

To: **District Directors, Circuit Managers and Principals**

Topic: **The need for Psychosocial Support in our schools.**

Message Objective(s): Make Psychosocial Support an integral part of the education system.

**Message:** Psychosocial support for learners is crucial in increasing learning potential for learners.

The education system is an integral part of any society and governments strive to provide this right to all children regardless of their background or location. Education is provided to all children in our country in varied contexts. Children maybe growing up in environments affected by conflict, violence, poverty, humanitarian crises and as a result, may experience increased cases of poor mental-health. With chronic stress often being a consequence of such adversity, there is a growing need for Psycho-Social Support(PSS)in our schooling system and a better understanding of the challenges faced in providing it.

### **What does PSS look like in schools?**

Psycho-Social Support is a general term for any non-therapeutic intervention that helps a person cope with life's stressors. After a crisis, such support can facilitate recovery and aid individuals to develop emotional resilience. Rather than being a 'one size fits all' approach, PSS recognises the importance of social context and adapting to that environment.

Among other things, PSS aims to teach children to understand their emotions , feel empathy, make decisions, and build healthy relationships both at home and school. Teaching styles/practices which involve cooperative and project-based learning, which can aid in fostering communication, emotional literacy, and self-awareness can be employed by teachers. Research has shown that when teachers employ effective learning methods such as discussion, role play, art and group work, then the potential to improve children's psychosocial skills is greatly enhanced.

### **Effects of chronic stress on children**

Highly stressful and traumatic events or situations that occur in childhood are commonly known as Adverse Childhood Experiences. If these are not dealt with early on, these events can result in maladaptive coping strategies-such as avoidance or withdrawal. The effects can be long lasting leading to mental illness and substance abuse.

### **Are teachers equipped to provide PSS in schools?**

Teachers need in school training to deal adequately with psychosocial issues of learners and if this is done it enhances academic learning and helping learners to develop coping skills in the face of adversity. Our theory of change recognises that quality education needs to be tailored and relevant to the variety of educational contexts we work in. Across the education system in South Africa ,there are many disadvantaged children whose social and emotional development needs are crucial to the work done by all educationists.

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