

THE PSYCHOSOCIAL CARE AND SUPPORT PROGRAMME FOR TEACHERS

The Ministry of Education and Training participated in the stakeholders' meeting held at Lesotho Avani under auspices of Sentebale. The purpose of the meeting was to disseminate information on Psychosocial Care and Support Programme for Teachers in Lesotho and to seek support from the Development Partners to support the initiative. The Ministry of Education is not the sole driver of the initiative. It works together with other key stakeholders namely; Sentebale Princes' Foundation, Regional Psycho Social Support Initiative ((REPSSI) and the National University of Lesotho (NUL). The partners work as a team to plan for the effective and efficient implementation of the programme.

The Principal Secretary for the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET), Mrs Mapaseka Kolotsane officiated at this meeting. She indicated that the psychosocial support programme was sold to her about seven years ago and she fell in love with it because the programme will respond to the challenges facing learners, thus improving enrolment, retention and achievement.

In this meeting, the Regional Inspector -Mrs Morojele Dotoro emphasised that the programme has come at the opportune time because MoET has discovered that children are still not in schools; attending irregularly; begin school late; repeat classes and drop out before completing primary education. She mentioned that the contributing factors include food insecurity; violence and sexual abuse against girls; corporal punishment; caring for sick relatives; teenage pregnancy and early marriage.

The representative of REPSSI from regional office in South Africa Ms Carol made some remarks regarding the programme. She pointed out that her organisation has developed the content of the Diploma programme to be offered in the SADAC region. She added that, the programme has been pre-tested in some countries including Zambia, Zimbabwe, Tanzania and Swaziland. The Outcome evaluation of the programme was excellent. In Zambia both teachers and learners were very happy because the school environment changed and became conducive for teaching and learning. she further indicated that Lesotho like other countries has challenges in schools that need to be addressed by this programme which will be offered by NUL.

The representative and also a programme coordinator Ms Ntoli Moletsane said that Sentebale is going to fund the teacher's tuition fees, accommodation and traveling costs for the teachers who have been selected to take part in the Psychosocial support diploma programme. She strongly indicated that even though participants believe that the cost of running this programme are too high, they should apply cost benefit analysis based on the number of learners who will benefit from the initiative. She said that the initiative is sustainable as teachers will have a multiplying effect by passing the knowledge, Skills and the right attitude to many generations.

Dr. Rets'elisitsoe Matheolane, the representative of the National University of Lesotho while addressing the participants indicated that, the duration of the programme is two academic years. She mentioned that teachers will have five days contact lessons on campus taking eight modules for the entire programme. According to her explanation, applications for this

programme will be online like any other programmes of NUL. She made it clear that teachers, who might encounter challenges during the application process, will be offered assistance on campus to conclude their applications.

The closing remarks were made by the Director Teacher Training and Development from MoET, Mrs. Masoloja Motlomelo. She indicated that as the Ministry, they are grateful for the opportunity that has been extended to MoET. She alleged that the initiative will make a significant contribution in improving teachers` morale and performance in schools for the benefit of quality education. The Director also pointed out that the effective delivery of quality education requires the capacity and guidance of highly skilled and motivated educators. She however, emphasised that training is very expensive and piloting with only seventeen schools out of about one thousand and sixty five (1865) is just the beginning. She therefore appealed for financial assistance from development partners to roll out the programme to the rest of the schools.