

A close-up photograph of several children's faces, showing their eyes and ears. The image is partially obscured by a semi-transparent yellow rectangular overlay that contains the main text.

# VOICES

OF HOPE AND CHANGE

Stories from across Africa, celebrating ten years of social and emotional support for children, their families and communities.

## THANKS & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### TO OUR IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

This publication would not have been possible without our dedicated partners from all across East and Southern Africa, who have shared their challenges and successes with us, so that others might learn from them.

They, and the communities and families they work with, gave their time, energy and commitment to the process of collecting these stories. We thank them deeply for this.

### TO OUR FUNDING PARTNERS

Ten years ago, an extraordinary group of government and corporate funders came together to do something about the social and emotional wellbeing of children affected by HIV and AIDS in Africa. They believed in REPSSI and the vision behind us, and it is because of their belief that we are here ten years later. To the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida), and the Novartis Foundation for Sustainable Development (NFSD), we offer our sincere thanks.

# VOICES OF HOPE AND CHANGE

Stories from across Africa, celebrating ten years  
of social and emotional support for children,  
their families and communities.

Cover photo: Children at a partner's community-based centre © REPSSI, 2011.

All photos in used in this publication have followed ethical written consent procedures.

info@repssi.org | www.repssi.org | +27 11 998 5820 | PO Box 1669, Randburg, 2125, Johannesburg, South Africa



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

WHAT WE STAND FOR .....	2
A SMALL DEDICATION .....	3
OUR JOURNEY: 2002-2012 .....	4
CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF:	
Igniting Hope .....	6
Changing Behaviour .....	12
Building Communities .....	20
Combating HIV and AIDS .....	26
Skilling Those On The Ground .....	32
Working With Governments .....	38
EXPERTISE: TOOLS AND TRAINING .....	44
REPSSI PARTNERS ACROSS THE REGION .....	46

# WHAT WE STAND FOR

## LOVE. CARE. PROTECTION.

All children have the right to be cared for, loved, encouraged and protected from harm.

Children and youth exposed to the devastating effects of poverty, conflict, HIV and AIDS are especially in need of care for their emotional and social (psychosocial) wellbeing. Many have lost parents and family, experienced deprivation and abuse, been stigmatised, witnessed atrocities, and suffered overwhelming grief.

If we wish to realise the potential of these children, if we wish to build strong and productive communities, if we wish to prevent HIV infections and promote healthy behaviour, if we wish to change attitudes and reduce discrimination... then we need to provide love, care and protection for all children.

We need to provide strong systems around children and youth to build their resilience and help them **thrive**.

## WHAT IS PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT?

Psychosocial support is love, care and protection. It is support for the emotional and social aspects of a child's life, so that they can live with hope and dignity.

All services for children can and should be delivered in a way that takes account of their psychosocial wellbeing.

Psychosocial support includes:

- ensuring the participation of children
- listening and responding to children's problems
- allowing children to express their feelings and needs
- helping children to appreciate their identity
- encouraging children to set goals and reach their potential,
- ensuring children have positive, nurturing relationships
- providing life skills for children and youth

Psychosocial support is best provided by families and communities.

# A SMALL DEDICATION



At REPSSI, it is our privilege to work with a range of outstanding organisations across the region. Whether they are well-known international NGOs, or small, community-driven initiatives, our partners are all concerned with the wellbeing of vulnerable children and youth.

Throughout the decade since our foundation, we have been inspired by the successes of our partners in improving the social and emotional wellbeing of the people they work with. Despite distressing circumstances, poverty, legacies of conflict, and the devastation of HIV and AIDS, ordinary men, women, boys and girls across Africa are being supported and empowered to help one another live with hope and dignity. We are proud to have been part of that work.

In these pages, we have collected together stories of change, inspiration and encouragement from our partners. These stories show us that change is possible, and that situations of despair can be transformed by hope. We dedicate this collection to our partners.

# OUR JOURNEY - 2002-2012

It has been ten years since REPSSI was founded. Those ten years have seen REPSSI move from strength to strength, becoming a leader in psychosocial support for the region.

Together with our partners, we have placed psychosocial support on the national, regional and international agenda; become SADC's technical partner; set regional standards; trained a pool of regional expertise; created an innovative new distance-learning course; and developed a comprehensive body of knowledge which can be applied at community level.



## IN THE BEGINNING

In 2001, a meeting was convened at Masiye Camp, Zimbabwe. This "think tank" was attended by a concerned group of practitioners, children, youth, partners, managers, and academics, from organisations responding to the crisis of orphaned and vulnerable children in the region due to HIV and AIDS.

They met to discuss the social and emotional needs of these children, and how best to address them. The four lead partners were terre des hommes, Salvation Army, SAT and International HIV/AIDS Alliance.

Supported by a trio of funding partners (the Swiss agency for Development and Cooperation, the Swedish International Development Agency, and the Novartis Foundation for Sustainable Development) this group established the Regional Psychosocial Support Initiative (REPSSI).

### YEAR 1&2

REPSSI is officially registered as a non-profit initiative, and the vision of its founders is put into action.

REPSSI begins to expand, create partnerships and develop knowledge.

2003-2004

### YEAR 3&4

Adoption of the mainstreaming approach to working with partners' programmes.

8 key child service areas prioritised.

Development of Strategic Framework 2005 – 2010.

Inauguration of the REPSSI Governing Board.

Deepening partnerships in the region.

2005-2006

### YEAR 5&6

REPSSI firmly established within the field. Begin to invest in training regional facilitators.

Study initiated with the Swiss Academy for Development and ChildFund Zambia to identify a successful minimal Psychosocial Support package.

Partnership initiated with the University of KwaZulu-Natal to develop a distance-learning Certificate Course in psychosocial support.

First partnership consultative Forum held.

2007-2008

### YEAR 7&8

Finalisation of 8 mainstreaming guidelines and 14 other manuals.

REPSSI ensuring children and PSS are on the agenda at national, regional and international fora.

8 countries piloting the Certificate course, supported by UNICEF and AusAID.

REPSSI and UNICEF support SADC to develop a "Minimum package of services for orphans, vulnerable children and youth", to provide a framework for governments in region.

2009-2010

### YEAR 9&10

5 million children reached through partners. Organisations seeking endorsement from REPSSI.

REPSSI named "Technical partner" to SADC. Regional Forum held with participants from 17 countries.

Zambia study provides independent evidence of need for REPSSI interventions.

Social Enterprise launched to resource new strategy 2011-2015.

1088 students enrolled in Certificate Course across 10 countries.

2011-2012





# VOICES

## IGNITING HOPE

Hope is the wellspring of all dreams, ambitions and change. Hope can be fostered through kids' clubs and caregiver support groups; home visits to show care and attention; and training for members of the community who interact with children every day.

“We are dealing with a situation of despair and we need to restore confidence, give hope for the future... psychosocial support does that.”

– Willard Manjolo, Government of Malawi

## IGNITING HOPE

Often, the most valuable things cost nothing at all, such as encouragement, love, trust, or a listening ear. This has been a revelation for our partners, and the communities they work with.

Peter Aduda, Kisumu Area Manager with **ChildFund Kenya**, says that through the partnership with REPSSI, "We realised that there are crucial things in people's lives that do not necessarily cost money... like attention, like love, like care."

"I used to think I was poor and believed that I could not give, but now I realise that I can give back in other ways that do not require money, by giving love and encouragement."

~ Caregiver, Botswana

**ChildFund** has now changed its approach to take into account psychosocial as well as physical or material needs. "Psychosocial support has transformed that attitude that 'we don't have money', and therefore there is nothing we can do," says Peter.

Likewise, Nancy Chidzankufa, Director of Programmes with the **Malawi Girl Guides Association (MAGGA)**, has used REPSSI tools to add value to her work. She tells us that "the community has come to realise that ... they can help a child to develop holistically without money."

In Botswana, **Project Concern International** has found participants were similarly transformed through REPSSI's *Journey of Life* workshops. "I used to think I was poor and believed that I could not give, but now I realise that I can give back in other ways that do not require money, by giving love and encouragement," a caregiver said after the workshops.



Grandmother holding the hand of her grandchild at a REPSSI partner site © REPSSI/ Willem De Lange

Read more about REPSSI's *Tree of Life* and *Journey of Life* manuals mentioned here on page 44.

