects (e.g. from Grand Challenges Canada⁹ and from National Institute of Mental Health of NIH¹⁰). This will be useful to understand recent developments and research directions.
- The South African Mental Health Roadmap.
- The outcomes of a major mental health meeting organized by the Gulbenkian Foundation¹¹.
- We will also draw from the work and experience of Africa-wide groups such as the Africa Mental Health Foundation¹².

The February 2014 Roundtable (to be organized by the Core Group and other experts)

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. Some of these will have participated in the November Workshop.

- The outcomes of the November 2013 Workshop will feed into this roundtable.
- The aim of this larger 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.
- In the process we will highlight briefly the work of STIAS in general but also the useful work that STIAS intends to do in its long term strategic themes (currently being developed), which include the Health in Transition theme (starting with Global Health/Global Mental Health).

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⁸ MHGap programme

⁹ www.grandchallenges.ca

¹⁰ <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/index.shtml>

¹¹ http://www.gmhmovement.org/binary_data/713_gulbmhplatf.pdf

¹² <http://www.africamentalhealthfoundation.org>