

Mental Health Campaign - Concept Note

Theme: #HowRUFeeling

When: 4th - 21st October 2021

What:

According to the Lancet Commission on Global Mental Health and Sustainable Development (2018), 20% of children and adolescents experience mental disorders. 50% of mental health conditions start at the age of 14 and suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death globally for adolescents and young people between 15 and 29. The research further reveals that 50% of mental health conditions start at the age of 14 and suicide is the second leading cause of death globally for adolescents and young people between 15 and 29. This shows that mental health conditions constitute a major burden of disease on adolescents and youth globally.

UNICEF research reveals that in Africa, only 15 out of 55 member states have a plan or strategy in place on mental health for adolescents and children. Despite overwhelmingly poor determinants of health in Africa, there is a culture of silence around mental health issues. Africans are more likely to believe in supernatural causes of mental issues, as well as a general lack of willpower, rather than environmental causes. However, the reality is that Africans, especially African youth, have a very high prevalence of depression, schizophrenia and personality disorders caused by chronic, long-term poor mental health.

Moreover, there is authoritative evidence that the mental health of young women and girls is deteriorating, and that the gap between men and women has widened over recent years. The underlying factors for the deterioration of young women's and girls' mental health are complex. Analysts point to the role of domestic violence and abuse, which has risen significantly over recent years. The role of the online culture has also been widely pointed to as a source of increased pressure on young

women and girls. Today, young women are three times more likely than men to experience common mental health problems.

In Africa, in 1988 and 1990 the Member States (MS)A in the African Region of World Health Organization (WHO) adopted two resolutions (AFR/RC39/R1 and AFR/RC40/R9) to improve mental health services. It was expected of each state to formulate mental health policies, programmes, and action plans however a survey conducted 2 years later showed despite some modest achievements, the situation of mental health programmes in most countries was found to be unsatisfactory.

The 2014 Mental health Atlas by the WHO assessed whether countries have an approved mental health policy and/or plan and also the level of its implementation; whether countries have a stand-alone mental health law, and the extent to which legislation is currently being used or implemented; the level of involvement of associations of persons with mental disorders and family members in the formulation and implementation of mental health policies, laws, and services at the national level and in all instance Africa was one of the regions to score low in the assessment.

Mental health needs, and socio-psycho support, especially for young women, are frequently overlooked and underfunded in Africa. Hence, the first step is to reprioritize this area of work. This can be achieved through, increased attention to mental health policy; putting in place identified government structures for sustained leadership and action to improve young people's mental health; ensuring a holistic communities approach action for young peoples' mental health; ensuring the children and Young People's mental health agenda must be gender-sensitive and assessed for gender equality and generating and systematically collecting data on mental health outcomes disaggregated by gender, age, and other protected characteristics.

The Youth Division - AUC in collaboration with UNICEF, UN Women, IPPF, and UNFPA Liaison Offices to the AU, and UNECA is thus launching a Continental

Mental Health Campaign which aims to capitalize on the following 3 “As” - **Awareness, Advocacy and Action** to raise the awareness and knowledge of Africa’s youth on mental health and mobilize public support to change the status quo around mental health in Africa and normalize mental health conversations on the continent.

Objectives:

1. To raise awareness of mental health issues around Africa and to mobilize efforts in support of mental health.
2. To provide an opportunity for duty-bearers, and policymakers working on mental health issues to exchange information on ongoing initiatives, their experiences, and lessons learnt to make mental health policies and services responsive to the needs of African youth.

Activities

Dates	Activity
21 Sept - 7 Oct	Quiz (buzz feed style)
4 Oct - 16 Oct	#HowRUFeeling on Tik Tok
11 Oct - 16 Oct	Infographics unpacking mental health
	Showcasing youth-led initiatives on mental health
	Showcasing impact stories
16 Oct	Mini Documentary
15 Oct	Egumeni Sessions: Fireside chats
21 Oct	Egumeni Sessions: Tweet chat

Expected Outcomes:

1. **Mobilization:** Mobilise at least 5,000 young advocates through the **#HowRUFeeling Campaign** to speak up about their mental health and how they are feeling on Social Media.
2. **Orientation:** Raise the awareness of at least 10,000 young people around mental health issues and best practices and stories of impact on mental health in Africa.
3. **Conversations:** Spark conversations around mental health in Africa by hosting Egumeni Sessions (Fire-side chat - Tweet chat) during the mental health week targeting 5,000 young people.
4. **Advocacy:** Amplifying conversations around mental health reaching at least 5,000 young people; policy makers and practitioners from AU Member States aware of young people's mental health experiences to garner stakeholder commitments towards strategic actions on mental health policy and intervention.
5. **Partnerships:** Engage with 4 partners to launch a continental mental health campaign and identify 2/3 flagship joint programs priority areas and action plan developed for implementation in 2022.

Target Audience:

Young advocates, policy-makers, duty-bearers, African youth, partners, and Media/Journalists.