



Building Communities of Care

WERA-IRN Final Report

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Submitted by:

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In our submission we proposed a systematic review of community development as it relates to community resilience development within educational contexts, including collaborative community-based service provision. This review was to be conducted from 01 June 2019- 30 June 2020, with the writing component completed by the end of July 2020. This review is well underway but has also experienced important setbacks, largely caused by the impact of COVID-19 on our team members. Given the size of the review, and the related international components, the review did develop at a much slower pace than originally anticipated. However, and as previously stated, our regular meetings on the process were significantly hampered from May 2021 onwards as various team members dealt with the continuing and multifaceted impact of the pandemic on their lives. Despite the WERA-IRN coming to an end, we will continue our work on this component as it has already resulted in various interesting developments that our team is eager to pursue.

In addition to the core focus of our KS, smaller site and topic-specific reviews are emerging across our partners. These include reviews of the literature available within contexts such as Brazil, Croatia and South Africa. Our larger team discussions of the review process have also raised interesting questions of how an international team conducts such a review, retaining validity, when working across cultural and language differences. This is an important topic that we would like to explore in more detail and share with others. Similarly, a review exploring management styles of relevant organizations engaged in community development work has been initiated amongst some of our network members.

An early publication related to this work was published in the *Journal of Psychology in Africa* in 2021¹.

The second component of our work during the time of the IRN has been focused on the development of an international research program. To this end a comprehensive research program has been developed and the international team is now looking for relevant funding opportunities. Consequently, the research plan has been written up in various research proposals. Currently, site-specific proposals are being finalised for submission and/or have been submitted for review in South

¹ Liebenberg, L., & Scherman, V. (2021). [Resilience and the Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\): Promoting child and youth resilience and related mental health outcomes](#). *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, 31(5), 455-463. DOI:10.1080/14330237.2021.1978180



Africa, Brazil, Croatia, New Zealand and Canada. To date however, none have been successful. Given the importance of the work to our team, our goal is to continue looking for funding.

During the lifetime of this IRN, our initial network expanded by 11 new members. Seven of these new members are actively involved in either site-specific components of the knowledge synthesis and/or currently working on funding applications. We also developed a twitter handle (@resiliencecons1) and a LinkedIn profile (The International Community Development and Resilience Consortium (ICDRC)) to promote and share the work of the IRN. As we increase the number of resources we are developing we will be making greater use of these social media resources as a means of connecting with others in the field. The work of the IRN is also showcased on the International Community Development and Resilience Consortium (ICDRC)'s website (<https://www.resilienceconsortium.org/our-projects>).

In terms of outputs, an edited book has been accepted for publication by Routledge titled: ***African Schools as Enabling Spaces: A Framework for Building Communities of Care***. The mission of the book is to provide a theoretical and applied framework from which intersectoral stakeholders can work. The scope of the book covers the different components of the school system across Africa. Stakeholders outside of the formal education system, but with a vested interest in education will also be included. These conceptual and applied frameworks are necessary given the current social milieu in which children find themselves. Increased demands, violent conflicts, lack of stability and social strain are but a few challenges impacting children's development negatively. This context has placed extraordinary demands on schools and staff, necessitating a renewed understanding of how to better support children's developmental needs. Resilience research findings suggest a holistic and integrated community focus. The finalised manuscript will be submitted to the publisher at the end of May, for release later in 2022.

Finally, our team presented on our work in a symposium at the 2021 WERA focal meeting. As capacity in the group returns, we will be publishing these presentations as part of a special issue of a journal.