



Kenya Association of Professional Counsellors

## **A REPORT FOR THE 9<sup>th</sup> COUNSELLING CONFERENCE**

**2<sup>nd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> September 2008**

### **CONFERENCE THEME**

**'Counselling Research: Its Implications for  
Practice''**

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## **SUMMARY REPORT OF THE CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS**

### **Theme – ‘Counselling Research: its Implications for Practice’**

#### **Official Opening**

The conference began with an opening address the Executive Director of KAPC, Cecilia Rachier. She thanked members for always making the conference a success for the last 8 years and said she was certain this 9<sup>th</sup> counselling conference would be an exciting and rich one. She said that this conference was coming at a time when counsellors in Kenya had been doing a very important and difficult work involving those affected by the post 2007 election violence. She commended the counsellors for their good work especially at a time when they themselves were also just as affected.

She thanked those who had produced abstracts for presentation and reminded members that research was an important aspect of counselling development.

The conference was officially opened by the chief guest The Honourable Professor S. M. Onger, Minister for Education, Science and Technology.

In his speech, the Minister stressed that the only way to keep abreast with the changing trends is to embrace and invest in research. He challenged counsellors to make use of existing research institutions to ensure research findings are operationalised. Referring to the recent strikes that hit many Kenyan schools, he observed that the school children are overwhelmed with too much school work and tuition and that this needed to stop and he reminded all of us to claim our children back as there was danger of us losing our children. He advised parents to interact with their children.

The minister was accompanied by the Chairman of the Teacher Service Commission and the Ministry of Higher Education officials.

#### **Participants**

A total of 235 participants attended the conference from 7 countries namely, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, USA, UK and Austria.

The participants came from different disciplines and professions and most of them were counsellors. There were various universities represented including Kenyan Universities of Nairobi, Baraton, Egerton, Kenyatta and Moi. Others included University of Dar-es-Salaam, Universities of Sheffield Hallam, Newcastle and Manchester in UK, University of Abertay, Dundee in Scotland and University of Central Florida in US.

Various local and international institutions were represented e.g. Handicap International, International Centre for Reproductive health (ICRH) International Organisation Migration (IOM), Population Council, Kenya Scout Association, Liverpool VCT, Education for Life, Kemri, Scot and TASO of Uganda. A number of the government ministries mainly in Kenya were represented.



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## **Abstracts and Presentations**

A total of 49 abstracts had been received and 37 were selected for oral presentations. The presentations were grouped into 12 sub-themes as follows:

- Place of Research in Counselling
- Counselling Training Models and Ethics
- Gender and HIV/AIDS, Prevention and Care
- Determinants of counselling interventions
- Counselling in context
- Counselling in Schools with Children
- Counselling in Schools
- Psychological Care and Trauma
- Contextual issues – Gender and Violence
- HIV/AIDS - Counselling Children
- Counselling Ethics – Children
- Counselling Supervision, alcohol abuse

## **Roundtables**

There was a 40 minutes roundtable session every day for all participants. The roundtables gave participants an opportunity for questions and answers on pertinent counselling issues some of which had emerged from earlier presentations.

## **Outcomes**

The presentations and roundtables were very lively and most participants enjoyed participating in the discussions.

There were various key note speakers and John McGuinness of Durham UK, gave his keynote address focusing on counselling in schools, followed by Professor John McLeod of University of Abertay Dundee Scotland. Professor John McLeod, who is a renowned author and researcher in counselling, is a professor of Tayside Institute of Health Studies, University of Abertay, Dundee. In his taped DVD presentation he shared with the audience about his ongoing research on effectiveness of psychotherapy. He emphasised the need for use of pre and post counselling interviews and emphasized the importance of getting the client's perspective on psychotherapy. Gudrun Prinz, a psychotherapist from Austria in her keynote address on attachment theory research reminded participants that attachment is a life long issue and that counsellors need to be aware of their attachment style and how it might affect their work with clients and that it was necessary to provide clients with a secure base., Professor Colin Feltham of Sheffield University UK, a renowned counselling author said it was important to know what research has found or not found. He said that statistics show that counselling has a success rate of 80% noting that this has implications of the remaining 20%. He also maintained that research findings do not always change behaviour and challenged counsellors to ask the question – 'what really causes change of behaviour?'



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Professor Feltham emphasised the importance of 'valuing but putting research into context' reminded participants of the modesty of research findings to date. He advised that we continue with traditional but be aware of the new ways.

Dr. William West, Reader, University of Manchester, UK gave a moving account of his experience of counsellors in Kenya saying he was impressed with by their emphasis on family. He encouraged counsellors to reflect on their traditional ways of helping even as they adopted Western ways of helping and to consider developing models that can work for Kenyans.

## **Areas for Further Research**

At the end of the conference, the KAPC Executive Director said that there was progressive evidence of developmental growth in the conferences and noted that participants seemed more concerned about quality, process and delivery of counselling training, services.

Some of the existing and emerging areas for research included:

- Orphans and vulnerable children
- Appropriate theoretical models or approaches
- Gender based violence
- Trauma
- Supervision
- Counselling services
- Training
- Counselling in schools
- HIV/AIDS
- Peer education
- Marginalised groups
- Teenagers
- Adolescents
- Marriage
- Family and relationship.

The conference ended with a summary of the proceedings from the Executive Director. She thanked all the participants for making the conference a success and invited the participants to the 2009 conference.