

Activity Report

Name of project	Girl leadership camp
Name of program	Psychosocial Support and wellness program
Supporting agency	African Woman Development Fund
Number of participants	30
Venue	Youth Empowerment Hub-YEH
Date	June 10 th , 2023



A group photo of the cohort participants who attended the 6 months psychosocial support program with their certificate of completion 10/06/2023

Overview of the project.

Psychosocial support Initiative is a mentorship series of Psychosocial support services and self-care programs under the “Girl leadership camp” supported by the African Woman Development Fund-AWDF , for group and individual psychosocial support circle for young adolescents, most especially the young women and girls in and out of school in Juba. The program aims at creating awareness and share experiences with young adolescents in communities about mental health issues especially as apply to their daily lives and provide supportive counselling and facilitate community members access to safe space along with counselling and trauma healing trainings to more than 120 young adolescent women and girls in Juba, through participatory methodologies and maximization on experiential learning.

Key observation

The final psychosocial support program strategy aimed for April was re-planned for 10th June due to the busy schedule of the specialist/Counselor who had other travel for international commitments.

As planned, the program was strategized and planned for out of the usual RiWA space where we have been taking the cohort through the 6 months of the trainings.

The cohort was invited at the Youth Empowerment Hub-YEH Juba, RiWA's host for the program a youth center that deals with youth activities that empower and trains the youth in various dynamics of livelihood.



As early as 8:30 am through till 9:30 am was the start of arrival and registration of participants, by 9:30 am, the session kicked off with a word of prayer, followed by a welcoming remark from Tande Elias the RiWA programs Associate.

He then requested each participant to introduce themselves by telling the others their name, and say something about the outfit or cloths they decided to wear for the day, this created humor in the environment of openness with no fear of each other and acceptance of a safe space to share.

After the introduction, participants were given 20 minutes to answer a short survey questionnaire to help collect data on their experience in mental health and stress management, below are some expectations as per the survey:

After answering the survey questionnaires, the Participants were given a 15 minutes tea break characterized by conversations and networking among the participants.

There after the facilitator was welcomed and kicked off with 30 participants ready to take part in the conversations.



Mr. Mandela Ade started by giving the participants a health questionnaire to answer, the questionnaire had 9 questions to be answered by ticking from the scale of 0 to 3.

The questions included:

1. Little pleasure in doing things
2. Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless
3. Trouble falling or staying asleep, or sleeping too much
4. Feeling tired or little energy
5. Poor appetite or overreacting
6. Feeling about your self or that you are failure or have let yourself or your family down
7. Trouble concentrating on things, such as reading the newspaper or watching television
8. Moving or speaking so slowly that other people could have noticed? Or the opposite being so fidgety or restless that you have been moving around a lot more than usual.
9. Thoughts that you would be better off dead or of hurting yourself in some way.

with 0 = Not at all, 1 =Several days, 2 = More than half the days, 3 = Nearly every day.

Fear.

The facilitator kicked off with a question for the participants. He asked the participants to tell him what makes them feel safe? and Some participants answered saying:

- When at home with my family
- In my bedroom alone listening to music
- When am with my aunty who we share a lot with
- I fell safe around positive friends
- When I have money.

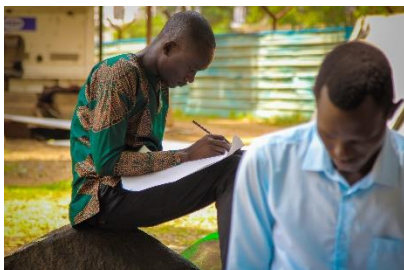
The facilitator then asked the participants what makes them feel insecure and unsafe? Some participants answered saying.

- When am at home I feel so insecure because of the stress and complains that comes of my family members for me to solve.
- When am around unfriendly people, like those whose use, Alcohol, smoke and don't respect others
- When I don't get business that earns me money
- When am broke and don't have ability to handle financial situations.



The facilitator then introduced Deng Fobs a famous visual artist who uses arts to comfort so many souls and addresses common issues using his artwork.

Mr. Fobs then shared inspirational stories about fine art and advised the participants to always use arts to convey or talk about their problems as a therapy to consoling and making one comfortable and free of fears and stress that makes them think and act irrational.



Deng Fobs then engage the participants by distributing fine art materials (Papers, pencils and crayons) to participants, and instructed the participants to take 20 minutes to reflect on what makes them feel safe at home.



