



### **EMDR Africa Ascending EMDR Therapists Band together for Continental Impact**

In 2010, during the first EMDR Asia conference, clinicians working or interested in Africa gathered in Bali to exchange ideas. Reyhana Sedat from South Africa, on the road to becoming the first EMDR trainer from Africa, agreed to pursue the concept of EMDR Africa. But building local capacity in various African countries came first for the participants of that meeting.

In 2016 Dr. Gisela Roth, an EMDR trainer from Germany working in Africa for over 30 years and cofounder of the EMDR Kenya Trust, created a Basecamp site, an online

collaboration tool, for a collection of counselors, therapists, psychologists and other mental health clinicians invested in EMDR in Africa. They gathered there to share knowledge, experiences, discuss issues and review trainings and programs. Many knew each other and had trained in EMDR with Trauma Recovery Humanitarian Assistance Programs in the mid-2000's. Most were struggling to organize their small, local community of EMDR therapists into a recognized association in their countries. All appreciated the benefits of working together and recognized the need to expand trauma treatment availability by growing EMDR training capacity on the African continent. To this end the EMDR Kenya Trust included other African countries in their training of supervisors.

In October 2019, initiated by Dr. Roth, and furthered by Anne Dewailly of Trauma AID France, participants from 5 African countries selected representatives for an EMDR Africa Network during an EMDR child training in Uganda. Through scholarships from Trauma AID Europe, 10 representatives of the EMDR Africa Network planned to attend the EMDR Europe conference in Berlin 2020 to further EMDR Africa. Though the conference was cancelled due to the Corona pandemic, these and other colleagues from Africa met via video conference to get an EMDR Africa association off the ground.

### **Enthusiasm Without Borders**

The concept of creating EMDR Africa to unite each country's small EMDR therapist community into building the infrastructure for sustainable, locally led EMDR Basic 1 and 2 training, with approved local trainers, supervisors and facilitators was enthusiastically received. The group feels strongly that training curriculum must adapt to the reality that most clients across the continent are suffering from complex trauma stemming from experiencing drought, famine/starvation, disease, pestilence, violence and war in addition to loss from the Corona pandemic. Research by Africans in Africa regarding EMDR is also urgently needed, as well as cultural adaptation of EMDR to African realities.

The first formation meeting was held virtually on June 5, with 22 participants representing 9 African nations. The EMDR Africa group so far includes practitioners from Botswana, DR Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, South Africa, Rwanda, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

The group knows they face many challenges as they work to define a roadmap to create EMDR Africa from the ground up. Few countries on the continent have psychologist or mental health associations to help them organize and define their mission, model and standards. This all-volunteer group, located hundreds of miles apart, and most working more than fulltime in research, teaching and therapy already, got down to business immediately. They formed committees in their first session to gather information and guidance on how to lay the foundation for their organization and create a work plan to build EMDR Africa into a thriving reality.



### **Connecting A Large, Multi-National Advisory Group**

The group has begun exploring their options through relationships with EMDR Europe, Trauma Aid in France and Germany, Trauma Recovery/HAP and EMDR Asia. They recently reached out to Sushma Mehrotra, Found member of EMDR Asia and Trauma Recovery, Asia and to Carol Martin, HAP's executive director to learn about navigating the EMDR formation process, and tools HAP could provide to mentor, foster and assist in their development. They have also consulted with EMDR Asia and EMDR Europe to gather best practices and insight into every aspect from governance and standards, to knowledge sharing, resources and fund-raising.

We will follow this exciting and inspiring initiative with encouragement from the sidelines, and they have promised to keep the Trauma Recovery community apprised of their journey and major milestones.