



**Workshop on developing an African Union Guideline on
Addressing Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Needs of
Persons in Conflict, Emergency, and Post-conflict Situations: 23-25
April 2024,**

Venue: Boulevard Palace Hotel, Monrovia, Liberia

Opening Remarks

By

Libakiso Matlho

AU PCRD Executive Secretary

Theme: “Towards Developing an African Union Guideline on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support to Persons in Conflict, Emergency and Post-Conflict Situations”

Excellencies;

Ladies and gentlemen;

First, on behalf of the African Union Post Conflict Reconstruction and Development Centre, I would like to express our gratitude to the Government of Liberia for hosting us as we gather to develop and shape the African Union Guideline on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support to Persons in Conflict, Emergency and Post-Conflict Situations.

Foremost, looking at Africa’s post conflict reconstruction and development landscape, we start by celebrating the significant strides made so far in addressing the aftermath of conflict and the challenges presented by trauma and its psychosocial effect on mental health of nations transitioning from conflict.

In particular, I need to emphasise and remind ourselves that this workshop takes place at an opportune time, after the endorsement of the revised Africa Union Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development Policy, 2024 by the AU Assembly held in Addis Ababa Ethiopia, earlier this year – February 2024.

Second, it is also worth-mentioning to point on the importance of including mental health and psychosocial support in the post-crisis and stabilisation response for conflict-affected countries as this can lead to greater peacebuilding outcomes and sustainable impacts at the community and national levels and improve affected people's and communities' resilience and agency.

For example, there is increasing evidence showing that children, youth, and women in armed conflict and post-conflict face particular risks if their

mental health and psychosocial needs are not addressed early on. It is therefore imperative that to achieve peaceful coexistence in communities affected by conflicts and during emergencies, people's mental health problems, negative coping strategies, lack of trust at the community level, and disrupted social relationships need to be addressed as a matter of right.

Moreover, a holistic MHPSS approach that is community-based and culturally grounded is required to ensure the meaningful participation of individuals and communities in developing effective mental health programmes for children, youth, women, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and refugees. This requires that all stakeholders, from national to local authorities and humanitarian and development actors, work with vulnerable communities to identify and design the approaches and strategies to enable them to become self-sufficient and resilient while exercising their rights fully and without discrimination.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As we brainstorm and engineer these MHPSS guidelines, I hope that our determined and collective efforts will yield the desired outcomes. It is my belief that the document that will be generated here will inform and mainstream mental health and psychosocial support principles in all the 9 pillars of the PCRD Policy. It is imperative for the success of our efforts in all other fields, be it economic development or integration, health care or the mental health psychosocial support, we shall at the end reach our lofty goal of freeing all the billion of Africans from fear and want of freedom, reconstruct that livelihoods towards attaining sustainable peace in the Africa we all aspire for.

I wish you all fruitful deliberations throughout this workshop.

I thank you.