REPSSI has a range of quality manuals, training and tools developed over years of working with partners.

A girl in another Far North drop-in centre told us about how the support she received helped her cope with her experience of losing her mother last year: "I didn't think that I'd ever find someone to talk to, until I came here and I was told not to give up and lose hope."

## PASSING ON HOPE

Three years ago, Tshikukulume was a teenager in rural Limpopo, South Africa, who was struggling to cope with the death of his parents.

"I used to think I had no future and no hope. I felt alone," says the 22-year-old, reflecting back. That was before being invited to the Far North Drop-In Centre, supported by the **Nelson Mandela Children's Fund**.

"The thing that encouraged me at first was being told that I could get some food there," Tshikukulume says. "But after a while I realised that what I was learning there was important. They were telling me that I could do something with my life."

"To help me see that I could become somebody they started with the *Tree of Life*... It made me realise that every tree, even the biggest, starts small but can grow big. Growing is a process. As you grow you always face challenges but you don't have to move backwards, or to turn to crime or become negative. You must encourage yourself; tell yourself that one day you'll be up there, just like a big tree and bearing good fruit.

"After being assisted myself I realised that there are so many people who also need help. So... my friends and I formed a group... We fight substance abuse. We teach people about HIV and AIDS. We're encouraging school drop-outs to go back to school..."

"I'm really thinking about being a social worker... I want to be remembered for getting street kids back to school, for playing a role in stopping alcohol and substance abuse. I want to be remembered for bringing hope."

"After being assisted myself I realised that there are so many people who also need help... I want to be remembered for bringing hope."

~ youth, Limpopo

## BRINGING HOPE, ONE VISIT AT A TIME ----- WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM MY FRIENDS

*It may seem such a small act, but two REPSSI partners in Tanzania show that just being visited is of great importance.*

### Africare, Zanzibar

Shaib Mohamed, the regional manager of **Africare's** project in Zanzibar, explained to REPSSI that the volunteers on his programme used to feel they could not go on a home visit without bringing something with them, such as food or clothes. But, triggered by REPSSI's training, Africare taught the volunteers to add value in other ways, such as listening, and equipping the caretakers to better care for their children.

The reports they are receiving demonstrate that while caregivers appreciated the material support, they value the social and emotional (psychosocial) support more. One elderly man caring for a grandchild by himself, and living in extreme poverty, told Africare "This is the most important thing: knowing how to care for my grandchild."

"They were all saying, we would like to be visited," said Shaib. "Because when you visit us we really feel that there are some people who are caring for us, who are caring for our children."

**"Visiting families gives them hope, and respect... it promotes their hope and them thinking that, okay, we are still of worth in this community."**

~ Winfrida Mwashala, Director of St. Lucia Hospice and Orphanage

### St. Lucia Hospice, Arusha

Some years ago Zainabu's brother and two sisters died, leaving behind six children. She now cares for them as well as her own three children and her grandmother.

Zainabu is HIV+, and recently found herself bed-ridden she was so ill. But members of **St. Lucia Hospice and Orphanage's** outreach team visited her. They cared for her, counselled her, and encouraged her to take ARVs, until she could get out of bed again.

Emotionally, she says she has changed: "I am now thinking HIV is not the end of my life." She is also able to take three of her children who are HIV+ to the clinic to get them treatment. She has gone on, in fact, to become the chairperson of her local Most Vulnerable Children Committee, a voluntary government structure trained and supported by St. Lucia. She now gives of her time to visit other families, to provide them with the same emotional and social support that she herself received.



*St. Lucia staff members on visits to families. Photo © REPSSI*



*Children in an after-school support group established by Red Cross Lesotho. Photo © REPSSI/ Willem De Lange*

*Children experiencing difficulties and feeling isolated can find support and comfort from their peers, in structures such as kids' clubs.*

### Kenya: Bringing peers together

Danso Dandora Community Support group is based in the Dandora slum area of Nairobi. As a result of training through **Hope worldwide Kenya**, on the REPSSI tool *Journey of Life*, they started a Kids Club to build the resilience of the children in their community.

Every Saturday, the members of the kids club come together, to play games and learn life skills, and the group quickly saw the effects. "These children, some of them are HIV positive and some are not. So when we started the idea was we mingle them together," says the chairperson. "Within a short time, the children built resilience, they adapted, and now they can face the challenges in their life better."

### Zimbabwe: Looking out for one other

In Zimbabwe, a teacher with **Midlands AIDS Services Organisation (MASO)** has set up a Journey of Life club for children at a local school. The members tell us that through the activities in the club, they were taught to be observant, to work together as a group, and to look out for others.

One member gave an example of seeing a child crying one day, saying "I was able to approach the child and find out what was wrong." Another member told us how they noticed that a classmate had no shoes. They put up a notice asking for donations, and enlisted the help of a teacher to pass on the donated shoes anonymously.

### South Africa: Adults also need support

It is not only children who gain confidence and hope from their peers. Virginia Mbaimbai is 68 years old, and lives in Soweto, South Africa. She lost six children to AIDS within a period of two years, and now cares for 8 grandchildren. She told us how a peer support group run by REPSSI's partner, the **Olive Leaf Foundation**, helped her cope with these extraordinarily difficult circumstances:

"What really helped me personally were the sessions we had on coping mechanisms. How does one cope when they've lost a loved one? I shared my own story with them. Six children in two years! All these children to look after. Support is important... I'm hoping that since I'm doing my best to bring these children up right, to put into practice all the parenting tips I've learned, they will grow to be upright, honest, hardworking people."

Read more about REPSSI's training manual, *Facilitating Care and Support Through Kids' Clubs*, on page 44.





# VOICES

## CHANGING BEHAVIOUR

Again and again, we hear from our partners that psychosocial support activities and tools have been effective in shifting deep-rooted cultural or community practises harmful to children's wellbeing.

Whether these are practises surrounding parental death, child abuse, or the role of the girl-child, communities across the region have come to identify the impact of certain behaviours on children. Not only that, but they have then taken steps to alter this behaviour, in order to better support the vulnerable children amongst them.

## DEATH, INHERITANCE & ADOPTION

Traditionally, many practises surrounding death can overlook children and their rights. Psychosocial support activities can help communities see the affect on children, and change their behaviour.

### Speaking about Death

In many communities across the region, children are not involved in activities surrounding the death of their parents. They are not brought to the funeral, nor are they told that the parent is dead. "In the past we were hiding the death," explains a caregiver with **ZAMWASO**. "When a parent passed away we told the child they were away travelling."

However, when encouraged to think about issues from the child's perspective, our partners report that communities realise children need the opportunity to grieve, and begin to change their approach. "Now, children take part in the process and that is a remarkable change," says Association Vute, an affiliate with our partner **Save the Children in Mozambique**.

### Inheritance Rights

Despite laws protecting children's inheritance, relatives of the dead parent often appropriate land or possessions belonging to the child.

Our partners have related many cases of this practise being reversed. In Zimbabwe, a grandmother in **MASO's** support group explained to us that she had taken property from orphaned children. The discussion in the *Journey of Life* had reduced her to tears when she understood how her behaviour had affected her nieces and nephews. "It helped me to realise that if anyone dies in the family, the property must be used for the good of the children," she said.

### Treatment of Orphaned Children

Children can also be treated badly when adopted by another family after the death of their parents. This discrimination can take many forms, such as being forced to eat separately, given fewer possessions, or being made to feel unloved.

Thankfully, behaviour like this can be changed through careful awareness-raising activities, as partners from across the region attest. A traditional leader in Malawi, trained by **CONSOL Homes**, told us: "Before we did not treat orphaned children in the community well... But after the *Journey of Life* and other training, that cruel behaviour has been reduced. We know now that an orphaned child is a child like any other."



Children at an early Childhood Development Centre with CONSOL Homes, Malawi. Photo © REPSSI

## WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM MY FRIENDS

"Before we did not treat orphaned children in the community well. But after the *Journey of Life* and other training, that cruel behaviour has been reduced. We know now that an orphaned child is a child like any other."

~ Community leader, Malawi

Our partners' experiences show that effective community mobilisation can help shift problems from the responsibility of an individual to the responsibility of the whole community.