After the 20 minutes, each participant was request to present their art works and explain what they meant when drawing the art work in reflection of the question, what makes you feel safe?

After the presentation of each of the participants art work and explanation of what they meant when drawing, Deng Fobs concluded the pre-lunch session by encouraging each participant to always use arts to communicate things that educates, informs and entertains most especially when they are feeling tired, depressed, stressed, so as to release some of the bad feelings out to get yourself relieved, and encouraged the participants to keep those art works they presented to keep on reminding them of what to do when they are going through hard times.

Participants were then introduced to a light mindedness game which involved blind folding and walking through assembled bottles to win as they waited for their lunch break.

The participants were given 1 hour lunch break, were they shared their lunch together and continued with conversations moved around networking and creating friendship.



After the 1 hour lunch break, to get participants ready for the afternoon session, Tory the logistics officer introduced a short game of participants sipping of over 5 soft drinks while blind folded and use their sense of taste to tell what brand that drink is?

The short game took 20 minutes before once again introducing Mr. Ade the counselor to take on the participants through their second session of the day.

What does trauma look like and how it creates fear;

Ade started by giving each participants a document that had a list of trauma reactions (Emotional, Behavioral, cognitive and physical reactions)

Ade asked each one of them to review the list of common trauma reactions handed to them critically and then put the participants in pairs, and asked each to remember that one thing that traumatized them most and created a feeling of fear, and then share that experience with the partner, while putting a tic if they experienced it by themselves, and a star if they witnessed it their colleague in BPU in a family member or friends.

The list of the common trauma reactions included:

Emotional Reactions

- increased worries or about safety of self or others
- increased worries or fears about security
- worries or fears about separation
- worries or fears about reoccurrence of event
- worries about ongoing situation
- feeling guilt or blame

- feeling helplessness
- attitude of seeming not to be affected

Behavioral reactions

- changes in work/school attendance or performance
- decreased concentration
- decreased attention
- change in sleep
- changes in appetite
- changes in mood (swings)
- changes in activities
- increased irritability
- increased anger outbursts or temper tantrums
- increased withdrawal
- regression in behavior (i.e., an adult acting like a child or teen)

Cognitive reactions

- repeated questions about the event
- repeated discussion or story telling about event
- repetitive play about the event
- misattributions and misperceptions about the event
- increased interest in media coverage
- trauma reminders (those things that are similar to sights, thoughts, sounds, tastes, smells etc. that were present at that time of the traumatic event)
- loss reminders (those things that serve to remind individuals about what and /or who they have lost because of the disaster or trauma)

Physiological reactions

- increased sensitivity to sound
- increased startle response, feeling jumpy or on edge
- increased somatic complaints including headaches, stomachaches, fatigue, vague aches and pains
- feeling like you're not as ready to perform your work to your peak abilities

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After the exercise, Ade asked each of the participants to explain how they felt without telling the story they heard from their partner when their partner was narrating their traumatic story?

He explained that each story told should remain between the two, and the exercise was meant to make them realize the reactions they could have not realized, as a result of trauma.

Some few participants explained how they felt when listening to their partners story and the reactions were as seen below:

"I really felt sorry for my sister, I wish I could be able to help her through, but even if I can't, I will try and help her with words so as to get over her situation" Taban Geoffrey

I thought my story was really traumatic, but when I heard of his story, I really felt like mine was so light, and

it made me feel like her trauma was more than mine" Robert Guya Antipas one of the participants

"Her story was so touching and I really felt very bad about her traumatic experience, but am very happy that she is coping up with her situation and based on her story she is really rebuilding her confidence" Sara Lutfy

In these few feed backs, Mr. Ade emphasized to the participants that fear due to trauma can be overcome by identifying how you feel and finding a way to prepare for recovery.

He further reminded the participants of a topic in one of the sessions that says "there are things you can control and there are things you cannot control", therefore you need to handle things that you can control and do away with the ones you cannot control.

In conclusion, he took the group through a session of meditation for 10 minutes and advised the participants to always practice it because it helps calm one soul in times you are trouble.

Certificate of completion



Towards the end of the day's session, each of the 30 participants who was present from day one of the psychosocial support and wellness program and through the 6 months, was awarded a certificate of completion as a qualification to help their respective communities in trauma and psychosocial support.

