

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

Press Release No: 000003456/2021

Date: 16 March 2023

Venue: Port Louis, Mauritius

AU-SARO and Mauritius set to initiate a Mental Health Facilitator Pilot Programme



The African Union Southern Africa Regional Office held a meeting with Senior officials from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology in Port Louis, Mauritius to discuss the launching of the Joint Mental Health Pilot Programme in country.

The Mental Health facilitators programme was developed by National Board Counselling and its main objective is to promote equity in mental health, enhance access to quality and competent counselling services, as well as support the growth of counsellors to foster hope, innovations and development of needed mental health services across the globe among others.

In his opening remarks, Amb. David Claude Pierre, spoke on the role and mandate of AU-SARO in the Region especially the coordination efforts with SADC and COMESA in implementing AU programmes and Agenda 2063. He further stated that the purpose of the visit to Mauritius is aimed at expanding Counselling and Guidance Services in the country by training teachers and school professionals on mental health knowledge and well build local capacity to hold high level training to increase mental health services in schools.

Speaking on behalf of the Mauritian Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, the Director of Primary and Curriculum development and Evaluation, Mrs Aneeta Ghooram stated that “mental health has been a major issue particularly following the

Covid-19 pandemic where many students continue to suffer from stress related difficulties due to the loss of relatives and loved ones”. She further added that there are more complex challenges in the Mauritian society with the same tickling down to primary schools and affecting students of all ages. She highlighted that the Ministry is undergoing a major reform in the education sector and that social and emotional wellbeing of the child is a major factor being considered.

Dr. Vedhiyen Moonsamy, Assistant Director of Health and Well Directorate reiterated that the Mental Health facilitators programme is timely and that the Mental health of Children and young adults is at the heart of the Government of Mauritius.

Despite the goal of wellbeing being enshrined in the constitution of African states and echoed in AU Agenda 2063, governments still face many challenges in realizing the well-being of all youth within the continent with indicators either non-existent, extremely low and sometimes even alarming as noted in several research in the Mental Health sector.

The MHF program was designed to provide community-based public education on mental health and foundational mental health skills on a global scale. As there are hundreds of millions of people worldwide with unmet mental health needs, the program aims to increase public awareness of mental health and service capacity by training individuals who come into contact with others in the course of their daily lives or functions to identify, refer, and, in some cases, support those with mental health needs. The program includes two curricula targeted to teaching these skills to those that work with primary and secondary school students in order to provide targeted training within strategic timeframes.

The AU-SARO is a Representational Office of AU in Southern Africa with a mandate to develop and maintain constructive and productive relationships between the AU, its Member States in the Region as well as with SADC and COMESA. It also aims to Increase awareness about AU programmes and Agenda 2063.

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