### Zimbabwe

Using a network of volunteers, **Bethany Project** works with Child Protection Committees, a local government structure. They have been using the *Journey of Life* to outline the responsibilities of the committees, and engage the wider community.

As a result of the *Journey of Life* training, they have seen a fundamental shift in the sense of responsibility for children. "Before, if a child had no school fees, the community would say this is not our problem. They would wait for a donor to come in. But now they are owning it... saying these are our children."

### Malawi

A similar shift has been seen in Malawi, as a result of *Journey of Life* training. "In the past, if a child had a problem, we assumed that it had to be tackled by the child's family alone," a staff member at **CONSOL Homes** in Malawi explains.

After undergoing the *Journey of Life* training, there is a collective sense of responsibility for children. The training has also led to a system for referring children's problems to government structures for further specialised support.

"Before, the community would say this is not our problem... But now they are owning it, and saying these are our children."

~ Staff member, Bethany, Zimbabwe

## INCREASING CHILD PARTICIPATION

Children's voices are not usually solicited, or listened to, in families or communities. Many parents, staff members, community caregivers and traditional leaders have told us that psychosocial support training from our partners has helped them listen to children and include them in decision-making.

The director of Fanang Diatla, an organisation supported by REPSSI's partner, the **Nelson Mandela Children's Fund**, told us: "It is not our culture to consult children... It is something that was lacking, but psychosocial support has opened our eyes that a child's suggestion is very important."

In Tanzania, caregivers in groups supported by **Zanzibar Muslim Women's AIDS Support Organisation (ZAMWASO)** say they now listen to children at a younger age, and ensure the greater participation of children.

One caregiver, Moskes Omar, explained the changes she had witnessed. "Before *Journey of Life* training we were way behind. When children came with questions we were not in a position to receive, give answers or information but only being harsh. We could not understand them."

The training helped parents to listen, and see about things from the child's perspective. "We have noticed positive changes in the children. They can now approach us and we can have a discussion. We can now exchange and share ideas."

Francisco Canivete, the director of a REPSSI partner in Angola, **Association Elavoko Lyomala**, has noticed similar changes after training in psychosocial support.

"I have seen that as a result of workers being trained on psychosocial support, children are now happy and both children and the workers know how to interact with each other. Attitudes and behaviour are transformed and children are now feeling at ease to communicate."



Caregiver Moskes Omar, Zanzibar, now communicates better with her children. Photo © REPSSI

"It is not our culture to consult children... It is something that was lacking, but psychosocial support has opened our eyes that a child's suggestion is very important."

- NGO Director, South Africa

### Returning from Conflict

In Katine, Uganda, REPSSI's partner organisation **Transcultural Psychosocial Organisation (TPO)** has trained youths from the community to act as peer educators. They have been trained in REPSSI's *Journey of Life*, and apply what they have learned with vulnerable children in weekly sessions. They use simple activities to facilitate discussions, games, and planning.

"*Journey of Life* helps everyone understand the importance of community parenting and how to identify children in need and help them," says one peer educator.

"When we started working with the children they could not talk and they were very tearful. But now they are happier and more hopeful, and they are so free to talk," adds another.

Elsewhere in Uganda, TPO has used the *Journey of Life*, along with counselling and other support, with communities to help them care for children who were abducted by the Lords Resistance Army. One parent's group formed told us just how valuable the training and support has been.

"When the children returned they were stigmatised and called names," one parent recalled. "But we have sensitised the community and this has now stopped."

"When my child came back he wouldn't respect anyone," said another. "He would say 'I don't care what you want, I can kill you anytime'". But now he is back in school and peaceful and we are happy together."

## INCLUDING THE MARGINALISED

### Children with disabilities

REPSSI's Certificate course (see page 32) encourages students to become more aware of children who are excluded or discriminated against. One student in Kenya, Laurence Dchieng Idipo, demonstrates how small actions can do a great deal to address discrimination against children with disabilities.

Laurence is the chair of the Rang'ala Community Psychosocial Support network. The network is supported by REPSSI's partner **ChildFund Kenya**, who run a sponsorship programme in the area. Laurence's network realised that some parents only chose the most healthy or non-disabled child for this programme.

"They went as far as taking children with disability into a hidden room so that they are not seen, even in the picture," he recalls. The course gave him ideas about how address the situation, through home visits and community discussion forums.

"What has changed the attitude of parents is the dialogue sessions between the community and the parents on the equality of human beings," he says. He reports that, as a result, many children with disabilities are now being put forward for sponsorship.

### Sex workers

Psychosocial support training emphasises resilience, and assisting people to build their capacity to overcome the difficulties in their lives. Julius of **Hope worldwide Kenya** explains how this helped him in his work.

"We have done work with sex workers who have reached a point where they feel they can't do anything except sex work and they have no abilities," he says. "They say they had always thought they can't do this. But now they realise they have all these resources in themselves, they can do it."



## EMPOWERING THE GIRL CHILD

**Malawi Girl Guides Association (MAGGA)**, has seen psychosocial support enhance their mission of promoting the girl-child. As a result of REPSSI's *Tree of Life*, Nancy Chidzankufa, Director of Programmes, told us, "the girls are able to discover their abilities ... and they are given that assurance to say they can make it in life despite challenges."

Early marriages still occur in many districts in Malawi, as a perceived way out of poverty for families. Nancy has been using the pictures from the *Journey of Life* to stimulate discussion with community leaders.

Through this, community leaders recognised their role in resolving issues, and developed community codes of conduct. These have proven very useful in cases of early marriage, sexual abuse and discrimination.

"We had one girl who was 13 years old," says Nancy. "She was being forced into marriage by her parents." The local traditional authority had participated in the MAGGA workshops, and as a result had set out procedures for such situations. He summoned the parents, and helped them understand that the proposed marriage was wrong.

The parents subsequently supported the girl to return to school. She is now 15, in secondary school, and still unmarried.

### Right to Education

Simbarashe, a staff member with **Batani HIV/ AIDS Services Organisation (BHASO)**, found that psychosocial support activities changed attitudes to educating girls. This was previously considered a bad investment, as girls would marry and leave the family.

"Our elders used to believe that there is no reason to send girl-children to school," he says. "They have now realised it is important to treat each and every child equally. Now girl-children are having the opportunity to go to school."



Tiwonge Barton, a Girl Guide in Malawi. Photo © REPSSI

"At first I used to just stay alone; I never thought of myself as worthy to stay in my peers' company. But nowadays, I mix with my peers and have no problems."

- Girl Guide, MAGGA, Malawi

### Camfed (the Campaign for Female Education)

in Zambia has been a REPSSI partner since 2009. Teachers, resource teams, support groups, district committees and others have been trained in psychosocial support using REPSSI tools such as the *Journey of Life*, *Hero Book*, the *Tree of Life* and *Journeying Towards Our Dreams*.

As a result, Camfed reports increased awareness

of, and commitment to fulfilling, the needs of girl children. After going through the training workshop, teacher Likando Pelekelo said: "I have gained a lot of knowledge on how to face challenges... I will ensure that the children and the community are sensitized on child abuse, gender and the importance of girl education. As a mentor, I will be a mother to the girls and visit their homes to encourage and support them."

## CHANGING GENDER ROLES

Childcare in Africa is still predominantly seen as a woman's role, and as a result is often undervalued. However, the awareness-raising and personal reflection that psychosocial support activities promote often help challenge these gender roles, and encourage men to care about vulnerable children in their communities.

Zephania Anyango is the only male member of his support group in the slum area of Nairobi, Kenya supported by **Hope worldwide Kenya**. His group runs income-generating activities to support vulnerable children, and holds weekly kid's clubs. Wearing a knitted cap and a permanent smile, he encourages other men to follow his example.

"African old men, like me, I give them a message," he says. "Men like me should volunteer and come together to do the kind of work I am involved in so that the country develops."

In the Kimandolu district of Arusha, Tanzania, Mohamed Nyasuka is a member of the Most Vulnerable Children's Committee. These committees were set up by **St. Lucia Hospice** in cooperation with the local government, following REPSSI training. Their role is to identify and assist vulnerable children in their area.

When he went on home visits as a committee member, and saw the situation of those most vulnerable children in their home, he realised that he really did need to provide this support. "Other men have tried to discourage me," he told us. "But this is my vision. I love children... This is from my heart."