Remarks of conclusion:

Christine Dogberengere -Participants representative

Christin appreciated RiWA and Mandela Ade the councilors for dedicating their time to train them in vital areas of livelihood for the past 6 months, She further said that she had learnt a lot and she believes her colleagues have also learnt something great.

She encouraged her fellows to always engage when there is a problem in their communities and use the skills and knowledge, they acquired from the training to help individuals or groups within their locality.

Christine also encouraged RiWA to continue with more of such projects and not only in Juba but also carry the same to other states and rural areas because the youth there are really facing a lot of challenges in their lives and don't know how to go about them, some even commit suicides because they are tired of the hard life they are living

Asan Juma – Executive director -RiWA



In her closing remarks, Asan Juma the Executive director congratulated and appreciated each of the participants upon the reception of their certificate well deserved and their commitment and consistency through the 6 months, and encouraged each one of them to go out there and practice what they have learnt to help their communities since they have already acquired the skills to counsel and provide psychosocial support and trauma healing.

Asan emphasized that the participants should not take these training for granted, for it is where the future of solving problems begin, because most of our communities are facing a lot with little support to heal them from their traumatic experiences, so it will be really helpful for them to take charge and start building back confidences within their communities and every sphere of environment they engage in.

She further told the participants to continue engaging with RiWA physically or through our social media platforms that we use to disseminate important messages and campaigns, for their contribution could help one or two people out there and RiWA will continue monitoring and engaging them in some of the future events to benefit them and their communities.

Impact of Activity/Findings

Rating each one's physical health based on the survey questionnaires for data collection, 62 % of the participants rated excellent, 28% average and only 10% rated somehow poor.

Mental health after the program rated 33.3 excellent, 16.6 somehow good and 19.8 average.

30.8 % happened to have attended a psychosocial support program for the first time, while 46.6% ever attended with other entities, most of with Rise initiative for women's right Advocacy

The wellness session was so engaging that every participant was tasked to reflect on themselves and be able to share their experiences of what they have been through in the past, they also learned about psychosocial wellbeing and fear, tips on how to deal with fear after a traumatic trauma.



Based on Ade our mental health professional, he often talks about the importance of having a strong support network, because trying to reach goals or deal with a crisis, one might frequently implore people to lean on their friends and family for support hence RiWA providing that unconditional support.

The topics discussed in the 6 sessions; the group discussions showed a normative influence on behaviors. From the discussions, some participants showed understanding with some trying to discuss how they did not know that some signs they face was as a result of trauma and then it creates fear, which showed just how important the topics on trauma and fear, had impact on the participants.

It also helped participants to cope with their fears, each participant showed a level of reactions of fear while in discussion, as we all know fear has been shown to have limited many people from doing the right thing or move on with life

Being surrounded by fellows who are caring and supportive helped participants to see themselves as better capable of dealing with the reactions of fear.

Still, having strong social support in times of crisis can help reduce the consequences of trauma-induced disorders including PTSD, so was the psychosocial support/wellness program.

Based on the survey questionnaire some participants learnt new mechanisms of how to deal with their stress and fear.

"I gained how to manage my stress and not letting anything temper with my mental wellness". Khasim Sophia, while others gained self-confidence and believe that every person has their own side of story and how to be patient enough with life and problems.

Through the training some participants were able to help themselves when get traumatized and control anger and develop a spirit of helping other facing the similar problems.

Some of the participants gained knowledge on how to pay more attention on themselves and control emotions, grow stronger and manage to deal with irrational feelings and developed psychosocial maturity.

While many networked with fellows and created a cycle of friendship to continue helping each other.

General recommendations

Grateful for being part of the program because it has really helped me deal with my own mental health which was not in good state.

RiWA is a very reliable place for mental health healing.

Do more trainings for other young people.

Helpful program I wish for continuation.

If we can be given practical opportunity to apply the skills acquired then would be highly appreciated.

Need for expansion in number and other regions or states.

It was an awesome training for the last six months and am grateful because I learnt a lot.

Questions:

Which other program does RiWA support?

Can RiWA give chances to train others on their behalf to know if we benefited from the program?

Conclusion and general comment(s)

The 6 months program was a success and through, the facilitator was great as well as broke down the topics for easy understanding and used various methodologies to sink the discussions for easy understanding by the participants.

Prepared by:

Tande Elias Agobe – Programs Associate-RiWA South Sudan