"African old men, like me, I give them a message... Men like me should volunteer and come together to do the kind of work I am involved in so that the country develops."

- Zephania Anyango, child support group. Kenya





# VOICES

## BUILDING COMMUNITIES

Communities and extended families are our most valuable resource in providing social and emotional support for children and youth. No institutional centre or outside group can hope to replace the daily, consistent care that the people in everyday contact with vulnerable children can provide.

Effective community mobilization is therefore crucial for ensuring that this care and support is provided. Here, we look at testimonies of how communities can be brought through a journey of awareness, to become sensitized to the needs of the children in their midst, and aware of their own ability to work together to make a difference.

## TAKING JOINT ACTION

Community-authored action plans are a highly effective way of catalysing joint care and support for children.

### Visits and care

The **Zanzibar Muslim Women's AIDS Support Organization (ZAMWASO)** used the *Journey of Life* with their community projects. As part of their action plan, one community established a fund. Each member contributes 500Tsh so that all vulnerable children in the community can be taken care of. They began monthly home visits and regular meetings with children, to check their progress and needs, and refer them to appropriate government services.

"The community as a whole has changed," said one community member. "Before, everyone was looking after themselves, and, because of the stigma of HIV, sick parents were avoided. Now they are saying this is the journey of life, everyone will pass this way."

### Kid's clubs

**Midlands AIDS Service Organisation (MASO)** has also used *Journey of Life* to mobilise communities.

"We found the level of literacy among the community was very low," explained a staff member. "So we used the picture codes in the *Journey of Life*... We talk about the problems children face, and then they say, 'oh yes, there's somebody like this child in our community'." This leads to questions

"After training we realised we were able to get together and do something to help the children."

- Grandmother, Zimbabwe

about the actions to be taken to help these children. One teacher decided to set up a kid's club as part of the action plan. A student in her club told us:

"The *Journey of Life* can help us connect, the old and the young... it brings together different people and different aspects of life, different problems... you maybe are an orphan and maybe I have been abused, but we are both on a journey and we can connect."

### Gardens

**Batanai HIV&AIDS Service Organisation (BHASO)** in Zimbabwe used *Journey of Life* with a group of grandmothers. A garden was included in their action plan, and proceeds from this garden were used to support vulnerable children.

"We were able to identify problems before, but not solutions," explains one grandmother. "After the training we realised that we were able to get together and do something to help the children."



A grandmother working in the community garden established in a *Journey of Life* action plan, BHASO, Zimbabwe. Photo © REPSSI

The T'sosane community in Lesotho has experienced great hardship due to the HIV and AIDS pandemic, including a dramatic increase in the number of orphaned and vulnerable children (OVC), and the number of elderly people who now have to care for them.

In response, the Phomolong support group was formed to provide emotional, spiritual and financial support for children and the elderly. They decided to set up a "kids' club", to provide a safe place for children in the community to talk, and seek advice on life matters.

REPSSI's partner **Touch Roots Africa (TRA)** trained Phomolong members in child protection and psychosocial care, and in *Journey of Life* and *Tree Of Life*. This provided them with skills to better engage the community, deal with stigma, and provide support to bereaved children in the kids' club.

### Increasing reporting of abuse

There is evidence from our partners that psychosocial support increases awareness of and reporting of child abuse. The *Journey of Life* has prompted communities in Kenya, traditional leaders in Malawi, and grandmothers in Zimbabwe to ask whether abuse is occurring in their area, and draw up action plans to clarify what should happen when abuse is suspected.

REPSSI's distance-learning Certificate (page 33) is also helping to improve self-reporting. "Children are now reporting cases of abuse to the police as soon as it occurs, as they have been taught how to deal with such cases," one graduate in Zimbabwe proudly informed us.

## HEALING OUR COMMUNITY

Liteboho Mokoena\* is one such child. His father passed away when he was still very young, leaving his mother alone to care for him. At first, he was not comfortable with other children, or talking about his life. But after time, Liteboho began to talk about the problems he faced, and how they made him feel.

He was trained on REPSSI's *Kids' Club* manual, which explains that everyone can play a part in assisting vulnerable children in their community. As a child who had lost his father, Liteboho felt he could help others not to suffer in silence like he did.

"The training taught me a lot about who I was and what I had in my life," he says. "Before I looked at all the problems in my life only and not the good things I had and all the people I had around me. It taught me that I did not need to feel alone and that things were good and not bad. I learned to understand why my mother was so sad and how I could help her."

Liteboho now contributes to community life by positively encouraging other children to live safe lives. "I am no longer scared, I am no longer angry, now I feel loved," he says.

"When we started the community was broken," say the chair. "Now we can see that people are doing much better in their lives, especially the OVC left behind by their parents."

\*name changed for confidentiality

"When we started the community was broken. Now we can see that people are doing much better, especially the orphans and vulnerable children."

- Chair of Phomolong Support group, Lesotho



## ROOTED IN COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION

One long-standing partner has rooted their work in community mobilisation, an approach which has brought them great success.

“Our organisation started in 1994 out of the need to see care and support for orphaned children,” explains Kathleen Okatcha, Director of the Kenyan Orphans Rural Development Programme (KORDP).

At the time, she says, the communal response was minimal due to fear of associating with HIV positive people. With no financial resources to invest, they began by holding community conversations to set priorities. Guided by the communities’ wishes, KORDP helped to establish Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres under trees.

Today, communities have organized themselves into 57 ECD committees, caring for 6,200 children in 5 districts. These centres are now housed in tin or mud-walled huts, built by the community. Children attending receive a meal, health care, literacy skills and psychosocial support. All of this is done by unpaid community care providers.

REPSI’s *Journey of Life* has been the main tool used to engage communities in this approach.

“It facilitates community reflection, dialogue and action to support children,” Kathleen explains.

Typically, community members gather weekly in the community building used as an ECD centre during the day. Community members take it in turn to present child wellbeing topics from the *Journey of Life*, and develop a shared action plan to resolve their problems.

She concludes: “One of the things that has made KORDP unique is the community based approach and the fact that the communities initiated the programme, they initiated the solutions, they initiated the strategy. We just helped them along.”

## A COMMUNITY LEADER’S PERSPECTIVE



The community committee running an Early Childhood Development centre in partnership with KORDP, Kenya © REPSI.

**The communities initiated the programme, they initiated the solutions. We just helped them along.”**

- Kathleen Okatcha, KORDP Director, Kenya

**“I want people to be able to look back and see that we made a difference in the lives of our children, we created a good future for them.”**

- Kenneth Zulu, Headman, Zambia

“Before the introduction of psychosocial support in our community we had a great number of problems that we were facing. Beer drinking, crime, prostitution, HIV and AIDS plagued us....”

“When psychosocial support was introduced through a workshop it helped us better understand how to interact with our children and how to allow them to have a voice when household decisions were being made. So the first thing we did was go into the community to sensitise them of these things, explaining the dangers related to some of our traditional practices.

“This work began in 2005 and it’s pleasing to know that we no longer have cases of sexual cleansing or young girls being forced into early marriages. The community fully understands the dangers and how it violates the widow’s and children’s rights....”

“The way I look at the future is this. If we, as a community, put all the training we’ve learned to good use then we should be able to shelter our children, educate our children, feed our children and give them a better future.

“I would love to build a place like a community hall where we can meet. I would like to see more of my community experience what PSS tools can do for them. I want people to be able to look back and see that we made a difference in the lives of our children. We created a good future for them. And we are already seeing the fruits. That’s why as community leaders we have embraced psychosocial support work.

“Psychosocial support is not just about workshops... it’s about changing our way of life in a positive way.”

- Kenneth Zulu, headman in a community supported by REPSI’s partner, ChildFund Zambia.



# VOICES

## COMBATING HIV & AIDS

Every minute, a child dies of an AIDS-related illness, and another child becomes infected with HIV.

We can make this shocking statistic a thing of the past. As the following stories from our partners show, social and emotional (psychosocial) support can help reduce new infections, reduce AIDS-related deaths and reduce the crippling stigma and discrimination surrounding HIV.



## REDUCING DISCRIMINATION

Not so long ago, many children in Zanzibar who were HIV positive were afraid of attending school, for fear of discrimination.

“Due to stigma, most of the children affected by HIV would stop to go to school... they were chased out of school because of their status,” explains Mussa Juma of the **Zanzibar Association for People Living with HIV and AIDS (ZAPHA+)**, a REPSSI affiliate.

But things have begun to change now – for the better. ZAPHA+ volunteers conducted meetings with a thousand teachers from the madrassas (Islamic religious schools), as well as bringing Catholic, Anglican, Muslim and other religious leaders together to discuss issues facing HIV-positive children. “We’ve seen the impact of working with the teachers,” says Mussa. “They are now united to support children in their school.”

ZAPHA+ also began kids’ clubs, for children to build resilience, and learn about disclosure, treatment, and their rights. Mussa says now due to the provision of psychosocial support “the children have self-confidence, can reveal their status and claim their rights, they are becoming champions, advocates.”

“Before the support I could not play with other children close to home or go to the school near home because in my area I was known as the boy whose family is sick,” one child says. “I have since noticed that my teachers, friends around the home and at school are not as harsh as they used to be with me, they now play with me, call me to join in activities and talk to me. My attendance in school has improved – I am now passing and my teachers pay attention to me.”

“Now, positive young people are actually becoming resource persons in fighting stigma,” Mussa grins. “Children living with HIV/AIDS now have a change in attitude. They are no longer resigned upon learning about their HIV status, they now can see a future and expect to live a long life.”

### Managing Your Health

Peggy Nkausu is supported through a community-based home care project Roma/ Ng’ombe Home Based Care, in Zambia. She started a *Tracing Book* (page 44) after training from REPSSI and CATIE, through which she could make notes about her health.

“All the dates are included, appointment days, when you are going for a CD4 count, etc., all are written down,” she explains. “This makes the work of the medical staff lighter, gives a doctor an opportunity to know your history without wasting time...”

“The tracing book helped my daughter to accept her status and live a happy and healthy life... [it] has helped to change our mindset from just thinking of being sick to having new thoughts of moving on in life and your future...”

“I thought I would die in 2006 but am still going strong and even encouraging other friends.”

“Children living with HIV/AIDS now have a change in attitude... They now can see a future and expect to live a long life.”

- Mussa Juma, Zanzibar

## LIVING POSITIVELY WITH HIV

“By identifying people I can trust and sharing with them my feelings I have overcome my fears... People now just see me as Memory and not that girl who will die soon...”

“I have found the Hero Book a very useful tool in my interacting with peers, especially when requested by parents of other HIV positive children to counsel them. The hero book has never failed me.”

### Do you have a message for others?

“Believe in yourself. People who stigmatise others do so because they do not know about themselves, and for some it is because they fear about knowing their own status. We just have to help one another in this world we live in.”

This is a remarkable story about a hero called Memory. It is a story about refusing to be a victim and about helping others to change their own prejudice.

When Memory’s parents died, she ended up in an orphanage. She overheard whispers about herself. On the wall of the classroom, someone scribbled: “MEMORY PHIRI HAS AIDS.”

It was at this point that Memory began her *Hero Book*, as part of a project under **CARE International Zambia**. In her Hero Book, Memory named, drew and “personified” this problem in her life as Chikonko, who represents Stigma.

Memory then took a courageous step. She began to tell her story to the girls in the orphanage. She told them that at thirteen, she had been raped because there had been no one to protect her. She told the other girls that the shame belongs not with her, but with the man who raped her and infected her with HIV.

“Stigma was one of the things that was almost breaking me down,” Memory says. “I was almost reaching a point of giving up hope and on life. No sooner did I surrender than I came across the hero book, the book which helped me develop tricks and tactics to counter stigma. I learnt to confront my fears and resentment with speaking openly about my status...”

“By identifying people I can trust and sharing with them my feelings I have overcome my fears... people now just see me as Memory and not that girl who will die soon.”



Memory Phiri, an extraordinary hero. Photo © REPSSI

## DEALING WITH DISCLOSURE

Mercy Lucy Chikurura is a nurse counsellor with **Batanai HIV & AIDS Service Organisation in Zimbabwe**. Her work encompasses post-test HIV support services, prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV, and treatment adherence for HIV positive families and children.

Despite a growing body of evidence showing that HIV-positive children who are aware of their HIV status show greater adherence to treatment and an improved sense of well-being, many children living with HIV are not aware of their status. This was true of most of the children Mercy was working with.

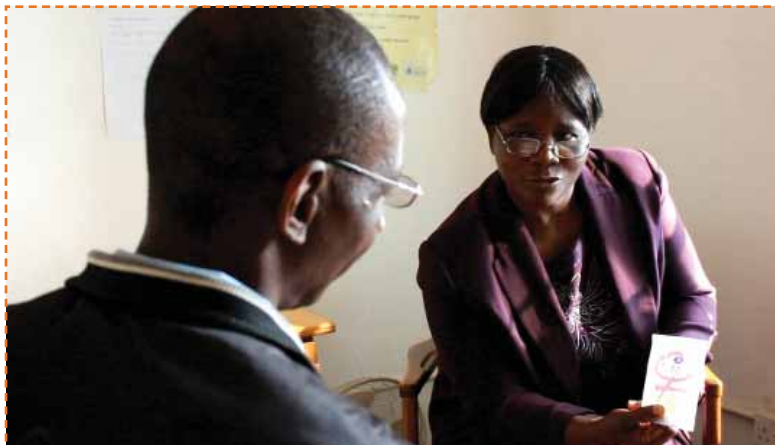
“Children were started on ARVs through their parents,” Mercy explains. “They were not told that they were HIV positive. You’d find that the parents get their children tested without their knowledge.”

In 2010, Mercy began REPSSI’s distance-learning Certificate course (page 33), which gave her a new insight into disclosure.

“With the certificate course, I realised the need to involve these children in their care. So I educated the parents who were coming to collect drugs for their children that it was necessary for them to bring the children for reviews so that we could counsel them, so that we could give them the information.”

“So far it has helped quite a lot. We actually have now children coming to collect their own drugs ... and they talk freely about their conditions. They even ask questions where they have problems ... and they are also participating in decision making.”

“I think this programme is very important,” Mercy smiles. “I feel I’ve been given a tool box.”



Mercy Lucy Chikurura in the Batanai counselling office, Zimbabwe. Photo © REPSSI

**Adherence for Children**

REPSSI’s partner PASADA, in Tanzania, has used their training from REPSSI to initiate activities for HIV positive children. Children are brought together to play and take part in drama and art activities. These structured activities helped the children work through their emotions, disclose their status, and adhere to treatment.

“It is a time for them to feel happy, and a place where they make friends and learn how to interrelate with other groups,” says a staff member. “These groups have been assisting children who are reluctant to take [ARVs] as part of their daily routine... But these activities have enabled children to talk about their status very positively, and to express their emotions.”

## REDUCING NEW INFECTIONS

Inside the mud walls of a small building in rural Kenya, a group of men and women are gathered on wooden benches. A local primary school teacher is on her feet, having volunteered to lead the *Journey of Life* discussion. Each week, different topics in relation to children’s wellbeing are discussed.

This building is a community centre, and it was built on land donated by the village headman, Eliud Ndeke Mukunga.

“I saw my people dying of HIV, and they had nowhere to go and learn,” says Eliud. “That moved me to give my piece of land to KORDP, so that the community can come and learn so that we fight this enemy.”

“My brother died of AIDS, and left very many children behind for me to care... it made me not to allow the same mistake to happen to our children again.”



People from Eliud’s village at a discussion in the Community centre © REPSSI

With support from REPSSI’s partner, the **Kenyan Orphans Rural Development Programme (KORDP)**, Eliud’s community shares information on child wellbeing, HIV prevention, the effects of discrimination, and the actions they can take to make a difference.

“The number of death caused by AIDS, it has really decreased,” continues Eliud. “People now can care for themselves. When you could use the word condom, people would run away. But nowadays, they do use it.”

“Discrimination and abuse, that was a normal thing that children experienced, children who were orphans in the community. Even things like you don’t have them eat with the rest of the family. But today it’s different. There is an awareness that orphaned children are children like the others... We strongly make sure that any child we find along the way, whether well-dressed or naked, whether sick or not, is ours.”

“Discrimination and abuse, that was a normal thing that orphans experienced... But today we make sure that any child we find, whether well-dressed or naked, whether sick or not, is ours.”

- Village headman, Kenya





# VOICES

## SKILLING THOSE ON THE GROUND

All across Africa, dedicated (and usually unpaid) community workers provide care and support to millions of vulnerable children. No relevant, accredited training existed for them, to professionalise this work.

In response, REPSSI and UNICEF developed an innovative new *Certificate Course in Community-Based Work with Children and Youth*, accredited through the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The Certificate is now being delivered by situated, supported distance learning in more than ten countries in East and Southern Africa, and there are already over 1,500 graduates across the region.

## SUPPORTING PEOPLE WITH HIV



Winfrida Mwashala discussing her organisation in Arusha. Photo © REPSSI

Until 2009, **St Lucia Hospice and Orphanage** in Arusha, Tanzania, was a residential care home for HIV positive children who had been abandoned due to stigma. The home could only take up to 30 children at once. But the Executive Director, Winfrida Mwashala, and her team have since radically changed the way St. Lucia operates.

"Now," says Winfrida with a smile, "we have reached more than 9000 children at community level." This new approach has helped reduce stigma and discrimination, and children are now being cared for within their own families.

The changes were triggered by Winfrida's participation in the *Certificate Course in Community-Based Work with Children and Youth*, created by REPSSI and UNICEF.

"The Certificate Course has supported me to understand how to develop the community," Winfrida says. "This helps us to not concentrate on a few children in institutionalised care, but focus more at community level with more children."

Children at St. Lucia are now being reunited with their families, who are trained and supported by St. Lucia to so as to provide the treatment their children need.

Together with local government, St. Lucia also set up Most Vulnerable Children Committees. Comprised of volunteers elected by the community, St. Lucia has trained them in psychosocial support. The committees visit vulnerable families, and help establish support groups for people living with HIV. One father of 7 children explained how his support group has been vital: "I now have hope, I am not alone."

"When we are caring for our patient we need to do it comprehensively," concludes Winfrida. "When you are doing all physical care and not doing psychological care, you are still losing this person... some of the patients, they say they were nearly to die, they thought this was the end of their life. But having people who were encouraging them, bringing them in a group, it has made them start thinking of their children, start thinking of their dreams."

### Respecting childrens' rights

*"A lot of things have changed in my life since attending the Certificate Programme. The most significant being that of realising and respecting children's rights. I now understand that children are fragile being who can be easily harmed by difficult times. They need utmost care as well as being involved in decisions that affect their lives. The certificate programme has really brought a new sense of respect for children."*

- Certificate graduate, Zimbabwe

## COMMUNITY-LED DEVELOPMENT

### Children with hearing and speaking difficulties

After learning about the children's right from REPSSI's Certificate course, graduate Mr. David Mulenga took a courageous stance. He challenged the local office of the Zambian Ministry of Education to ensure that children in the local community with speech and hearing impairments be accommodated at the local school.

The district office responded positively, and assigned a special teacher to the school. To date, four speech and hearing impaired pupils are enrolled in the local school.

David, with a wide smile of satisfaction, explains that now "I am hopeful that there will be more children who will come forward and be enrolled and enjoy their right to education... I feel so happy that, finally, the children are enjoying their rights of going to school and interacting with other children in the community."

*"My understanding of children at risk has improved. I am able to understand them and able to help them. Because of my contribution I have been appointed to be one of the people to train other institutions on children's rights."*

- Certificate graduate, Malawi

Cathia Dehwe is an outreach officer with **Batanai HIV & AIDS Service Organisation (BHASO)** in Zimbabwe. She works with support groups and people living with HIV. Some of this work is at a nearby resettlement site, where there are high numbers of orphans. Many children don't attend school because of a lack of fees.

The REPSSI *Certificate Course in Community-based Work with Children and Youth* has helped her to value the knowledge within the community.

"I applied most of the principles that I learnt ... and I've seen the community at the forefront," she says. "They take ownership of the programme."

When she consulted them about what they most needed, the community suggested building a centre where children could play and learn basic reading and writing skills.

"Now they've built a day-care centre, where these children attend from Monday to Friday," she says. "They've got care-givers who assist these children."



Cathia Dehwe at work in Zimbabwe. Photo © REPSSI



## CHILDREN IN GOVERNMENT CARE

**Kisumu Children's Remand Home** is a government institution, intended as a centre for children in conflict with the law. Due to a lack of space in children's centres they are now being sent large numbers of children needing homes because of being abandoned, orphaned, or abused.

"Many children come here with different problems," explains Kenneth Mbitu Nuua, Director of the Home. "They really need to be assisted so that they can cope with these situations." According to Kenneth, an 18-month accredited Certificate Course is helping his staff do just that.

George Owino is one of three staff at the Home currently taking REPSSI's distance-learning Certificate Course.

"This Certificate helped me a great deal," George explains, "because it has given me a lot of skills in handling these children. I meet children who have passed through many challenges... so, when they end up in my hands now, they are already afraid, shaken, they cannot talk... I have to talk to these children, I have to accommodate them, I have to find a way of making them comfortable and making them understand that actually, they are in safe hands."

George has also applied skills from the course in addressing wider issues. One day, a nine-year old boy, who was physically disabled, was brought into the remand home. His parents had already died "and he was now wandering here and there, trying to find anybody to take care of him."

"After listening to the child, I felt that maybe I could use the networks that I already knew... So I approached one of our partners and they actually took up the case and now this boy is in school."

It was the Certificate that helped George start to network with other organisations. "As a Development Facilitator, maybe I don't have to have all the solutions," George laughs, "Sometimes I need to get these solutions from somewhere else."



George Owino with the children in Kisumu Remand Home. Photo © REPSSI

### Listening to Children

*"My colleagues and I used to think that the proper rehabilitation of children with socially unacceptable behaviour was by force.*

*Through the course I learnt that children need to be listened to and given a chance to talk. By applying this I realised that the children whom I work with have started really opening up to me, telling me their problems. If it wasn't for the project I would still be thinking wrongly. Thank you so much REPSSI for the opportunity to learn."*

- Certificate graduate, Zimbabwe

## RESPONSIVE TEACHING & POLICING



In Malawi, Judith Karaonge is a **teacher and a volunteer at Malawi Girl Guides Association**.

Before the Certificate programme, she used to punish students coming late to class or behaving poorly, as she didn't have an understanding of what difficulties in their life might be impacting their school performance.

As a result of the course, Judith tells us, "I understand that giving punishment means I'm adding some troubles, some challenges to them." She now spends time finding out what problems they are facing at home which may be affecting school performance. She has discovered some children in the class had recently been orphaned, others were being given excessive household tasks, and these issues were leading to poor school attendance and performance.

"Now I'm able to call them, to counsel them, to assist them," she tells us enthusiastically. She often follows up with parents or caregivers to find out if she can help address some of these issues.



Sergeant Zama spent five years working with the Domestic Violence Unit of the **Royal Swaziland Police Force**. Last year, as a result of the Certificate, she was promoted to a training position at the Police Training College. There, she passes on her knowledge about child protection and sexual offences to 200 recruits a year.

"The Certificate really empowered me to share what I learned and transfer it to others," she says. "We learned about human rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and about the best interests of the child. We also learned that children need to participate... they need to be part of reaching a consensus... children are not just to be seen, they are to be heard also."

As a result of the course, Sergeant Zama now ensures that children are consulted in any policing decisions made about their welfare.

"As police officers we deal with the community, and children they are part of the community," she concludes. "I would recommend that other law enforcement agencies take up this course."



# VOICES

## WORKING WITH GOVERNMENTS

REPSSI partners with governments in 13 countries across East and Southern Africa, to assist them in shaping national action for vulnerable children.

REPSSI is also a technical partner to the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and has supported the development of key regional frameworks to guide work with vulnerable children and youth in all member states.



## BOTSWANA

In 2005, the Government of Botswana responded to alarmingly high HIV statistics by implementing a plan of action focused on food parcels and material support for orphaned and vulnerable children.

An evaluation two years later showed that psychosocial support was missing from the response, and the government set about addressing this gap. It was a REPSSI community-mobilisation tool, the *Journey of Life*, that they turned to.

Kefilwe Malebe, who coordinates psychosocial support for the Government of Botswana, explains that *The Journey of Life* was selected "because it offers a simple practical approach that can be used regardless of literacy level, and the participatory nature allows communities to conceive their own solutions and develop plans to carry them out."

With their development partner Project Concern International (PCI) Botswana, the government embarked on a national roll out to mobilize communities with the use of the *Journey of Life* tool.

"This experience has demonstrated that governments can be leaders in providing effective PSS. As shown by the Government of Botswana, governments can provide critical national vision, direction and motivation, and can coordinate national plans of action that take effect at community, and can empower and mobilise communities, in a cost-effective way."

The national roll-out, through established district child protection committees, has already reached 2144 children and 1104 caregivers. The government of Botswana and PCI Botswana are committed to reaching 18,922 children and their families in the next five years through *The Journey of Life* tool.



**"Governments can be leaders in providing effective PSS... They can coordinate national plans of action that take effect at community level, and empower and mobilise communities."**

- Kefilwe Malebe, Government of Botswana

## NAMIBIA

### Results in Botswana

REPSSI's partner, Project Concern International Botswana, has been working with the government of Botswana, with funding from PEPFAR, to roll out the *Journey of Life* nationally, in order to involve communities in supporting the high numbers of orphans and vulnerable children in the country.

Through the *Journey of Life* Awareness workshops, adults and children identified the most pressing needs of vulnerable children. Together, young people and adults brainstorm available resources in the village to tackle these needs. At the end of the workshop, participants develop a Community Action Plan.

Their monitoring shows that a year on, *Journey of Life* in Botswana has facilitated:

- Personal transformation through reflection and increased awareness
- Improved adult-child communication and relationships
- Improved referral systems for vulnerable children and families
- Income generating activities to alleviate poverty
- Less corporal punishment in schools
- Support groups in schools and in communities

"REPSSI has been instrumental in assisting the Ministry of Gender, Equality and Child Welfare to build our knowledge in psychosocial support," says Ms. Joyce Nakuta, the Deputy Director of the Child Care Division for the Government of Namibia.

Through trainings, conferences, sharing of our training materials, and ongoing meetings with the government and stakeholders, REPSSI has been building an awareness of the role of psychosocial support in national planning for orphans and vulnerable children.

As a result, the Ministry has identified the importance of including psychosocial support in its programs. This is most clearly illustrated by the Ministry's recent commitment to allocate resources towards this purpose.

"In 2010, the Ministry and key partners developed a Joint Psychosocial Support Plan," Joyce explained. "This has set the stage for the mainstreaming of psychosocial support and the capacity strengthening of the social welfare workforce of the Ministry."

Psychosocial support has also been incorporated in the national Namibian standards for Orphans and Vulnerable Children, which is a critical step in ensuring that good quality care is provided for children across the country.

Social workers, community staff and caregivers have subsequently been trained in psychosocial support, using REPSSI tools.

"This will help with improving service delivery by social workers and community child-care workers, for children in need of care," affirms Joyce.

MALAWI

In 2001, a study in Malawi found that “while children were being given material support, their emotional and psychological needs were being neglected.” The government responded with a national plan of action for orphans and other vulnerable children, which included psychosocial support as one of the main interventions.

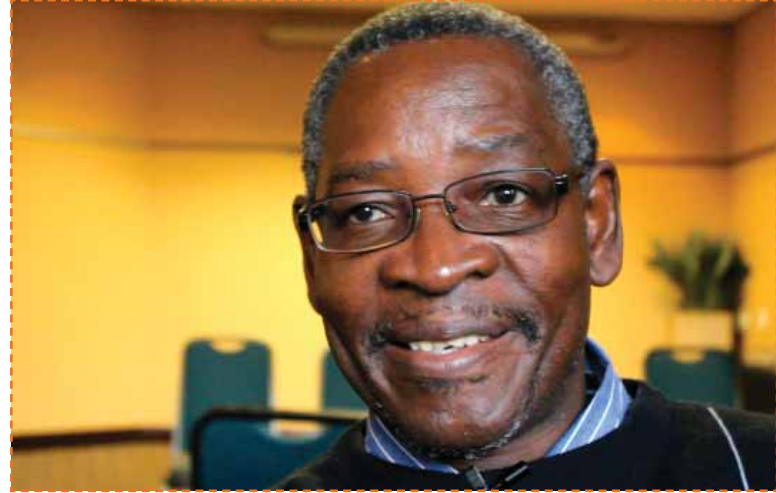
“We started consultations with REPSSI,” **Willard Manjolo, Acting Director of Social Welfare Services for the Government of Malawi** explains.

REPSSI assisted by providing guidance in developing policy, and training a pool of psychosocial support experts, known as ‘Master Trainers’. The government is now adapting REPSSI training manuals to local conditions.

“Since we started providing psychosocial support to orphans and vulnerable children, there’s been tremendous change in positive thinking, both for the children themselves, as well as the caregivers. Because we are dealing with a situation of despair ... What [psychosocial support] does, basically, is to restore confidence and hope for the future. You are actually dialoguing with children, caregivers, communities, to realise that when you experience problems, it’s not the end of everything.”

“Instead of children wandering about, instead of caregivers not paying attention, that has changed. Children realised the need to go to school, caregivers are providing that support and communities are coming together to support those children that experience, emotional and psychological problems.”

“I think this is a tremendous achievement because children now have a future, they see a future, with hope. I think that’s a major benefit we are seeing in Malawi.”



“Children now have a future, they see a future, with hope. I think that’s a major benefit we are seeing in Malawi.”

- Willard Manjolo, Government of Malawi

TANZANIA

**Jeanne Ndyetambura is the Assistant Commissioner for Social Welfare, Government of Tanzania.** Her Ministry’s mandate is to address issues concerning all vulnerable groups.

“We thought about the vulnerable groups and what they need, and psychosocial support was found to be one of the primary services that was necessary to adopt,” says Jeanne. “We went into partnership with REPSSI and ever since we have been working with REPSSI in terms of capacity development of the government, to be able to mainstream psychosocial support in our services.”

The government in the process of developing national guidelines for psychosocial support and support, and with REPSSI’s assistance has conducted trainings for staff at the national level, and for caregivers at community level.

“In most cases,” Jeanne explains, “the kind of caregivers we are dealing with are largely very elderly caregivers who are caring for orphans, or children who are taking care of other children... So you see these are the two categories of caregivers who are very vulnerable because they lack care parenting skills.”

In Tanzania, 53% of all vulnerable children are cared for by very elderly grandparents, and 12% are cared for by their siblings. The government’s programmes work with children through children’s clubs where they address emotional issues affecting them, and provide them with coping strategies and advice.

“We have been getting feedback that it is really making an impact,” concludes Jeanne proudly. “Children who have thought they can never make it in life, they are starting to dream again.”



“It is really making an impact. Children who have thought they can never make it in life, they are starting to dream again.”

- Jeanne Ndyetambura, Government of Tanzania



# EXPERTISE

## TOOLS & TRAINING

### MEMORY WORK

Memory Work techniques, such as memory books and memory boxes, are designed to help families cope with death and grief. Children develop their identity and emotional capacity, understand the past and become less afraid of the future.

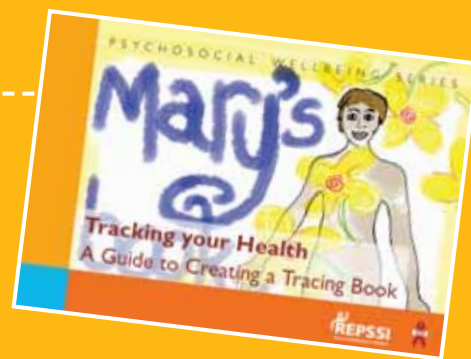
*" My father passed away a long time ago, but I found that the Memory Work helped me... Accepting that life goes on when you've lost someone you love can be hard. But realising that there are ways to remember and deal with the loss is a good thing." 20-year-old, Limpopo*



### THE TRACING BOOK

The *Tracing Book* guides a person living with HIV to develop a patient-held journal that tracks ongoing health. An evaluation found that " the tracing book gives people living with HIV a simple adaptable tool for monitoring their health... [It] gives people living with HIV a sense of power over the virus."

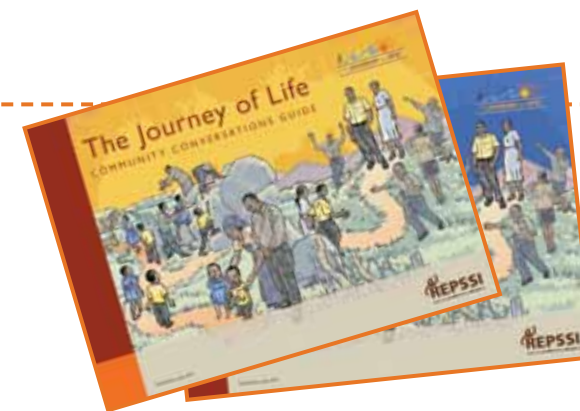
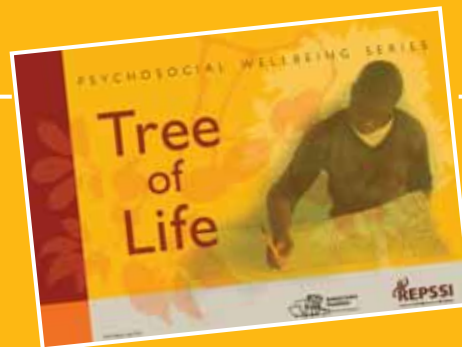
*" When you see the tracing book you are able to see what problem the client had each day. I wish all the clients had one." - Doctor, South Africa*



### TREE OF LIFE

A psychosocial tool that uses tree parts as a metaphor for different aspect of our lives. It helps children talk about loss and bereavement in a way that helps them share stories of hope, and connections to those who have died.

*" Out of everything I learned the Tree of Life has really helped me. It made me realise that I have an inner strength that I wasn't even aware of, that helps me to overcome any obstacle in my life." - 17-year-old, survivor of forced early marriage, Zambia*



### JOURNEY OF LIFE

A tool which mobilises communities to support both caregivers and children in need, by encouraging reflection and discussion, and providing the information and skills to be able to plan a course of action. It is comprised of Awareness Workshops, Action Workshops and Picture Codes.

*" We know that people need help in difficult circumstances. When I saw the boulders on the road [Picture Code], I knew that the street kids and orphans would not be able to climb over on their own. I knew I must be one of the people to help them climb over, and I encourage other people to contribute in whatever way they can." - community member, northern Uganda.*

### MAKING A HERO BOOK

A series of autobiographical storytelling and art exercises, designed to support each child to identify one significant psychosocial obstacle, and to support them to gain more power over this obstacle.

*" Hero Book released the hero that was within me. I've become a more confident, determined and outspoken person. I've learned to recognise the talents and abilities that I possess. Yes problems will come. But problems are only there to sharpen us as people.... Now, I'm a child mobilizer, a community mobilizer, a counsellor, and a peer educator." - 21-year-old survivor of rape, supported by Child Fund Zambia.*



### KIDS CLUBS

A training guide for Kids Club leaders, designed to equip them with the knowledge and skills that they will need to start up and run kids clubs which provide day-today care and support for children.

*" I am no longer scared, I am no longer angry, now I feel loved. I still have a lot of problems in my life. School is very challenging and I do not know if I will be able to continue with my education after I finish high school. Still, I am happy now. I have many friends and I have responsibilities in the community. I think that my future will be good." - boy trained by Touch Roots Africa, Maseru, Lesotho*



## REPSSI PARTNERS ACROSS THE REGION

Country	Government / Academic	Civil Society
Angola	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Institute for Children</li> <li>Ministry of Social Welfare</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Save the Children</li> <li>Child Fund</li> </ul>
Botswana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Department of Social Services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Marang</li> </ul>
Mozambique	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ministério da Assistência e Reinserção Social</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>International Child Development Programme</li> <li>Wona Sanana</li> <li>Save the Children</li> <li>International Federation of the Red Cross</li> </ul>
Zimbabwe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ministry of Health and Child Welfare</li> <li>Ministry of Labour and Social Services</li> <li>Ministry of Education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hospice Association of Zimbabwe</li> <li>Farm Orphans Support Trust</li> <li>Farm Community Trust of Zimbabwe</li> <li>Midlands AIDS Service Organization</li> <li>Batanai</li> <li>Bethany Project</li> <li>Batsirai</li> <li>Salvation Army - Masiye Camp</li> </ul>
Kenya	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Development (Department of Children's services)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hope Worldwide</li> <li>Child Fund</li> <li>Kenya Orphans Rural Development Program</li> <li>KICOSHEP</li> <li>Kenya AIDS NGOS Consortium</li> </ul>
Tanzania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (Department of Social Welfare)</li> <li>Institute of Social Work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family Health International</li> <li>Africare</li> <li>PASADA</li> <li>Humuliza</li> <li>KwaWazee</li> <li>Salvation Army</li> </ul>
Uganda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ministry of Gender Labour and social development (Youth and Children Department)</li> <li>Nsamizi Institute of Social Development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>World Vision</li> <li>Child Fund</li> <li>Transcultural Psychosocial Organization</li> <li>Kitovu Mobile</li> <li>Mt Elgon Community Development Project</li> <li>CRO</li> </ul>
Malawi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ministry of Gender, Children &amp; Community Development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Malawi Girl Guides Association;</li> <li>Consol Homes;</li> <li>National OVC Committee</li> </ul>

Country	Government / Academic	Civil Society
Namibia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ministry of Gender Equality &amp; Child Welfare</li> <li>NAMCOL</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Catholic AIDS Action (CAA)</li> <li>Churches Action for Orphans</li> <li>Philippi Trust</li> </ul>
Zambia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ministry of Education</li> <li>Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Child Fund Zambia</li> <li>Campaign for Female Education</li> <li>Kondwa Home based and Child care</li> </ul>
Lesotho	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NOCC</li> <li>Ministry of Health and Social Welfare</li> <li>Institute of Education – National University of Lesotho</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NGOC</li> <li>Red Cross Society</li> <li>Touch Roots Africa</li> <li>Sentebale</li> </ul>
South Africa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Department of Social Development</li> <li>National Action Committee for Children affected by HIV and AIDS</li> <li>Department of Basic Education</li> <li>DOH Department of Health</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nelson Mandela Children's Fund</li> <li>Child Welfare Association of South Africa</li> <li>South African Red Cross Society</li> <li>Health Development Africa</li> </ul>
Swaziland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Children's Coordination Unit in The Prime Minister's Office</li> <li>Ministry of Education</li> <li>University of Swaziland</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Save the Children</li> <li>UNICEF</li> </ul>

### Regional & Strategic Partners:

- Southern African Development Community (SADC)
- Regional AIDS Training Network (RATN)
- Regional African AIDS NGOs Network (RAANGO)
- Swiss Academy for Development (SAD)
- Western Cape Education Department (WCED)
- VSO Regional AIDS Initiative of Southern Africa (VSO-RAISA)
- International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)
- Save the Children UK
- Save the Children Sweden
- ChildFund
- MiET Africa
- Southern Africa AIDS Trust (SAT)
- UNICEF – ESARO
- Regional Inter-Agency Task Team (RIATT) for children affected by HIV
- MHPSS Reference Task Team
- Swiss Academy for Development (SAD)
- FIDA (Missions & Development Co-Operation Organisation, Pentecostal Churches of Finland)
- World Vision International

## COPYRIGHT & FUNDING

### REPSSI'S INTERNATIONAL COOPERATING PARTNERS

REPSSI would like to thank our international cooperating partners for their continued support:

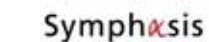
- Swiss agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)
- The Swedish International Development Agency (Sida) and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD)
- The Novartis Foundation for Sustainable Development (NFSD)
- The Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID)
- United Nations Children's Fund - East and Southern Africa Regional Office (UNICEF-ESARO)
- Symphysis Foundation

### COPYRIGHT

© REPSSI is the copyright owner of all material contained in this publication, with the exception of any information, photographs or material attributed herein to other sources.

In terms of the South African Copyright Act, No. 98 of 1978, no part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or by any information storage and retrieval system, without prior permission in writing from REPSSI, or, where the aforementioned photographs or material are concerned, from the relevant copyright holder.

This publication must be attributed with the words: REPSSI (2012), *Voices of Hope and Change*. Johannesburg: REPSSI. [www.repssi.org](http://www.repssi.org)





Working across 13 countries in East and Southern Africa